

If you are still getting our newsletter through the mail and would rather not receive the printed copy, please e-mail us at newsletter@friendsvinp.org and we will update the membership database accordingly. This will save the Friends the cost of printing, handling, and postage, which amounts to several thousand dollars each year. The money saved can go directly into our program budget to help fund such things as environmental and cultural education, seminars, coral reef research, and land acquisition. Please be sure to send us your e-mail address so we can notify you online when the newsletter is on the website, or whenever the website has been updated with important information.

Clinton Creates National Monument

On January 17 President Clinton signed a proclamation establishing the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument. This exciting step will enable the Department of Interior to protect and preserve nearly 13,000 critical acres of the marine ecosystem around St. John. The Presidential Proclamation is paraphrased below.

The Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument, in the submerged lands off the island of St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands, contains all the elements of a Caribbean tropical marine ecosystem. This designation furthers the protection of the scientific objects included in the Virgin Islands National Park. The biological communities of the monument live in a fragile, interdependent relationship and include habitats essential for sustaining and enhancing the tropical marine ecosystem such as mangroves, sea grass beds, coral reefs, and sand communities. The fishery habitats, deeper coral reefs, octocoral hardbottom, and algal plains of the monument are all objects of scientific interest and essential to the long-term sustenance of the ecosystem.

The island of St. John rises from a platform that extends several miles from shore. This platform contains a multitude of species that exist in a delicate balance, interlinked through complex relationships that have developed over tens of thousands of years.

Proposed Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument



As part of this important ecosystem, the monument contains several threatened and endangered species including humpback whales, pilot whales, dolphins, brown pelicans, roseate terns, least terns, and sea turtles. Countless

species of reef fish, invertebrates, and plants utilize these submerged lands during their lives, and over 25 species of sea birds feed in the waters. Between the nearshore nursery habitats and the shelf edge spawning sites in the monument are habitats that play essential roles during specific developmental stages of reef-associated species, including spawning migrations of many reef fish species and crustaceans.

The submerged monument lands within Hurricane Hole include the most extensive and well-developed mangrove habitat on St. John. The Hurricane Hole area is an important nursery area for reef associated fish and essential to the overall functioning and productivity of regional fisheries. Numerous coral reef-associated species, including the spiny lobster, queen conch, and Nassau grouper transform from planktonic larvae to bottom-dwelling juveniles in the shallow nearshore habitats of Hurricane Hole. As they mature, they move offshore and take up residence in the submerged monument lands.

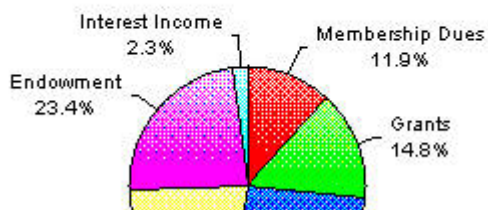
NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do proclaim that there are hereby set apart and reserved as the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument, for the purpose of protecting the objects identified above, all lands and interests in lands owned or controlled by the United States within the boundaries of the area described on the map entitled "Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument" attached to and part of this proclamation. The Federal land and interests in land reserved consist of approximately 12,708 marine acres.

For the purposes of protecting the objects identified above, the Secretary shall prohibit all extractive uses, except that the Secretary may issue permits for bait fishing at Hurricane Hole and for blue runner (hard nose) line fishing in the area south of St. John.

The Secretary of the Interior shall manage the monument through the National Park Service. The Secretary of the Interior shall prepare a management plan, including the management of vessels in the monument, within 3 years, which addresses any further specific actions necessary to protect the objects identified in this proclamation.

Friends Gather for Annual Meeting

Sunday afternoon, January 21st, over 100 Friends of the Park members met at Cinnamon Bay for our perhaps our best attended annual meeting ever. President John Garrison reviewed the Friends' accomplishments for 2000 including: two land acquisitions; installation of 215 moorings; and providing funding for coral research, a stage performance, the archeology dig, Annaberg cultural demonstrations, swimming lessons, and park planning activities. The Friends' fundraising and endowment earnings made these activities possible.



Garrison also discussed developments on the organizational front, noting that over the past year the Friends has hired a full-time development director, installed donor management software, and held two Board of Director retreats. Fundraising activities for the year included the highly successful sales of license plates, grants and donations. The graph illustrates the Friends' revenue sources. The largest source

of funds comes from individual donations, followed closely by endowment income.

