

## Maho Bay is Under Threat

Maho Bay is being seriously threatened and members of this organization need to be aware of the issues and ramifications.

Although within the overall boundaries of Virgin Islands National Park, most of the property inland from Maho Bay is privately owned. The most significant piece is a 441 acre private in-holding owned in 11 undivided shares. The National Park Service purchased three shares (equivalent to about 120 acres) a number of years ago and the Trust for Public Land (a non-profit land preservation organization) acquired an additional share (equivalent to 40 acres) in 2004. Heirs of the original owner retain the remaining seven shares.

This property is bordered by Maho Beach to the west and encompasses virtually the entire basin as one looks inland, right up to Centerline Road, Mamey Peak and Ajax Peak. This beautiful and pristine area, rich in botanical wonders and historic treasures, appears to be parkland – but it is not, and is now facing a significant threat.

A developer is attempting to purchase the remaining seven shares from the heirs to build an “institute”, return a few acres to each of these heirs, develop a significant personal compound and develop additional land for residential home sites. He is insisting that the NPS and TPL cede their four shares to him and agree to a number of other demands. In return, he will designate an additional 80 acres as a conservation easement.

Any prospect of developing this spectacular area within the Park is extremely distressing as it will destroy the integrity of the Park by essentially dividing it in two, not to mention the severe negative impact it will have due to habitat destruction and increasing erosion and sedimentation in one of the most beautiful bays within the Park. While we very reluctantly have come to understand that we may have to accept that some development may be necessary to protect at least a portion of that land, these demands and conditions put forth by the developer will have extreme, long-term detrimental impact on the Park.

1. **The NPS is to cede their three shares to the developer in return for a conservation easement.** We consider it fundamentally wrong, and contrary to the spirit of the NPS’s mission, for the NPS to cede their ownership of their share of the land.
2. **The developer is to be allowed to divert the North Shore Road inland, behind the wetland area and create a parking area and a footpath to provide access to the beach.** The proposal to alter and thereby impede access to Maho Beach by diverting the road is a personal affront to the people of the Virgin Islands, especially residents of St. John, as well as our many visitors who return to the island year after year.
3. **The developer is to be allowed to build a private dock in Maho Bay.** This would be a threat to seabed ecosystems in that part of the bay and to those swimming in the protected area.
4. **The developer is to be allowed to clean and drain the wetlands**

**area into Maho Bay.** While the wetland area had previously been open to the bay, for the last 50 years or more it has served admirably as a natural sump and filter for sediment and debris coursing down the valley, effectively helping keep Maho Bay clean. The plan to open a permanent waterway will environmentally devastate Maho Bay, especially in light of the construction that will follow in surrounding areas. Friends members and other concerned parties will be contacted shortly about what they can do to help.



*A Happy Eco-Camper!*

## 2005 Summer Programs

A critical program imperative of Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is cultivating the next generation of conservation minded citizens. Toward that end, we have had a busy summer supporting three important programs that appeal to various interests in environmental education and resource protection. Summer Eco-Camps, Student Conservation Association (SCA) Trail Crew Program, and the REEF Great Annual Fish Count are all programs that help us work toward achieving our mission of fostering the next generation of environmental stewards.

### Summer Eco-Camps

Friends’ funding proudly supports Summer Eco-Camps held at the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station (VIERS) in Lameshur Bay. The three-day/two-night Eco-Camps, provide local young people between ages 8–16 with the opportunity to learn about St. John’s natural resources through activities such as hiking, swimming, snorkeling, eco-art, and environmental games and presentations. While at camp, students learned about the history of Lameshur Bay and St. John, mangrove and coastal ecology, and plant and wildlife identification. This year’s camps focused on water resources and conservation.

