

Welcome
to Friends
Tidings!

Welcome to *Friends Tidings*, the quarterly newsletter of the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. While this newsletter is normally reserved for Friends members, this edition (and future winter editions) is being shared with the entire St. John community to increase understanding of the Friends and of VI National Park. Friends members will note that this edition is twice as big as usual, since there is so much going on and being planned. We hope that all readers enjoy this edition and find it informative and useful. We also hope that non-members reading *Friends Tidings* will consider joining us in our quest to make Virgin Islands National Park a model of natural resource protection and cultural preservation while promoting the responsible enjoyment of this unique national treasure. Membership information is enclosed.



In Memory of Laurance S. Rockefeller

By Joe Kessler

Laurance S. Rockefeller passed away this summer, and his death is mourned by the Friends of VI National

Park and people throughout the world who were awed and inspired by his tireless efforts on behalf of conservation, preservation of wilderness areas and ecological concerns.

Mr. Rockefeller is best known for being instrumental in establishing or enlarging national parks in Wyoming, Hawaii, California, Vermont, Maine, and of course here in the Virgin Islands. His donation of some 5,000 acres of land on St. John created Virgin Islands National Park in 1956. As we look around at neighboring islands and others in the region we appreciate that had it not been for Mr. Rockefeller's vision, that is what St. John would be like.

I met Laurance Rockefeller a few months before his death when I visited him in his NY office. We spoke about St. John, and his recollections about the island and the people he knew were detailed and vivid. It was an inspiring, rewarding and fascinating meeting, and one that I will cherish as my memory of someone who has done so much for St. John and conservation.

I am sure that I am not alone when I regularly say a word of thanks to Mr. Rockefeller for creating VI National Park. Aside from the people of St. John, it is the Park that makes St. John so special – and most importantly, it is what will keep it so special. I am sure that he will rest in peace having done so much and having created a truly lasting legacy.

Study: Impacts of VINP on the Regional Economy

VI National Park and its visitors contribute nearly \$128 million annually to the regional economy and generates more than 2,500 jobs locally. These are the overall findings of a study recently commissioned by the Friends on the economic impact of the Park on the local economy.

While it was obvious that Virgin Islands National Park is an economic engine for the local economy, there was not any hard data to demonstrate this. Now there is. The Friends contracted Jane Israel, who holds an MBA with specialization in environmental economic analysis, to conduct a study with St. John-specific cost and spending data. Jane, who was helped by Park staff and Friends' volunteers, conducted a study and produced a report that provides a valuable description of the Park's economic impact on St. John and the Virgin Islands.

A visitor spending survey was conducted in March to measure the impact that Park visitors have on the local economy. This survey was designed to capture the spending patterns of a wide range of visitors to the Park: hotel guests, villa/condo guests, campers, boaters, and day users.

The study reports that in 2003 there were a total of approximately 822,000 visits to VI National Park, 336,000 of those which were considered day-users. The survey showed that approximately 80 percent of visitors to the Park indicated that the Park was the primary reason for their visit to St. John.

Information collected has been significant in understanding how important Virgin Islands National Park is to our local businesses. Visitors to the park directly spent \$92 million locally, on average about \$335 per travel party per night. The lodging sector received the largest amount of direct sales (\$35 million), followed by restaurants and bars (\$18 million) and local transportation (\$12 million). In addition to visitor spending, VINP payroll, operations, and construction expenditures resulted in direct inputs of \$3.8 million in sales and 138 jobs.

While many of us think about the Park in terms of its natural beauty and conservation value, its significant contribution to the local economy is another blessing the Park bestows upon these islands.

We encourage you to read the report on this study to gain a full understanding of the Park's economic impact. The report is available on the Friends website and copies are available upon request.

• TIDINGS NOTES •

Arona

Carabana Ensemble Theater will present the final play of its trilogy of female cultural icons of the Virgin Islands entitled, *Arona*. Arona Peterson was an herbalist and culinary specialist from St. Thomas, who wrote many books, of those, the most well-known being "*Herbs and Proverbs*". The play will be presented once a week, on Thursday evenings at the Cinnamon Bay Amphitheater, and will be free of charge to the public. There will be a total of 16 performances, beginning mid January 2005 and run through April 2005. In addition, Carabana will present this play during Black History Month at the four predominant schools on St. John.

Friends has a New Staff Member!



