



NEWS

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PROPERTY IN HEART OF ST. JOHN, USVI PRESERVED

The Trust for Public Land buys major beachfront parcel

St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands – A major beachfront property in the heart of Virgin Islands National Park has been purchased by The Trust for Public Land, a national nonprofit conservation organization, and will become part of the biggest expansion of the park since it was created more 50 years ago, TPL announced today.

“This is one of the finest beaches in the world, and it is right in the middle of one of our nation’s most popular parks. We are excited that it will now be protected for all visitors and locals to enjoy,” said Greg Chelius, director of TPL’s Florida and Caribbean program.

The property, known as Estate Maho Bay, includes more than one-quarter mile of beachfront on pristine Maho Bay and rises to almost 1,000 feet in height. It also has significant ruins from the Danish colonial era, 1700-1860, and may have pre-Columbian cultural resources from the Taino Indians.

The overall cost of the acquisition is \$19 million, Chelius said. TPL has a fundraising goal of \$35 million for this acquisition as well as several additional properties within the Maho Bay watershed identified by the national park as priority acquisitions. The total will include an expected \$9 million in federal funds and \$26 million which will be raised from private sources. Already, one anonymous donor has given \$5 million.

The property will be added to the national park as soon as funds become available, Chelius said.

“Protection of this property has been a priority of the National Park Service for many years,” said Mark Hardgrove, superintendent of VI National Park. “We couldn’t be

more excited that it is finally coming to fruition. Many thanks to TPL for this partnership, which is helping to preserve one of the crown jewels of America's park system."

TPL signed a contract in September 2006 to purchase the majority of the 419-acre property, which was owned by 11 heirs of Harvey Monroe Marsh. The acquisition became final on Monday, giving TPL 6/11 interest in the property. While the property has not yet been subdivided, TPL now owns a total of seven interests, with the National Park Service owning an additional three. The 11th is being retained by one of the heirs. As part of the agreement, the heirs are also each retaining a six-acre lot, with the ability to build up to two homes.

TPL will retain 18 acres of the property, located away from the beach, and will sell the property for limited development unless funds can be raised privately to help repay a loan covering the cost of the purchase.

"Our goal is to develop as little of the property as possible," Chelius said, "so we will be looking to those who love St. John and Maho Bay to help ensure its protection by contributing financially to our effort."

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. Since its founding in 1972, TPL has helped protect more than 2 million acres of land in 45 states. Working in Florida since 1975, TPL has protected more than 300 sites – over 200,000 acres at a market value of more than \$500 million. The Trust for Public Land depends on the support and generosity of individuals, foundations, and businesses to achieve our land for people mission. For more information please contact us at (850) 222-7911 or visit us on the web at www.tpl.org/florida.

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