

Coral Reef Task Force



On June 16, 1998, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13089 for Coral Reef Protection. The Executive Order established the US Coral Reef Task Force, new policies and federal agency responsibilities concerning protection of coral reef ecosystems.

Task Force members include the Secretaries of Interior, Commerce, State, and Defense; the administrators of EPA, NASA, and USAID; and governors of the states and territories that contain coral reefs. A number of non-governmental organizations (NGO's), including Friends of Virgin Islands National Park, participate.

At the August meeting in American Samoa, in which the Friends actively participated. The Task Force adopted a National Action Plan to conserve coral reefs. This plan mandates a science-based ecosystem approach to coral reef conservation, and has the following major actions:

1. Develop both high-resolution and large-scale, low resolution maps of coral reef ecosystems throughout US waters.
2. Monitor, inventory, and assess the health of US coral reefs by establishing a nationally coordinated, long-term monitoring program
3. Conduct strategic research to determine the key threats facing US coral reefs, including coral diseases and bleaching.
4. Understand the human dimension. Coral reefs are particularly vulnerable to the effects of human activities through direct exploitation of and damage to reef resources and through indirect impacts of adjacent land-based activities such as polluted runoff. This will lead to measures for reducing the adverse impacts of human activities.
5. Expand and strengthen the network of coral reef marine protected areas. Establish no-take marine reserves to protect at least 20% of US coral reefs by the year 2010. Toward this end, immediately move forward to establish no-take reserves in the highest priority reef habitats.

The Friends of the Park believes that action #5 of the Plan is the most important. For nearly six years the Friends has advocated the establishment of a no-take marine reserve in National Park waters surrounding St. John.

Many of our members have seen the video we produced in 1996, entitled "Reserve The Future", about this subject. We intend to step up our efforts to have our coral reefs designated one of the highest priority reef habitats so that the National Park Service can establish and enforce a no-take marine reserve in our waters.

However, we believe that 10 years is too long. If St. John's reefs continue to degrade for the next 10

years at the same rate they have over the past 10 years, there won't be anything left to protect. We therefore urge the US Coral Reef Task Force to reach the 20% goal by the year 2005 at the latest.

Funds for Parks Washington DC Update

The Conservation And Reinvestment Act (CARA) is the largest and most significant environmental bill in history and it stands a very good chance of being signed into law this year. This Act would reinvest almost \$3 billion annually into natural resource conservation programs from federal Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas revenue.

Almost \$900 million, would go to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and be available for land acquisition for national and state parks. LWCF was the source of funding for the Park's Gibney Beach acquisition earlier this year.

Members of the U.S. Senate attribute the success of the bill to the many grassroots advocates who filled their mailboxes, fax machines, and voice mailboxes with declarations of support of this vitally important legislation.

The Friends is a key player in this campaign to preserve our precious natural environment. We will make sure that Virgin Islands National Park gets its fair share of funding. CARA has passed in the House of Representatives as well as in the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee. The full Senate will vote this fall.

You can help!

Call, write, or e-mail your Senators and urge them to vote for CARA when it reaches the Senate floor this fall!

Annaberg Sugar Plantation

A Premier Cultural Heritage Site

Annaberg is a place to be in awe of, a place to be proud of and a place to support. The Friends has committed to fund nearly 50% of the \$52,000 expenses for the cultural demonstration program at Annaberg again this year. We have submitted grant applications and are accepting contributions for this important program.

The Annaberg Plantation site is a stabilized sugar factory amidst what was a Danish plantation built by slaves around 1810. Enslaved Africans, who were later dependant laborers, worked the steep land and factory until the late 1800s. The Afro-Caribbean culture of today evolved from slavery beginning in the early 1700s.

This premier cultural resource site depicts the slave, plantation and subsistence societal eras, while the demonstrations provide an important educational link to the human heritage of the Virgin Islands.

Visiting Annaberg is time traveling. A walking trail and interpretive signs provide access to remnants of slave quarters and factory buildings. The site's centerpiece is a stone windmill 38 feet tall and 34 feet in diameter.

But, simply touring the plantation and reading the interpretive signs leaves visitors hungry for more. Therefore, in January 1999, the Park asked local people whose family histories are rooted on St. John to demonstrate traditional ways of life during those early years of challenging living conditions.

The demonstrations provide a cultural experience for visitors available nowhere else in the US Virgin Islands.

Unfortunately, the Park cannot budget adequate funds needed to support the demonstrations. The Friends is interested in obtaining supplemental funds because the program is a perfect match for our mission to preserve the Park's cultural resources. We also see the value in having community members display traditions, educate and interact with Park visitors.



