



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

4611 Tutu Park Mall
Suite 300
St. Thomas, VI 00802
(340) 774-3320

45 Mars Hill, Frederiksted
St. Croix, VI 00840
(340) 773-1082
dpnr.vi.gov



Office of the Commissioner

CONTACT: Jamal Nielsen, Media Relations Coordinator
jamal.nielsen@dpnr.vi.gov

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR FORGES INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

TO RESTORE NEW WILDLIFE AND MARINE SANCTUARY

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources announces a unique partnership with the Island-Ocean Connection Challenge (IOCC) to link Savana Island with 40 globally significant islands across our world's oceans, including but not limited to Floreana Island in the Galapagos; Tetiaroa Atoll in French Polynesia; Late Island in Tonga; and Ulong Island in Palau.

The IOCC is coordinated by ISLAND CONSERVATION, SCRIPPS INSTITUTION OF OCEANOGRAPHY, and RE:WILD with the intent to restore biodiversity and promote resilience of international fishery and terrestrial resources to support local livelihoods. Parallel restoration activities across a network of globally important islands are a small but important nature-based tool to combat global climate change impacts. Recognizing Savana Island for both its local and global importance, the Commissioner hereby declares that:

1. The Virgin Islands of the United States has historically recognized and protected special areas in its public domain, including the named islands and cays of Capella, Carval Rock, Cas, Cockroach, Congo, Cricket, Dog, Dutchcap, Flanagan, Frenchcap, Kalkun, Pelican, Shark, Stevens, Sula; the game preserves of Flat and Little Flat, Ruth, Saba and Little Saba, and Turtledove, and the Wildlife and Marine Sanctuary of Frank Bay;
2. The offshore cay, Savana Island, located west of St. Thomas at latitude 18.34097 N, longitude -65.0794 E, constitutes a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital importance to the people of the Virgin Islands.
3. Savana Island and its surrounding area is locally important for biodiversity to thrive, with dense forests of *Coccothrinax barbadensis* and stands of *Tabebuia heterophylla*, dry shrublands of *Lantana camara*, and cliffs with *Puffinus lherminieri* and other migratory shore birds, possesses ecological and aesthetic qualities that give this area special territorial and international significance for restoration and rewilding.

4. Restoration of islands by removal of invasive species of flora and fauna improves habitat for seabirds, a group of animals that act as ecosystem engineers linking our lands and seas through nutrient cycling essential for the construction of coral reefs, to benefit ecotourism, fisheries, and marine industries.
5. Designation of Savana Island as a Wildlife and Marine Sanctuary as an inviolate sanctuary to facilitate the objectives of the Department to protect, preserve, manage and regulate an area of special territorial significance.
6. Therefore, designation of Savana Island as a Wildlife and Marine Sanctuary will fulfill the policies, goals, and purposes of V.I. Code Title. 12, Chapter 1, Subsection 94.

For questions or more information on the designation of Savana Island, please contact Nicole Angeli at the Division of Fish and Wildlife at DFWElectronic@usvi.onmicrosoft.com. For more information on the Island-Ocean Connection Challenge, please visit <https://jointheiocc.org/projects/> or contact Sally Esposito at Island Conservation.