Valerie Garcia is the Friends new Administrative Assistant, and she'd be more than happy to help you with matters related to membership, license plates, *Living Art* book orders, and Friends Boutique items. Valerie recently returned to St. John with her husband after a nine-year absence in Pennsylvania. While there, she spent many years working for non-profit organiza-

tions, and enjoyed volunteering for people with disabilities. Welcome Valerie!

LOOK US UP!

Check out the new Friends pages in the 2005 St. John Phonebook due out in December! Thank you to the staff at St. John Phonebook for the donation of these pages, we appreciate your generosity and community spirit.

Arawak Expeditions Hosts 2nd Annual Kayak for the Park

A very special **Thank You** to Arthur & Beth Jones for hosting the 2nd annual Kayak for the Park. In October, five kayakers, lead by Arawak Expeditions owner Arthur Jones, circumnavigated St. John over the course of five days, stopping to camp at various locations around the island. Along the way, participants were treated to private presentations by Park rangers, learning about the island's history, plants, animals, and coral reefs. All proceeds of this trip were donated to the Friends of VI National Park. Thank you to all who participated in making this trip a success: Arawak Expeditions, Cinnamon Bay Campground, Maho Bay Camps, VIERS, National Park Service rangers, Rafe Boulon, Laurel Trager, and Ken Wild, and last, but certainly not least, our courageous kayakers. Please visit Arawak Expedition's website for information on next year's trip at www.arawakexp.com



From the Superintendent

Greetings Friends of Virgin Islands National Park!

The Park has just completed all projects and programs for fiscal year 2004. When I reflect on this past year, I recall all of the challenges we faced, and although extremely difficult at times, we were successful in overcoming those challenges. Of course, we would not have had such a banner year if not for the unwavering devotion of Park staff, volunteers, and the strong support and commitment of the Friends.

I want to use this opportunity to bring to your attention a couple of noteworthy achievements in 2004. First of all, we completed the initial stage of the planning process for the General Management Plan (GMP). We held three public Scoping Meetings and eleven Stakeholder Meetings over a period of several weeks. The GMP Planning Team also spent approximately one week developing alternatives and assessing the impacts of those alternatives on the Park's resources and the surrounding community. Sometime next month, I will make a presentation to the Regional Director, and if approved, another series of meetings with the public will be held during late winter-early spring of 2005.

We also launched the Mooring Fee Program in December 2003, and as one would expect with a new program, we experienced a few problems. However, the Park has a very capable staff assigned to the Mooring Fee Program and those problems are being addressed. The Park also developed several Environmental Assessments ranging from the Rehabilitation of North Shore Rd. to Control of the Feral Sheep/ Goat Populations. Although there has been a delay with the completion of the Hawksnest project, we anticipate the construction will be completed within a couple of months. We will also begin the demolition of the old Maho Bay Pavilion that was destroyed during Hurricane Lenny, and will plan for the construction of a new facility in the coming fiscal year.

I am particularly proud of the Park staff relative to the manner in which they have worked with the youth in the community this year, especially with youths from the John's Folly Learning Institute. Park rangers provided them with instruction in certain areas such as biology, history, marine science, etc. They also received swimming lessons from Park lifeguards. This was truly a successful program and one that we would like to continue in the future. In 2005, we would also like to become more effective in working with educators in the local schools and, towards that end, it is our intention to hire an Education Coordinator. This employee would be fully engaged with faculty members from the various schools on St. John and St. Thomas in all fields of study, but particularly in the field of environmental science.

Finally, as I have mentioned, the Park has been faced with some demanding challenges in 2004, but I am fully convinced that because of a highly professional Park staff, hardworking volunteers and the support of the Friends, we prevailed. Thus, it is because of this realization that I welcome the challenges of 2005 and am confident that we will have another productive and successful year.

Art Frederick, VINP Superintendent

Friends Field Seminars

Have you always wanted to learn more about St. John's history and natural wonders from experienced professionals but never had the opportunity? Want to develop a skill like nature journaling, photography or basket weaving with one of St. John's talented artists? Now you can! The Friends of the Park offers a variety of seminars every year to open your mind and stimulate your senses.

Experts in all these disciplines volunteer their time to Friends of Virgin Islands National Park as a fundraising effort. Field seminars range in price from \$20 - \$60 for members, \$25 - \$70 for non-members, and last from two to six hours. All proceeds are a donation to the Friends.