Demonstrations include: Crop Cultivation - In a what was historically the ox corral, traditional organic methods of cultivation produce passion fruit, banana, bay rum, cashew, sour sap, avocado, mango, pigeon peas, prickly pear cactus, sugar cane, herbs and local medicinal plants, to name a few.

West Indian Cooking - As the crops are harvested, they are taken to the cook shack and prepared for visitors to sample, using recipes and cooking methods handed down through generations. Breads, fresh fruits and juices are regularly available for visitors to sample.

Weaving and Displays - The demonstrators weave hoop vine and whist vine into baskets, placemats, coasters and boxes. On display for the children to enjoy are percussion instruments hand-made of gobi and squash gourds, and flamboyant tree seed pods.

Oral History - Demonstrator Miss Felicia, now in her 80s, recalls for a family of visitors how she carried her mother's large basket from their home on the top of St. John's Bordeaux Mountain all the way to Coral Bay and back with a load of groceries in the basket balanced on her head.

Please contact Trudy at the Friends if you would like to join us in support of the Annaberg cultural demonstrations

Leadership Changes in the Park

Superintendent Berry Retires

This summer the Virgin Islands National Park said a warm good bye to Russ and Jeanie Berry. After three years in the Virgin Islands and 34 years of service in the National Park Service, Superintendent Berry

retired to his new home in Virginia.

"*Russ, you're the best leader this Park has ever seen,*" said Friends board member and 30-year St. John resident, Glen Speer, at a farewell party for the retiring superintendent. Glen was not alone. Many Friends members and Park staff made genuinely appreciative comments.

Superintendent Berry had many accomplishments to be proud of as the sun sets on his career. He left the Park's budget one million dollars richer. He helped increase official Park land by 2.5 acres at Gibney Beach, the first substantial land acquisition by the Park since the 1970s. And well on its way, under his guidance, are a Vessel Management Plan and a Commercial Service Plan. They will improve protection of Park waters by better managing boat activity and limit commercial services in the Park to those "appropriate and necessary".

Best wishes to Russ and Jeannie.

[New Superintendent Not Yet Appointed \(10/4/00\)](#)

New Visitor Contact Station

In early July the Virgin Islands National Park opened a new visitor contact station, conveniently located at their dock in Cruz Bay. The building reflects traditional West Indian architecture and also holds offices for Park staff. Come visit!



Proud of Our Board

Board members attend monthly meetings, set the direction of the organization, fundraise, host events, contribute their time and services and never get enough credit. So, from the Friends staff, here is a note of thanks to the dedicated members of our Board of Directors.

- John Fuller, Chairman, Retired Naval Officer and Business Executive
- Miles Stair, Vice Chairman, Owner, Holiday Homes Real Estate
- Joan Bermingham, Treasurer, Retired Accountant
- Christie O'Neil, Secretary, Realtor
- Ashley Boynes, Owner, Inter Island Transportation
- Harry Daniel, Assistant to US Congressional Delegate Donna Christiansen
- Maggie Day, General Manager, Maho Bay Camps
- Julien Harley, Administrator, Island of St. John, US Virgin Islands
- Irene Patton, Owner, R&I Patton Goldsmiths
- Cid Hamling, Owner, Connections
- Madeline Sewer, Retired Educator and High School Principal

- Glen Speer, Architect, Land Developer & Builder
 - Andy Stillman, Securities Trader
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Friends of the Friends



The Friends' greatest assets are our generous members. We would like to extend our gratitude to a few of St. John's local businesses and other loyal friends who have shown us tremendous support in the recent months. Contributions from the following businesses allow the Park to hold free swimming lessons, the archaeology dig to house interns, and the Friends to keep things going. Special thanks to:

Adams Asset Management Co.
Artecology
Caneel Bay
Cinnamon Bay Campgrounds
Cinnamon Bay Watersports
Cruise Ship Excursions, Inc.
Holiday Homes - St. John
Low Key Watersports
Maho Bay Camps
Mongoose Junction Merchants
Paradise Aquatours
Paradise Watersports
R& I Patton Goldsmithing
Serindip Condos
Tallship Trading
The Lime Inn
Tiny Jewels & Imports

Don't worry; we haven't forgotten all the others who support us in many ways. Thanks to you too. Please keep these Friendly folks in mind as you conduct business on St John.

Private Donations are the Keystone

Throughout the nation, government organizations are relying on private partnerships to add quality and sophistication to public projects. The National Park Service is no different. The Friends is your conduit to influencing improvements in the Park from your role as a concerned citizen.

We have a memorandum of understanding with the Park that allows us to solicit funds and grant them to Park projects. But, we don't just write checks. Your funds are closely managed when in our hands. Numerous worthy projects are in need of funding. Contact us to let us know how [you can make a difference](#).