

Friends' Three-Year Strategic Plan Completed

The Friends' Board of Directors created a strategic plan because they felt that the Friends had evolved and developed as an organization to a point where annual planning was no longer effective and planning with a longer horizon was required. A retreat held in December 2001 and attended by Board members and staff was the basis of this strategic plan. The VINP Superintendent and a senior interpretation ranger also participated. The output of this retreat was refined and expanded by Board members and staff to arrive at the actual plan, summarized below.

The key elements of this strategic plan were to 1) revisit and refine the Friends' mission, 2) craft a vision for the Friends and 3) establish the strategic directions necessary to fulfill our mission and move towards realizing our vision.



The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park and promotes the responsible enjoyment of this unique national treasure.

To accomplish this mission, we:

- Fund, support and implement projects and activities that further protection of natural resources, preservation of the cultural resources and enhancement of environmental awareness.
- Promote volunteer and community involvement in the Park.
- Advocate for the users of the Park.
- Operate independently of the Park, while we have a memorandum of understanding and are supportive of the Park, we reserve the right to differ respectfully.
- Advocate on behalf of the Park to advance Park interests before Congress and the Territorial Government, within the National Park Service, and among the general public.

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Silt fence during rain, demonstrating the large amounts of sediment washing into the Francis Bay wetland.

Maho Bay Campground Road Project Slated to Begin

Maho Bay Campground, located within Virgin Islands National Park, has always been a tremendous supporter of the Friends and the National Park. Maho demonstrates its support by providing housing for many of the volunteers that the Park and Friends host. Maho is also our primary source for new members. Thankfully, we have an opportunity to work with Maho Bay Camps again and give a little something back to them, while making great strides toward protecting the wetland area within Francis and Maho Bays.

In 2000, Friends was awarded a grant from the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources to conduct an erosion reduction project. As many of our members that have stayed at Maho will agree, the roadway to the campground is in poor condition. In fact, a one-year study conducted by researchers from Colorado State University showed that sediment washes into the Francis Bay Wetland at a rate of 170 tons per year. Taking this into consideration, Friends partnered with Island Resources Foundation, Virgin Islands National Park, Maho Bay Camps, Colorado State University and the property owners adjacent to the roadway to address this serious issue.

Together we developed a project to improve a 435-foot section of the Maho Bay Camps road where the worst of the erosion is occurring. The construction will include the building of swales and concreting portions of the road. We have recently received the permits for the road work and will be choosing a contractor soon. The construction is slated to begin at the end of July. •

• TIDINGS NOTES •



Summer Intern Welcomed

Friends welcomes Will Bostwick into our organization for the summer. Will joins us from Penn State University and brings a background in environmental resource management, ecology, and education. He will be working to coordinate our volunteer effort on Hassel Island, learn to research grant possibilities with foundations, oversee the Maho Bay roadwork and manage the VIERS Eco-Camps for kids.

Scholarship Recipient

Friends is proud to announce our first-ever scholarship recipient. Leia LaPlace of St. Croix will be receiving a \$1,000 scholarship to help her with her third year of study at the University of the Virgin Islands. Leia has a double major in marine biology and business administration. Next year, she will be studying in Hawaii on an exchange program. Leia is a terrific academic student with incredible potential. We wish her the best of luck in continuing her education.

Audrey Hedberg Memorial

Long-time members of the Friends and/or residents of St. John will likely remember Dean and Audrey Hedberg: Dean had been the President of the Friends for several years in the early 1990's. Dean was back on St. John in May and made a generous donation to the Friends Scholarship Fund on behalf of family and friends as a memorial to Audrey, who passed away several months ago.

Travel Opportunity for Friends Members

Remember that members of Friends of VINP are eligible to participate in the National Park Trust's *Park Educational Travel Program*. These are guided trips to national parks in the United States and abroad. The next two trips are to Alaska and Costa Rica. You can get further information from the NPT website: <http://www.parktrust.org/travel> The Friends share in the proceeds from your participation in these trips, so be sure to inform them of your membership. It's a great way to see some other beautiful and interesting Parks and help the Friends at the same time. *Bon Voyage!* •

News From VINP

By John King
Superintendent VINP



Much has happened during the past few months and new and exciting things are on the horizon. My thanks to all our friends and partners for all you do in contributing to the park's success. We simply could not do it without you.

Our new Visitor Center exhibits are finally in. They speak eloquently to the natural, cultural, and recreational resources that truly make the Virgin Islands National Park the crown jewel of the Caribbean, and certainly contribute to the quality of the experience our visitors have. The exhibits were the centerpiece to the VC dedication ceremony that took place on April 7. Many of you were able to join us on that special day.

We will have young people all over the park this summer assisting with conservation-related work projects. We will once again host a Youth Conservation Corps program. Last year's program was our largest ever. We hope to have a similar sized program this summer. We will, for the first time, be hosting an AmeriCorps program. We'll have two Student Conservation Association trail crews this summer and will be hosting a 14-person archeological field school from East Carolina University. We look forward to getting much needed cultural resource assistance from this group in the form of cultural resource site assessments and underwater archeological surveys.

We will also be embarking on a couple of new initiatives in the near future. We will be instituting a mooring fee collection program toward the end of this summer. We anticipate that this program will produce several hundred thousand dollars per year that we can apply toward badly-needed park projects. We'll also be starting up a new activity that we're calling the Supplemental Interpretive Ranger Services program. This will allow us to supplement our interpretive staff, greatly expand our interpretive offerings, and touch a much larger segment of our visitor community with a park and conservation-related message. I'll share more about that program with you soon.