Call 779-4940 to register, space is limited.

JANUARY	
Jan. 12, Wed.	– Laurance Rockefeller and Caneel Bay – St. John Historical Society president Chuck Pishko will celebrate the life of the man who helped to create Virgin Islands National Park.
Jan. 15, Sat.	– Secrets to Nature Journal Writing – Join award-winning author and photojournalist Cristina Kessler for a workshop on how to start a nature journal and keep it going.
Jan. 19, Wed.	– English Creole – Linguistic expert Mr. Elroy Sprauve will explain the interesting patterns, expressions, and history of the language heard on St. John.
Jan. 22, Sat.	– Underwater Photography – Accompany professional photographer Steve Simonsen and learn to use your own camera to take beautiful underwater magazine-quality photos.
Jan. 26, Wed.	– Full Moon Hike to Ram's Head – Explore the southernmost point of St. John with park ranger Don Near to learn about the fascinating natural and cultural history of this area.
Jan. 29, Sat.	– Archaeology Boat Trip (North Shore) – Set a course through prehistory with Park archaeologist Ken Wild while visiting the north side of St. John.
FEBRUARY	
Feb. 5, Sat.	– Bird Watching Tour – Go on a search for our migratory friends with Laurel Brannick-Trager, park ranger and St. John Audubon Society president.
Feb. 12, Sat.	– Archaeology Boat Trip (South Shore) – Set a course through prehistory with Park archaeologist Ken Wild while visiting the south side of St. John.
Feb. 16, Wed.	– Afro-Caribbean Drumming Workshop – Learn new rhythms and beats from local drum master Eddie Bruce.
Feb. 19, Sat.	– Marine Fun for Kids! – Join UVI's marine advisor Elizabeth Ban on Hawksnest Beach for fun games and snorkeling. For strong swimmers ages 8–14.
Feb. 20, Sun.	– Marine Biology Sailing Trip – Snorkel the underwater treasures of St. John's reefs with NPS marine biologist Jeff Miller aboard the catamaran <i>Allura</i> .
Feb. 23, Wed.	– The Ruins of North Shore – Follow historian David Knight and explore the ruins of Peace Hill, Trunk Bay and Cinnamon Bay.
Feb. 27, Sun.	– St. John Medicinal Walk – Learn about bush medicine lore of the Taino and Afro-Caribbean cultures from legendary trail guide Thunderhawk.
•Please tear out this page and save it to use as a reminder.	

MARCH	
Mar. 5, Sat.	– Stars and Their Stories – Lay back and let astro-mythologist Kelly Hunter guide you through the constellations of the night sky.
Mar. 12, Sat.	– Coastal Ecology – Learn all about mangroves, sea grasses, and coral reefs as you circumnavigate the island with NPS chief of resource management Rafe Boulon.
Mar. 16, Wed.	– Traditional Basket Weaving – Dale Clave, culture bearer at Annaberg Plantation ruins, will demonstrate the waning art of basket weaving.
Mar. 19, Sat.	– Explore Hurricane Hole by Kayak – Paddle with Arawak Expeditions through the Coral Reef Nat'l Monument, stopping to snorkel in the mangroves and seagrass beds.
Mar. 23, Wed.	– St. John Architecture – Architect Michael Milne will take you through some of the island's home sites to explain their structures and significance.
Mar. 26, Sat.	– Coral Reef Research – Snorkel areas along the North Shore with USGS marine ecologist Caroline Rogers and learn why Elkhorn corals are being considered for protection under the Endangered Species Act.
Mar. 30, Wed.	– Explore Lameshur and Europa Bays – Plant ecologist Gary Ray will intrigue you with his discussions of the rich communities of native species on our island.
APRIL	
Apr. 2, Sat.	– Marine Biology Sailing Trip II – Snorkel the underwater treasures of St. John's reefs with a NPS Marine Biologist aboard the catamaran, <i>Jolly Mon</i> .
Apr. 6, Wed.	– Tropical Photography – Accompany professional photographer Steve Simonsen on a trip around St. John, and learn to use your own camera to take beautiful magazine-quality photos.
Apr. 9, Sat.	– St. John in the Early 1900s – Learn from local resident Guy Benjamin as he shares memories of his youth, when only a couple hundred homes existed on St. John, and donkeys were still the mode of transportation.
Apr. 16, Sat.	– St. John Architecture – Architect Glen Speer will take you through some of the island's finer homes to explain their structures and significance.
Apr. 23, Sat.	– Sail the Pepper! – Captain Fred will guide you through Park waters on this beautiful traditional island sloop built right here on St. John. Makes 2 snorkel stops.
Apr. 24, Sun.	– Snorkel the 6 Ecosystems of Scott Bay – Snorkel these sites from shore with Caneel Bay's chief "snorkologist" Lucy Portlock.



