



Hurricane Hole mangroves.

Storm Moorings in Hurricane Hole

Thanks to the generous financial support of the Kenny Chesney Foundation and the Ocean Trust, the Friends added an additional 42 storm mooring berths in Hurricane Hole this summer – bringing the total to 96 berths along the storm mooring chain system.

Hurricane Hole is the most pristine of the mangrove habitats remaining in the USVI and contains approximately 75% of all mangroves remaining on St. John.

Hurricane Hole, located on the eastern end of St. John, is as its name implies, an area traditionally used by boaters as a storm refuge. Typically, boaters would anchor toward the middle of the bays and then tie the stern of their boats to mangrove roots and trunks along the shoreline. While this was certainly not done maliciously, tying lines to the trees damages the mangroves, particularly during violent storms.

With input from local boaters, BVI-based mooring specialists, and a marine engineer, the Friends and VI National Park developed the plan to install a chain mooring system in Hurricane Hole to protect this mangrove forest while providing safe refuge for boats during storms. Sixty-four mooring berths were installed in 2005 and the balance was installed this summer.

A heavy-duty (1") mooring chain is secured to the seabed as close to shore as possible with triple-blade embedment anchors driven down about 16 feet. The embedment anchors are spaced 30 feet apart and this constitutes a “berth”. Boaters can now secure their boats to the chain instead of the mangroves. This is a “win-win” for both the boaters, who have an exceptionally strong mooring point, and the mangroves, which are no longer at threat from ropes. While we hope that the system will not be needed, it should be a comfort to all concerned that such a system is in place.

Soon Come! Friends of the Park Store

Hurray for those of you tired of climbing the many stairs up to the Friends’ office to shop! This fall, we will open a retail store in Mongoose Junction (ground level) that will cater to local residents and visitors alike with a variety of unique and exciting products, everything from home décor items to educational gifts and t-shirts. Many of our carefully chosen products will be made from recycled materials and renewable resources, and others will support fair trade organizations. The concept of sustainability will be predominant throughout the store and will offer ways in which we all can help to preserve our environment for future generations.

Stop in and check out our new venture! The store will also be a convenient place to find out what we are up to; information will be available on events, seminars and current projects, or if you would like to renew your membership, it can all be done in our new store next to R&I Patton (in the previous Canvas Factory location) on the street level at Mongoose Junction!

Summer Eco-Camps

This summer marked the 7th year that Friends of VI National Park, Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station (VIERS), Clean Islands International, and the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) worked together in partnership to offer Eco-Camps for Virgin Islands students. In July, a total of 142 young Virgin Islanders between the ages of 8–16 years old attended one of five summer camps at VIERS on St. John’s remote south side.



Eco Campers!

Eco-Camps provide local Caribbean youth with a three-day / two-night camping experience, in which they participate in many
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**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.

• TIDINGS NOTES •

2007 V.I. Coastweeks

September 15th, 2007 marked the beginning of V.I. Coastweeks. During these three weeks, community members rally together to remove debris from beaches and coastal shores in an effort to protect marine species and habitats and collect valuable information on the amount and type of debris found. During last year's Coastweeks 1,083 people on St. John, St. Thomas, and St. Croix removed over 19,255 pounds of debris from 53 miles of VI shoreline! Be a part of the growing success of this event and join a Friends' sponsored beach cleanup or consider joining our Adopt-A-Beach/Trail Program and adopt a beach or trail to clean throughout the year. To find out more about VI Coastweeks, coordinated clean-ups throughout the territory, or Friends' Adopt-A-Beach/Trail Program please contact Kristen at the Friends, 779-4940.

Farewell to Friends' Summer Intern

With the close of summer, Friends reluctantly says goodbye to summer intern Andrew Deppensmith. Andrew was a tremendous asset to us here at the Friends' office. His thoroughness and willingness to help with any task will be greatly missed. Projects and events he contributed to include: 2007 SCA Summer Trail Crew Program, membership and administrative tasks, Kapok Chronicles, and Summer Eco-Camps at VIERS. Andrew has since returned to Virginia where he is in the process of pursuing a job in the environmental sector.

Volunteers needed!

Help the Park and the Friends preserve St. John's natural and cultural resources by becoming a volunteer today! Through hands-on work, you'll learn new skills, share your knowledge with others, and gain a better understanding and appreciation for the Park and our community. Each year, Friends' volunteers contribute hundreds of hours to the Park. Interested in getting involved? Here are some ways in which you can help:

Help staff Friends' new retail store in Mongoose Junction: spend time greeting customers, answering questions about the Friends and the Park, and selling merchandise related to the Friends, the Park, and the environment.

Become an Annaberg Docent and provide tours of the Annaberg Plantation Ruins, a site rich in historical and cultural significance.

Become a Naturalist Docent and help the Park offer new interpretive natural history and ecology tours to visitors.

Record data of important historical artifacts at the National Park archaeology laboratory.