I'm really excited about what has been done in recent days and where we're headed as an organization. My thanks to each of you, Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park, for your continued support, involvement, and encouragement. It is a distinct pleasure serving along side you as we seek to protect and preserve this very special place. •

If you would like to receive the Friends' newsletter in the future via email, please drop us a line:

newsletter@friendsvinp.org

Strategic Plan Completed

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Friends' Vision

We seek to be an active partner in helping Virgin Islands National Park be a model of resource protection and cultural preservation which is valued by the community around it and all those who experience this unique national treasure.

Four strategic directions have been selected to enable us to achieve our mission and advance towards our vision over the next three years. These are:

- 1) The Friends will be able to meet challenging fundraising targets and be in a position to consider large capital campaigns.
- 2) The Friends' role, purpose and approaches will be widely understood within the community in which we operate.
- 3) Volunteer opportunities and Board participation will be greatly increased.
- 4) The Friends' operational effectiveness will be consistent with the needs of this growing professional organization.

Within this strategic plan we have set some very ambitious objectives for the next three years, but we believe that we are up to the task. However, we can only achieve our mission and advance our vision with your continued support and assistance. Please contact Joe Kessler or Kim Lyons about how you can help. Members who have questions about the strategic plan or would like more details, contact Joe Kessler at jkessler@friendsvinp.org •

Seminars Success and More to Come

Our seminar series which concluded this past April received very positive remarks from participants and instructors. The series not only educated and entertained 300 participants, but it also raised nearly \$9,000 for Friends. The series would not have been successful without the generous amounts of time that many of the instructors donated. Our seminar instructors are made up of Park Service employees, researchers and artists. These busy individuals shared with residents and tourists alike their knowledge and enthusiasm about St. John and VINP.



Participants of Photography Workshop

We are planning on continuing this annual series and expanding it to include more opportunities. We encourage you to send comments and suggestions for future planning. We would like to hear from you about the seminars you enjoyed and what type of seminars you would like to see in the future. Please send your suggestions and ideas to: seminar@friendsvinp.org •

Cultural Appeal Thank You

Many thanks to all our members and donors who have contributed to the appeal to keep the cultural demonstrations an ongoing feature at the Annaberg Plantation. We have raised almost half of our goal thus far and are hoping to reach our intended goal by the summer's end. For those of you who are still interested in making a contribution, it's not too late. Please make your check payable to the Friends of the VI National Park and indicate that the funds are for the cultural demonstrations at Annaberg. If you have any questions about the appeal please contact Kim Lyons at 340-779-4940 or email klyons@friendsvinp.org •

St. John's Beaches Recognized for Prestigious Certification



Trunk Bay

Three beaches on St. John have received a prestigious certification by a national environmental watchdog group. The Virginia-based Clean Beaches Council awarded its Blue Wave certification to beaches at Maho, Hawksnest, and Trunk

Bays. The award indicates the beaches are clean, safe and environmentally friendly. The beach managers – in this case the

Virgin Islands National Park – had to apply for Blue Wave certification and show that water quality is monitored at least monthly. Plenty of trash bins, enforcement of dumping and camping regulations, and a balance between humans and the environment also are criteria.

Public safety, cleanliness, and environmental quality were found to be adequate at beaches in 17 states, as well as on St. John. "We're seeing marginal improvement nationally," said Walter McLeod, the council's president, who hopes to spur more interest in coastal environmental issues. "As people become more aware and get a better understanding of what the issues are, we'll be able to make more strides." •

NPS Donates Medical Equipment

The National Park Service and the St. John EMS Association have teamed up to bring life-saving equipment and training to St. John. The National Park Service has purchased a LifePack 12, a multi-functional piece of medical equipment, that will allow emergency medical personnel to better respond to medical crises on the island. The Park Service is making the \$25,000 machine a “permanent loan” to the St. John EMS Association, said Judy Shafer, deputy superintendent of the Virgin Islands National Park.

Carol Beckowitz, president of the St. John EMS Association, explains that LifePack 12 combines several critical functions. First it is a defibrillator, which can shock the heart back into rhythm during a cardiac emergency. It also provides 12-lead

electrocardiogram readings, a high blood pressure monitor and an oxygen saturation monitor.

Accompanying the LifePack 12 is a round of training that recertified all six St. John EMTs and for the first time, certified all 28, Park Service and Fire Service personnel as Medical First Responders.

“That’s a big first step for St. John,” Beckowitz said. •

Please visit Friends online:

<http://www.friendsvinp.org>

President’s Message



By Joe Kessler

It is amazing to think that I have been with the Friends for almost a year now. And what a year it has been – certainly a tumultuous one for the country, but an exciting and challenging one for me and the Friends. A year ago I had the privilege of taking over the leadership of

the Friends from John Garrison and I inherited a strong, well thought of and dynamic organization that was a credit to John’s hard work and dedication. It was a great base to build from and this year we have taken the Friends to even greater heights: the Friends is now almost 3000 members strong, the Board of Directors adopted a challenging strategic plan to guide us into

the future, and we are well on our way to successfully completing a demanding and challenging portfolio of projects that has helped make Virgin Islands National Park even better.

Of course we could not have done any of this without you – our dedicated and committed members. You have been exceptionally generous this past year and we especially appreciate this in light of the increasing demands on your philanthropy. The tragic events of this past year have forced all of us to reevaluate what is important to us and where we will direct our energies and resources – clearly helping to protect and preserve the Virgin Islands National Park remains one of your priorities.

As I move into my second year with the Friends I renew my promise to you to do my best to ensure that the Friends continue to meet, or exceed, your expectations of us and to remain worthy of your confidence. Thank you for your continued support. •

Friends of 
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NATIONAL PARK**

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