Project Accomplishments for 2004

The Friends is proud to say that we had a very successful year, and we're excited to share our accomplishments with you. With the help of Park staff, volunteers, interns, and generous donors, we continue to support important projects and activities that further our mission of protecting and preserving the natural and cultural resources of VI National Park. Here's a list of some of our project accomplishments for 2004:

- **Carabana Theater Ensemble** completed 16 presentations of *Nenie Myrah*, at the Cinnamon Bay Amphitheater. This story of the life and times of St. John's renowned midwife and traditional healer, was very well attended and well received.
- **Over 50 interns** were funded through the Friend's Archeology program this year. Total volunteer hours equaled 10,890, including the University of Maine's Engineering Department, which volunteered 4,560 hours performing GIS and 3-D mapping of the Leinster Bay ruins.
- This summer's **Student Conservation Association (SCA) trail crew** consisted of 4 students from St. Croix and one from Puerto Rico. For over 4 weeks, crew members experienced living in eco-tents at Maho Bay Camps, while repairing approximately five miles of hiking trails in the National Park.
- Sponsored 80 Virgin Islands students for **Summer Eco-camps** at VIERS, 3 days and 2 nights of interpretive hikes, swimming and snorkeling, art projects, stargazing, National Park videos, and fun games. Disney Cruise Lines is a major sponsor of the camps, and treated campers to a visit from Mickey and Minnie Mouse.
- Engineering work for the **Hurricane Hole Moorings** has been completed and contracting for the construction is underway. We expect to be able to install about 60% of the moorings with available funding, and work is scheduled to begin in early 2005.
- **The John H. King Scholarship (\$1,000)** was awarded to Makeda Okolo, a student at American University in Washington D.C., who is pursuing a degree in International Studies with a focus on Environmental Policy. Makeda grew up on St. Croix and graduated from the St. Croix Educational Complex in June of 2002. With a 3.38 GPA, she ranks in the top 10% of her class, making her an ideal recipient for the scholarship.
- Supported cultural presentations at **Annaberg Plantation** so that visitors may continue to experience the life and

times through demonstrations of cooking, basket weaving and gardening.

- **The Learn to Swim Program** was provided with new snorkel gear, floating devices and other equipment to help over 60 St. John youth improve their swimming skills. Proceeds from the Beach-to-Beach Power Swim paid for the new equipment.

We would like to thank all who helped to make these projects a success. Your support and our combined efforts will allow us to continue providing these projects and new ones in the future. Thank you!

Affinity Partners Program Takes Shape

The Affinity Partners Program has gained momentum this year! A number of new businesses have joined us to show their appreciation and support for Virgin Islands National Park.

As a membership organization, dues provide the base of financial support for our organization. We endeavor to find creative ways to thank our members for their continued support, and also persuade prospective members to join us in our mission to help preserve and protect the resources of VI National Park.

The Affinity Partners Program is an opportunity for local merchants to give back to the Park by assisting the Friends in developing our membership. Participating merchants make available exclusively to Friends' members offerings such as discounts on merchandise or services.

We applaud these outstanding businesses for setting a terrific example of community partnership, and thank them for their generous offerings.

- Awesome Powerboat Rentals on St. Thomas** — offers a discount on powerboat rentals.
- s/v Alcyone** —offers a discount on day sails.
- Bolongo Bay Beach Club** —offers a discount on hotel rooms, and day sails to St. John.
- Bougainvillea Shops** at Mongoose Junction and The Westin Resort —discount on apparel.
- Canvas Factory** —donation on sale of small, embroidered tote bag.
- Ceremonies St. John** —free wedding cake with use of services.
- Hillcrest Guest House** —offers a discount on lodging.
- Island Fancy** —offers retail discount.
- Kallaloo & Terra Hawk Villas** —offers discount on lodging.
- Low Key Water Sports** —requests donation on behalf of Friends.
- Maho Bay Camps** —offers discount on lodging.
- R & I Patton Goldsmithing** —donates proceeds of zemi sales.
- St. John Weddings** —offers discount on marriage ceremonies and vow renewal services.
- Thunderhawk Trail Guides** —offers discount on guided eco hikes.