Garrison was joined by Friends' staff members Becky Bremser and Trudy Toliver in recognizing and thanking the hundreds of volunteers who have contributed in many ways throughout the year.

The Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Jim Owens, an environmental planner who has worked tirelessly to create the vessel management and concessions management plans for the Park.

Superintendent John King addressed the crowd, sharing his personal belief in partnerships and his desire to work closely with the Friends. King discussed his intention to create a business plan for the Virgin Islands National Park in an effort to ensure the Park's long-term financial viability. "We're going to spend a fair amount of time in the days ahead talking about our mission as an institution," says King. He also noted that the Park would be developing a new General Management Plan to replace the 1983 plan currently in use.

Keynote speaker Dr. Laverne Ragster, Provost of the University of the Virgin Islands, provided the crowd with an informative discussion of coral reefs. While monitoring and cataloging these resources is important, Ragster stressed that thoughtful actions and education are needed to protect this resource. She urged people to consider the whole island as part of the coastline, reminding us that our actions on land significantly impact the surrounding coral reefs. In closing, Ragster challenged the members of the Friends to draw on their experience and skills to work towards protecting the coral reefs in the Virgin Islands National Park.



From right: John King (Park Superintendent) and Dr. LaVerne Ragster (Keynote speaker) among the Friends.

Archaeology Dig Continues Through June 2001



More than 700 volunteers gave over 14,000 hours of service at the Cinnamon Bay archaeology dig in the year 2000. According to Park Archeologist Ken Wild, "We have made many wonderful

finds this year and have learned a lot." As the dig enters its third year, the focus will be on completing excavation of the site by June 2001. Volunteers will assist Wild with this work. In addition, students from University of Syracuse and University of Southern Maine will participate in the dig and perform testing to determine the boundary around the prehistoric site.

Efforts to catalog, and perform research and analysis will be the focus after June. The dig will continue to provide excellent educational opportunities for volunteers including numerous school groups. The Friends is pleased to support this continuation of the dig and future cataloging and curating activities.

Generosity Results in Educational Exhibit

This spring the first new exhibit in the Park's Visitor Center will be an interactive touch-screen kiosk designed to educate visitors on the threats affecting fragile marine and near shore environments.

The generosity of Bill and Joan Gross allowed the Friends to fund the project for the Park. Bucky Buchalter owner of Digital Dudes designed the program with the help of the Park's Chief of Resource Management, Rafe Boulon who supplied the scientific information.

"It continues to prove true, that private contributions allow this Park a level of quality that it wouldn't have with only its federal budget," said president, John Garrison about Mr. and Mrs. Gross' donation. "The kiosk will be a great tool for adults and kids to see through the eyes of an endangered hawksbill turtle and to learn of the hazards they face everyday," he continued.

Great appreciation goes to Bill and Joan Gross who supported the Friends' ability to deliver a state-of-the-art educational exhibit on time and on budget.

Donors and Volunteers Make It Happen!

The Friends gives special thanks to our donors who recently provided significant contributions:

Paul Tudor Jones
Bill and Joan Gross
Park Isle Villas
Andy and Joy Stillman
Gallows Point Resort
Glen Speer
Roger and Erna Killion
Westin St. John Resort &
Villas
Ron and Harriet Hale
Sullivan Design Build
Lucy Waletzky
The West Indian Company
Mongoose Junction

Christie O'Neil
The Koonce Foundation
Glenn and Mary Pizzini
Coral World
Susan and Mal Preston
The Shoemaker Fund
Caravan Gallery
Pat and Hal Brown
Joan and Ed Bermingham
Cruise Ship Excursions
Edward D. Stone, Jr. &
Assoc.
Alan and Margot Hunt
and Jane Israel for
preparing the newsletter



Superintendent John King (left) congratulates Jim Owens, 2000 Volunteer of the Year. Jim Owens assisted the park with planning documents as a volunteer from November 1999 to July 2000

Help purchase land to protect natural resources. Consider donating cash or appreciated stock earmarked for land acquisition.

Next time you visit the Park, you'll see the difference!

Comments or suggestions? Write the Friends [webmaster](#).