During the month of July, more than 100 campers were able to enjoy one of five camps. Once again, Disney Cruise Line, Texaco

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## • TIDINGS NOTES •



### New Program Manager

Greetings and thanks for the wonderful welcome! For those of you who have not heard, my name is Kristen Maize and I am the new Program Manager at Friends. I was born and raised on St. John and spent the past year working as a field research assistant here on the island, so I understand the

gravity of preserving our natural and cultural resources. I am thrilled to be a part of an organization that is dedicated to that very goal. Like many of you, I love this island, and am grateful so much of it was bestowed to the National Park. I also appreciate you, as Friends members and supporters who have helped the National Park maintain St. John's pristine natural beauty. Thank you.

As the editor of Tidings, I encourage any suggestions or comments on how we could improve our newsletter. I am also open to new ideas for the 2006 Seminar Series. Emily did a fantastic job on this year's Seminars, and I am eager to hear any comments from those of you who participated. Please contact me at 779-4940.

### Annual Virgin Islands Coastal Cleanup

Saturday September 17th marks the beginning of the 20th Annual International Coastal Cleanup. Within a three hour period on the 17th organizations all over the world will rally together to remove debris from beaches and coastal shores in efforts to protect marine species and habitats. While this synchronized cleanup is only for a few hours, the Annual Virgin Islands Coastal Cleanup continues for three weeks, providing individuals and organizations with ample time to perform their cleanup. During this time Friends encourages volunteers to join our Adopt-A-Beach/Trail Program and adopt a site, pledging responsibility for keeping it clean. If you are interested in our Adopt-A-Beach/Trail Program or simply participating in a beach cleanup during Coastal Weeks please contact Kristen at 779-4940.

### New Naturalist Docent Program

Due to the success of our Annaberg Docent Program, we have been working closely with the National Park Service to establish a new volunteer guide program focused on the natural history and ecology of St. John. If you like being outdoors and are interested in becoming a volunteer naturalist guide or learning more about the program, please contact Kristen at 779-4940. We are particularly interested in individuals with specialist knowledge or interests (i.e. birds, plants, butterflies, marine sciences) so that the Park can offer new interpretive opportunities for visitors.

## WILLPOWER

Bequests are a critical source of support for Friends of Virgin Islands National Park.

Please remember the Friends in your estate.



## From the Superintendent

### Greetings Friends of Virgin Islands Park!



Several months ago, Doris Jadan, a long-time St John resident and member of the Friends of Virgin Islands NP (FVNP) passed away. Doris was one of the first people I met when I arrived at the Park. On occasion, she would invite me to her residence for lunch or dinner. Sometimes when I would have officials from the National Park Service Regional Office here for operational visits, I would take them to the small museum she operated and Doris would proudly give them a tour. It

would be on these visits that Doris would tell me about her life on St. John and how much she loved Virgin Islands National Park (VINP). Doris came to St. John with her husband about the time that the Park was established. She immediately developed a great relationship with the Park, which endured for nearly 50 years. Doris was a teacher in the public school system for many years where she is noted for developing an Environmental Science Program. Many of her former students still attribute their understanding and appreciation of the environment to the instruction they received from Doris.

She wrote several books and after the death of her beloved husband Ivan, she created a museum in his memory. He was an opera singer, tenor I believe, who Doris helped flee Russia during Stalin's reign. Some of her books are sold in the VINP Visitor Center and the proceeds go to the operation of the museum. Doris was a strong willed and opinionated person. To illustrate, I can recall last year during the General Management Plan public meeting held in Cruz Bay how passionately she expressed her love for the Park.

Since her death in December, I have often thought about Doris. This little lady from Alabama, who came to St. John, fell in love with the island and St. Johnians and will be remembered as one who gave so much to the people and the land. But, one of my fondest memories is of Doris riding around Cruz Bay in her golf cart with a big bright smile and her small shaggy dog in a seatbelt sitting next to her. As a member of FVNP and a strong advocate for the Park since its inception, she will forever be admired and missed.

Art Frederick, VINP Superintendent



**We need your help!**

### Adopt-a-Beach/ Trail Program

Volunteer to adopt a beach, bay, or trail and become responsible for keeping it clean during Annual Virgin Islands Coastal Cleanup Weeks, Earth Day, and in between as needed!

