



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR MARKS EARTH DAY WITH NATIONAL MERCURY STUDY FINDINGS

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) announced that the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) participated in the Dragonfly Mercury Project, a nationwide research initiative led by the National Park Service in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey. Results from the study indicate a low potential risk from mercury bioaccumulation in freshwater ecosystems within the Territory, including impacts associated with runoff, fertilizers, and other pollution sources.

Dragonflies are important indicators of environmental health because they bioaccumulate heavy metals in their bodies. By analyzing dragonfly larvae, scientists can better understand mercury levels in aquatic systems over time.

“This Earth Day, we recognize the residents and landowners who help protect our waters by using native plants to reduce runoff, properly disposing of mercury-containing products such as batteries at landfills, and applying low-erosion practices,” said Dr. Nicole Angeli, Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife. “While mercury levels found in dragonfly larvae at all Virgin Islands sampling sites were below thresholds of concern, we remain alert to emerging sources of pollution and will continue periodic monitoring.”

DFW scientists joined more than 8,500 researchers nationwide who collected dragonfly specimens from 190 national parks and protected areas for analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey. In the Virgin Islands, Division biologists collected, measured, and processed 72 samples, documenting site-specific mercury concentrations ranging from 50 to 128 parts per billion (ppb). Sampling locations included Caledonia Ghut and Carambola Ponds on St. Croix, as well as Fish Bay Ghut, Lameshur Bay Ghut, and Reef Bay Ghut on St. John.

Additional project data are available through the U.S. Geological Survey’s Dragonfly Mercury Project dashboard at: <https://geonarrative.usgs.gov/dmpdatadashboard/> General information about the project can be found at: *Dragonfly Mercury Project – Citizen Science (U.S. National Park Service)* For more information, visit dprn.vi.gov or contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife on St. Croix: (340) 773-1082 or St. Thomas: (340) 775-6762 Email: DFWElectronic@usvi.onmicrosoft.com.