Please see our website at www.friendsvinp.org/affinity_partner.htm for more details about each of these offerings.

Are You a Card Carrying Member?

Please visit these merchants and service providers and tell them you're a Friend. You'll receive great discounts on everything from flip flops to wedding ceremonies! But remember, you'll need to show your current official Friends membership card, so be sure to bring it along.

Get Friendly!

It's easy to become an Affinity Partner, just call Karen Brady at the Friends office, 779-4940, and she will help you get started.

Thank You!

The Friends was successful this year because of the generous support of many people, businesses and organizations whose donations, both in cash and in-kind, contributed to helping protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park and promote the responsible enjoyment of this unique national treasure.

Recognition of donors would not be complete without first thanking Rosalie Stahl and Donald Sussman, whose visionary donations in the past fundamentally changed the Friends and our support of the Park. The impact of their contributions continues to be felt every day.

The Friends has more than 3,000 members and your contributions, whether its annual dues, donations to special appeals, participating in our events, sponsoring individual projects or purchasing Friends' merchandise, all help to enable us to support the Park. We are profoundly thankful for your support and are humbled by your generosity. We are especially grateful to the following individuals and organizations for their support this past fiscal year:

First, we would like to make special mention of the support of Rob Blakeney and Ed Guerlich, whose contributions clearly demonstrate their commitment to the protection and preservation of Virgin Islands National Park and their special interest in archeology.

Donors of more than \$10,000:

Disney Cruise Lines
Maho Bay Camps
NOAA
Andy & Joy Stillman

Donors of \$5,000 – \$9,999:

Arawak Expeditions
Caneel Bay Resort
Prosser-ICC Foundation
R&I Patton Goldsmiths
Tropico Management
The Westin Resort

Donors of \$2,500 – \$4,999:

Alison and Doug Jayne
EarthFriends
St. John Phonebook
Texaco Caribbean Inc.
VI Council of the Arts

Donors of \$1,000 – \$2,499:

American Paradise Real Estate
Joan Bermingham
Pat & Hal Brown
Mary Anne & Tom Campbell
Carlos Castell Alvarez
CSG Group
Will Ferry & Sherry Draper
First Bank
David Fussell
Gumpel-Lury Foundation
Frank Harrison

Hawaiian Tropic
Home Depot
Alan & Margot Hunt
Hyland & Beth Johns
Koonce Foundation
Anna & Tom Lawson
Donald & Betty Lentnek
Madison Associates
Rhonda & David McCay
Mongoose Junction Merchants Association
Christie O'Neil

Project AWARE
Roosa Family Foundation
Travis Sanders
Scotia Bank
Glen & Radha Speer
Ann & Bill Starr
UBS Financial Services
Lucy Waletzky
The West Indian Company
Jamison Witbeck
Efrem Zimbalist III

Donors of \$500 – \$999:

Caribbean Villas & Resort Management
Carper Foundation
Michael & Elizabeth Chen
Koke & Cheryl Cummins
C4th Embroidery
Frank Darabout
Matthew Grove
Todd Hecht

Holiday Homes Real Estate
Jim & Donna Kalbach
Bob & Ann Klenke
Jone LaBombard
Low Key Watersports
Mongoose Junction Merchants Assoc.
Bob Nellis
Sadie Sea

Phillip Van Heusen
Sue Sawyer & Rick Jay
Al Sayegh
Steve Simon & Helen Porter
St. John Dive Adventures
Doug & Leslie White
Wind n' Surf Adventures
VIERS

Donors of \$250 – \$499:

Dave Carlson
Gail & John Chester
Cingular Wireless
Coca Cola
Al Cohen
William & Marjorie Coleman
Stephen Conley
Cooper Industries
Richard Decker
Catherine Ellis
Endurance Sports
Elizabeth & John Ford
Gallows Bay Resort

James & Denise Gentile
Louis & Pamela Goltermann
Drew & Stacy Henderson
Bente Hirsch
Ray & Donna Holton
Steve Horman
Island Marine
Kathy Jones
Anthony & Florence Jorgenson
Beth & Seth Klarman
Margate Management
Dennis & Sherrie Martin
Eric & Rene McEntyre