- Help clean debris from shorelines, trails, and hillsides
- Get involved in the community
- Help keep St. John beautiful
- Have fun!

*You Can Make a Difference!*  
Interested in Adopting?  
Please call Kristen at (340) 779-4940

Photo: Steve Simonsen



SCA Summer Trail Crew 2005

## 2005 Summer Programs *(Continued from Page 1)*

Caribbean, and the Prosser ICC Foundation were major supporters of these camps, while new sponsors included GlobalVest Management Company, Graystone Builders, and Rotary East. We thank them all for their generosity.

### SCA Summer Trail Crew Program

This is our fifth year working in partnership with Student Conservation Association (SCA), Virgin Islands National Park, and Maho Bay Camps to sponsor a trail crew for four weeks during the summer months. The SCA Trail Crew Program provides students ages 16–19 with a unique outdoor experience repairing and maintaining hiking trails while learning about the natural ecology of the area. This year's team consisted of four Virgin Island students, from both St. Thomas and St. Croix, and four students and two leaders from the continental U.S.

The crew worked on the Cinnamon Bay, Reef Bay, Lameshur Bay, and Europa Bay trails, clearing vegetation, and building and repairing stone steps and drainage dips on over five miles of trails in the Park. The effects of their work will reduce erosion and make these trails more "hiker friendly".

In addition to learning about trail maintenance and developing an understanding of their role as responsible stewards of the environment, they also learned important team building and leadership development skills living together at Maho Bay Camps for the month. Accommodations were provided free of charge again this year by Maho Bay Camps; we truly appreciate their continued support.

### REEF Great Annual Fish Count

Something new for Friends this year was joining the REEF Great Annual Fish Count, a Park-affiliated program coordinated by the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF). The program mobilizes and trains volunteer snorkelers to identify and record fish populations and diversity in National Park waters using a REEF fish identification kit. To help volunteers improve their identification skills, Laurel Brannick, the National Park Ranger coordinating the Count, held a brief seminar on common reef fish of the V.I.

On Saturday, July 16th fish count volunteers gathered at Trunk Bay to officially celebrate the launch of the new program and share collected fish data from earlier surveys. The Fish Count is an ongoing program. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Kristen at 779-4940.



## Park News

### New Sign!

The National Park Visitor's Center recently acquired new signage, which visibly identifies the National Park Headquarters. The sign, displayed on the side of the Visitor's Center, is obvious to all passersby and has increased traffic flow tremendously. The building is now easily identifiable and the National Park is credited with significantly increasing visitation to the Visitor's Center.

### North Shore Road Rehabilitation Project

Islands Roads Construction, contracted by Virgin Islands National Park, has begun the North Shore Rehabilitation Project, which plans to repair and enhance the North Shore Road in several places. The first phase targets three sites: the Cruz Bay Overlook, Hawksnest Beach Road, and Caneel Road. Construction began at the Cruz Bay Overlook July 27th, followed by the closure of the Hawksnest Beach parking lot, where there are plans to increase the number of parking spaces and repave the lot. The Rehabilitation Project is projected to last 18 months, with a break in construction from December 2005 to May 2006.

### In Remembrance

The Friends and the Park staff were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Georgia Gottlieb, acting Administration Officer of VINP, in what Superintendent Art Fredrick described as "a senseless act of domestic violence." Georgia was a 20-year veteran of the National Park Service and a stalwart of the Administrative Division. We offer our deepest condolences to her son and family and to our colleagues at the Park who lost a dear friend and valued colleague.



### Living Art Second Edition

The second edition of *Living Art* with improved readability is now available. The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is proud to be associated with Steve Simonsen's spectacular photographic essay of St. John. This book is the perfect gift from, or to, those who love St. John and Virgin Islands National Park, and a portion of the proceeds from the sale of all books will help preserve the natural beauty celebrated in this book.

