



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, 2nd Floor
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 COMMISSIONER DELIVERS ALL-ISLANDS COMMITTEE CHAIRS REPORT AT 52ND U.S. CORAL REEF TASK FORCE MEETING

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) delivered the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC) Chairs Report during the 52nd Meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF), held in Washington, D.C. today. The report highlighted the shared priorities and ongoing efforts of U.S. coral reef jurisdictions to strengthen protection and management of reef ecosystems in the face of increasing environmental challenges.

Representing the collective interests of coral reef jurisdictions across the United States and Pacific and Caribbean regions, Commissioner Oriol emphasized the importance of coordinated action, sustained federal support, and strong partnerships to safeguard coral reef resources that are critical to local economies, coastal resilience, fisheries, tourism, and cultural heritage.

"The challenges facing coral reefs require collaboration across all levels of government and continued investment in science-based management," said Commissioner Oriol. "The All-Islands Committee remains committed to ensuring that jurisdictional priorities are reflected in national coral reef conservation policies and programs."

Among the major priorities outlined in the executive summary of the report were:

- Strengthening partnerships between federal agencies and reef jurisdictions to improve responsiveness to local conservation and management needs.
- Advancing resilience-based management practices to help coral reef ecosystems adapt to climate-related stressors.
- Supporting implementation of jurisdictional reef restoration plans and promoting innovation in restoration efforts.
- Improving response capabilities for coral disease outbreaks, bleaching events, invasive species, vessel groundings, hurricanes, and other disturbances.
- Supporting the development and enforcement of water quality standards that protect coral reef health.

- Building capacity for effective and sustainable coral reef fisheries management.
- Securing long-term support for programs that strengthen local coral reef management expertise and workforce development.

The report also underscored the need for continued federal-jurisdiction collaboration under the Coral Reef Conservation Act and greater integration of local priorities into the work of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and its working groups.

The U.S. Virgin Islands remains at the forefront of coral reef conservation efforts in the Caribbean, with DPNR implementing initiatives focused on reef resilience, watershed management, marine protected areas, fisheries sustainability, restoration, and public education.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, established in 1998, brings together federal agencies, states, territories, commonwealths, and freely associated states to coordinate efforts aimed at protecting and conserving coral reef ecosystems throughout U.S. waters.