Steve & Fran O'Day
Lucy Portlock
Neil & Trudie Prior
Jeanne & Bill Rayne
Bruce & Sharon Schoonover
Bruce Sklarew
Alexis Smith
Starfish Market
Robert Thomas
Tradewinds Newspaper
Dave Vorhes & Linda Chase
Terry Whitham & Evelyn Webber

Please let us know if we inadvertently omitted your name or placed you in the incorrect group (but, please note that the above includes donations made between October 2003 and September 2004) Thanks!

New Green Builders Group Forming



As most of our readers know, development has exploded on St. John, including on private in-holdings and lands bordering the National Park. It's become more of a common site to see huge scars from the careless clearing and leveling of land replacing our green hillsides. All too often, development sites are cleared completely of vegetation, leaving loose topsoil to wash downhill after heavy rains. This causes severe sedimentation in our bays, which smothers corals and other marine life.

Although we cannot put a stop to development, the Friends (and many others) saw a need to at least provide guidelines on responsible building practices and development in the Virgin Islands. The Friends is working with architects, builders, designers, contractors, scientists, and others who share the same concerns to create a non-profit organization called the **Island Green Builders Association (IGBA)**.

IGBA will soon be open to all those interested in joining in on this mission. If you'd like to learn more about IGBA, please contact Joe at the Friends.

The recovery of *Acropora* spp. throughout VINP

By: *Caroline Rogers and Erinn Muller*

Acropora palmata, elkhorn coral, and *A. cervicornis*, staghorn coral, are two of the most important reef-building corals throughout the Caribbean, and until recently were the most prolific coral species inhabiting shallow reefs. Over the past 15-25 years, however, hurricanes and widespread white-band disease have caused massive declines, over 90% in some locations, of both species. This decline has been so extreme that both elkhorn and staghorn are being considered for protection under the Endangered Species Act.



Although large swells continue to impact the growth and survival of these corals, the last major hurricane that passed through the Virgin Islands was about a decade ago, and white-band disease is no longer common throughout the reefs. It appears that acroporids are starting to rebound from their decline, and scientists from USGS in collaboration with NPS and UVI are attempting to document the distribution and stresses effecting both *A. palmata* and *A. cervicornis*.

In VINP, monthly monitoring of 68 tagged elkhorn colonies has taken place in Haulover Bay for 19 months and indicates that the disease, termed white pox, is now the most important stressor effecting this species. There also appears to be an increase in disease prevalence, which coincides with heightened sea surface temperatures during September and October. Unlike white-band disease, which usually causes complete colony mortality, the lesions caused from white pox can heal. Of the 199 lesions observed during the first year of this study, 48% healed completely, mostly during the first three months of recovery.

In Hawksnest Bay, 60 elkhorn colonies were selected randomly using GPS technology. This site, with a much higher density of elkhorn coral, will allow us to compare disease patterns within VINP.

Another study taking place in VINP, funded by the Friends with support of the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, is mapping the size classes of *A. palmata* as well as the distribution of disease throughout the Park. So far a majority of the colonies recorded are between 10 and 50 cm in length, possibly indicating a young population, and white pox disease has been observed at every site.

It is too early to tell if populations will ever recover to the levels seen 30 years ago, but continued research may help answer some questions regarding the survival and proliferation of both elkhorn and staghorn corals.



Looking for a great gift for the holidays?

Buy someone you love a gift certificate for Friends of the Park Trunk Bay license plates. Gift certificates are good for personalized plates (\$105.00) or serial numbered plates (\$55.00).

To order personalized plates call the Friends or pick up an order form at Connections or the DMV. Be sure to allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. Serial plates are available at the Friends office in Mongoose Junction and at Caribbean Auto Mart on St. Thomas and St. Croix. Call Valerie for more information at 779-4940.

Photo Contest for New Friends of the Park Plates!

Although our attractive Trunk Bay plates are still selling like hotcakes, we've decided to change our look to an underwater motif — and we need your help! In admiration of our precious and beautiful marine resources, we're offering the opportunity to have your underwater photo on the fronts and backs of vehicles in all the Virgin Islands!