When purchased from the Friends, part of the price may be considered a tax-deductible charitable contribution. Please call (340-779-4940), come by our office in Mongoose Junction, or visit our website ([www.friendsvinp.org/store/book.htm](http://www.friendsvinp.org/store/book.htm)) for ordering information.

**Friends'  
Mission**

*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.*

## Upcoming Friends Events!

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

### 3rd Annual Friends Family BBQ

Feast on traditional BBQ fare at this 3rd annual family event hosted by the Friends. There will be interesting displays about the diverse marine and terrestrial eco-systems found on St. John, and fun environmental games for the kids, like the ever-popular Marine Jeopardy and Queen Termite games. There will also be craft demonstrations and live music. Plan to join us on Oct. 15, 2005 from 4:00–7:00 pm at the Winston Wells Ball Field.

### Exclusive Benefit for the Friends!

Arawak Expeditions will again this year offer a kayak expedition package around St. John. This fall, Oct. 3–7th, Arawak will lead a small group of 10–12 kayakers and 2 guides on a St. John adventure. Leaving Cruz Bay, the tour will completely circumnavigate the island, and include stops at the beautiful white sand beaches in V.I. National Park on St. John's north shore. Kayakers will also enjoy the quieter side of St. John, while exploring secluded beaches and coves of the island's south

shore. Along the way, participants will be treated to exclusive presentations by National Park Service rangers, which will include a private viewing of artifacts discovered at the archeological dig sites at Cinnamon and Trunk Bays, along with a presentation by Park archeologist Ken Wild. Space is very limited; please sign up soon if you would like to join us for this special trip. The cost of this adventure is \$995.00.

### Save the Date!

### Help us Celebrate 50 Years of V.I. National Park!

Dec. 1, 2006 marks V.I. National Park's 50th birthday. To commemorate this special occasion, we have planned events throughout the year, and what better way to kick-off the festivities but with a gala event. Bring in the New Year with Friends of V.I. National Park on Dec. 31, 2005 with an elegant evening of fine wine, food, and dancing, hosted in one of St. John's most beautiful villas. Watch for details!

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

## President's Message *By Joe Kessler*



One of the many roles the Friends plays is advocate for the resources and users of V.I. National Park. The looming threat of development of privately held land in the Maho Bay valley and hillsides has serious implications for the marine and terrestrial environment and for the people, residents of the Virgin Islands and visitors alike, who value the Maho Bay area and its beach.

The demands and conditions insisted upon by the developer are onerous and odious and we call on the NPS to actively reject them. We expect the national agency whose purpose is "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects [of national parks]... by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations", to do what is right, and what is best to protect as much of this spectacular landscape as possible. Anything short of strong opposition to giving up the NPS shares of the land, limiting access to Maho Bay beach, building a private dock on NPS property, and/or draining the wetlands that have protected Maho Bay for decades, adds insult to injury and may well mark the

beginning of the end for Virgin Islands National Park.

Even without the conditions detailed in the cover story, the development that is planned for Maho will destroy the unparalleled beauty of the area; gone will be the unbroken canopy of green of the valley and hillsides, only to be replaced by villas, mansions and an "institute"; also gone will be the crystal clear waters and vibrant marine life of the bay, having been sullied and choked by the runoff and sediment from the spoiled hillsides.

Sadly, there may not be anything that we can do about it, as the developer is, should he buy this property, well within his rights to develop it as he sees fit. However, we must do what we can to limit the negative environmental impacts and to mitigate the negative effects on visitor experience. Whatever happens on the hillsides and valley will impact us all: environmentally, culturally and socially, now and well into the future.

As a member of the Friends, I know that you have great affection for this Park and have probably enjoyed some wonderful times at Maho Bay. If you want your children, grandchildren and all those who will follow to enjoy this spectacular treasure, now is the time to stand up and take notice.

Thank you very much for your continued support. I will call on you shortly for your help on this issue. I know that I can count on you!

Friends of   
**VIRGIN ISLANDS  
NATIONAL PARK**

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