Submit your photo entry to:
Friends Photo Contest
P.O. Box 811, St. John, VI 00831
Or email: amigos@friendsvinp.org

Join the Friends or renew your memberships on-line by going directly to our website at:

http://www.friendsvinp.org/new_stuff/joindirect.htm



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

newsletter@friendsvinp.org

Projects for 2005

Actions speak louder than words and our Board of Directors recently approved an active, ambitious and challenging program plan for 2005 projected to cost about \$400,000. This includes new projects proposed by the Park, projects that have previously been approved but not yet completed, and new Friends-initiated projects. Many are projects that have grown to be closely identified with Friends support and, of course, there are many new projects as well.

Each fall, the Superintendent submits a prioritized list of Park needs to the Friends' Board of Directors. Given limitation of federal funding for the Park – it typically meets only 70% of the Park's budgetary needs – Friends' support is often the only way critical natural resource protection, cultural preservation, and environmental education activities can take place.

The Friends' Board carefully considers the projects in the Park's Support Request. Those projects that are approved, along with Friends-initiated projects that the Board chooses to undertake, constitute our annual program plan. This year's plan includes the following projects:

Natural Resource Protection

Resource Protection Moorings (\$175,000): Install storm refuge moorings in Hurricane Hole for approximately 100 boats. This project has been implemented in several stages and will hopefully be completed in 2004.

Feral/Exotic Animal Outreach (\$6,000): Develop a series of pamphlets to educate VINP visitors and island residents about feral/exotic animals and their impacts on the cultural and natural resources of VINP.

SCA Trail Crew (\$25,000): Again sponsor a crew of budding conservationists from the Student Conservation Association to repair and upgrade priority trails within the Park. This year's project will build on our experience of fielding a crew of young Virgin Islanders.

Boating Outreach (\$9,000): Develop and distribute instructional and cautionary materials to instruct boat operators, particularly of small powerboats, where and how to anchor in the waters of VI National Park and VI Coral Reef National Monument.

REEF Fish Counts (\$1,400): Participate in a national program that mobilizes and trains volunteer snorkelers to identify and document fish diversity and populations in marine areas.

White Pox Research (\$14,400): Support research on white pox disease and impact on coral health.

Adopt a Trail / Beach (\$1,000): Promote community participation in the Park by organizing civic, religious and business groups to adopt beaches and trails for periodic cleanups.

Cultural Preservation

Annaberg Cultural Presentations (\$20,000): Continuing support of the cultural presentation program at Annaberg Plantation and maintain a volunteer docent program at the site.

Archeological Artifact Preservation (\$30,000): Assist in the preservation of the thousands of artifacts uncovered in the archeological digs by supporting material purchases, stipends and location costs of interns, and organizing volunteers.

Museum Exhibits for Cinnamon Bay (\$43,000): Support for the development of museum quality exhibit space within the archeological research setting at Cinnamon Bay Greathouse \warehouse and showcase the history of St. John through a chronological time line using objects in the park's collection and through graphic illustration.

Historic Structures Preservation through Computer Graphics (\$15,000): Provide support and logistics to continue developing 3-D computer models of the Park's historic structures.

Hassel Island Restoration (\$8,000): Continuing effort to restore the Creque Marine Railway area to allow the site to be safely visited, while promoting community involvement in the further restoration of Hassel Island.

Folklife Festival (\$10,000): Continuing support of the premier cultural festival on St. John held during Black History Month (February).

Cultural Theatre Presentation (\$8,000): Support a weekly theatrical presentation (January – April) by Carabana Ensemble Theater Company entitled “*Arona*”, a monodrama celebrating the life and times of Arona Petersen, the noted folklorist and cultural icon of St. Thomas.

Environmental Education

Eco-Camps (\$20,000): Again sponsor summer camps for Virgin Islands youth, allowing them to spend three days at VIERS learning about marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Parks as Living Classrooms (\$8,000): Provide small grants to assist teachers in St. John schools to creatively incorporate the Park in class studies, and support transportation costs to facilitate classes to participate in VINP programs such as: visits to historical sites, the archeology digs, Reef Bay hike and Annaberg.

Scholarship Fund (\$4,000): Provide scholarships and summer internships for two Virgin Islanders in their junior or senior year of university studies related to natural resource management.

Members wishing more information, or wishing to become involved with any of these projects, are welcome to come by the office or call. We invite members who are particularly interested in one of these projects to consider being a special sponsor of the project. Please contact Karen for more information.



Living Art

Living Art, the spectacular photographic essay of St. John, is the perfect gift from, or to, those who love St. John and Virgin Islands National Park. This 200-page coffee table book, by renowned St. John photographer Steve Simonsen, celebrates the natural beauty of St. John in 182 stunning photographs.

The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is proud to be associated with the publication of this spectacular photographic essay of St. John, and a portion of the proceeds from the sale of all books benefits the Friends' support of Virgin Islands National Park — helping to preserve the same natural beauty the book celebrates. When purchased from the Friends, a portion of the price may be considered a tax-deductible charitable contribution. Please call, come by the office, or visit our website to place your order or for more information.

If you already have a copy of Living Art, you know what a great gift it is. If you have not yet experienced this wonderful book — now is your chance!

Give the gift of *Living Art* this holiday season.

Upcoming Friends Events!

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the upcoming Friend's events:

2nd Annual Friends Family BBQ (aka Friends Family Fish Fry!)

The Friends Family Fish Fry has metamorphosed into the Friends Family BBQ...and with good reason! We want to support efforts by the Park to increase awareness of fisheries management; therefore, we will leave the fish in the sea, and feast on traditional BBQ fare. Other new twists this year include fun games and activities for our younger Friends, and craft demonstrations for kids of all ages. We will again have live music to dance to, and great raffle prizes. We also want to make it easy for everyone to join us for a really enjoyable afternoon, so we moved the event to the middle of town. Plan to join us on December 12, 2004 from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Winston Wells Ball Field in Cruz Bay.

Gala 2005

Join us on March 26, 2005, for the Friends first annual gala event in one of St. John's finest villas. This will be an elegant evening filled with extraordi-

nary dishes created by talented chefs, live music and a silent auction. Reserve your tickets early as numbers will be very limited.

2nd Annual Friends' Beach-to-Beach Power Swim

Swim to Cinnamon Bay, swim to Trunk Bay, or go all the way to Hawksnest Bay. On May 29th, 2005 Friends will host the 2nd Annual Beach-to-Beach Power Swim. The race consists of three courses this year: a short course from Maho Bay to Cinnamon Bay, about 1 mile; an intermediate course from Maho Bay to Trunk Bay, about 2-1/4 miles; and, a long course from Maho to Hawksnest, about 3-1/2 miles. You can compete in the long course as an individual or as part of a 3-person team. Swimmers assisted by snorkel and/or fins may also compete.

Call the Friends (340) 779-4940, or visit our website for more information on these events.

President's Message *By Joe Kessler*



I am pleased to be able to share this edition of the Friends Tidings with all of our neighbors on St. John as well, of course, with all of our members. We hope that you all find this newsletter interesting and useful. If you are not a member, as you learn more about us you may wish to join the organization — I would be pleased to welcome you as a "friend".

In this newsletter, you will read about the many things that are going on in the Park and with the Friends. You will learn about projects that would welcome your support, upcoming events, our very popular seminar series that you can attend, and the many volunteer opportunities that you can get involved in. I hope that you will find a way to get involved and have fun at the same time.

Currently, the most significant event going on is the development of a General Management Plan (GMP) for the Park and the National Monument, the results of which will have long term impacts. The planning process is highly interactive, and is most effective with the active participation of the users of the Park and other stakeholders. While I do

my best to represent your interests, it is no substitute for your personal input and participation.

The initial input and data gathering stage has been completed and the planning team is now developing alternative strategies and approaches. Once these are in-hand, another round of public and stakeholder meetings will be held to narrow down the alternatives. I encourage you to provide your input: if you live in the Virgin Islands, you can attend the public meetings; if you live outside the islands, follow the proceedings and provide input via the Park's planning website (www.nps.gov/sero/planning/viis_gmp/viis_info.htm).

The important thing is to make your voice heard. After all — it is your Park! So, let's all work together in making VI National Park even better! Aside from the people of St. John, it is VI National Park that makes our island so special —and most importantly, it is what will keep it so special.

And to our members, Thank You once again for your continued support. It is you that give us strength by your numbers and sustenance by your contributions — both financial and in volunteer time. Please continue to keep VI National Park as one of your philanthropic priorities — our Park needs you, now more than ever!

Friends of 
**VIRGIN ISLANDS
NATIONAL PARK**

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