Be a Front Desk Assistant at the National Park Visitor Center. Welcome visitors, answer questions, and help sell books and gifts.

Help out in the Friend's Office with the various administrative tasks, events, and programs that require assistance throughout the year.

Superintendent's Message



*Mark Hardgrove,
Superintendent*

Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument in my opinion are the most precious resources in the National Park System. I am excited to get to work with National Park System staff and partners to prepare our Park units for the Centennial of the NPS in 2016. I am also looking forward to completing our two Park General Management Plans (one for each of our park units). The next few years will be very important to these special places.

I have much to learn about our issues and our Park operations, and many people to meet. I plan on being an active member of the community, working with all governmental agencies to best protect our resources, serve our visitors, and work with our Park neighbors.

I plan on working with the Park management team to improve the Park's ability to compete within National Park System funding programs for natural and cultural resource management projects, facility management project funding, and equipment replacement program funding.

I must also say I am very proud to be working with such an effective Friends group! Just reading back through your recent newsletters shows an impressive track record.

Hopefully by the time you read this I will have survived the move. My wife, Millie and I just moved three kids out of the house into colleges and are packing and loading for our trip to St. John.

I am looking forward to living and working along with each of you in such a wonderful place.

NOW IN STOCK!

Friends of
**VIRGIN ISLANDS
NATIONAL PARK**
presents

**The Establishment
of Virgin Islands
National Park**

A film by
**Bruce Schoonover,
Steve Simonsen &
William Stelzer**

Featuring never
before seen photos
& rare home movie
footage from
the 1950s.

Quantities are limited. Purchase your DVD today at Friends of V.I. National Park office in Mongoose Junction, purchase it on-line at www.friendsvinp.org, or call us at (340) 779-4940 to order your copy. DVD's are \$20 or \$18 for Friends members.

Summer Eco-Camps

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environmental education activities, games, and projects. These activities help our youth better understand the variety and importance of the eco-systems which can be found on St. John and in Virgin Islands National Park.

Camp curriculum was based on the field guide *Island Peak to Coral Reefs* by Toni Thomas and Barry Devine, and the lessons were presented by VIERS volunteers, UVI researchers, gemologists, botanists, and Park rangers who shared their special knowledge to assist with the education of our campers. The ultimate goal is to have campers take away from their experience a better understanding of the nature that surrounds them everyday, the importance of healthy and balanced eco-systems, and a sense of proper stewardship of the environment.

VIERS' remote location at Lameshur Bay within the boundaries of VI National Park, provides a perfect setting for campers to experience hands-on interaction with nature. Hiking trails, historic ruins, beaches, and coral reefs are all easily accessed from the base camp and are utilized as a living classroom.

It is because of the generous support of our camp sponsors Prosser ICC, Disney Cruise Line, Lana Vento Charitable Trust, First Bank, and the Rotary Club of St. John that our campers were able to attend camp free of charge to their families. Their friendship and support are very important to us. We are grateful for their continued trust in our ability to provide Virgin Islands' youth with a meaningful summer experience.

Impressions of the Summer Intern

By Andrew Deppensmith

This summer I had the opportunity to be an intern for Friends of VI National Park. Partaking in some of the programs that the Friends provide was an enriching experience.

I recently graduated from Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, Virginia with a B.S. in Environmental Science and International Relations. With those interests, I can think of no better place to be than in the Virgin Islands. In 2006, I worked at the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station (VIERS) as a camp counselor for the Summer Eco-camps. This year, I was lucky to be accepted as the summer intern for Friends of the Park.

While at the Friends, I assisted with a number of projects and programs. I acted as a liaison between the Friends and the Student Conservation Association (SCA) Summer Trail Crew, in which we helped revitalize some of the trails on St. John. This consisted of lopping vegetation, installing water bars, and digging drainage ditches to help improve VI National Park trails. I also had the chance to help with Summer Eco-camps at VIERS, where I assisted teaching V.I. youth about the eco-systems they encounter in their environment. Being in an environment where there is such rich diversity, made my job much easier. Besides those programs, I had the chance to help out with some of the inner workings of the organization which was a great learning experience.

All in all, working with the Friends has been a wonderful opportunity, allowing me to work with great people. I am thankful for having had the chance to work with such a great organization.

2007 SCA Summer Trail Crew



SCA Trail Crew taking a break from their work on the L'Esperance Trail.

This is the seventh summer Friends of VI National Park has worked in partnership with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and Virgin Islands National Park to sponsor a student trail crew for four weeks during the months of June and July. Friends' SCA Trail Crew Program provides students ages 16–19 with a unique outdoor experience repairing and maintaining hiking trails while living in VI National Park. Through this program, trail crew members are introduced to a variety of topics including outdoor work, camping and hiking skills, low impact outdoor living, and a basic cultural and ecological knowledge of the island.

This summer's crew consisted of three Virgin Island students from St. Croix, and three students and two leaders from the continental U.S. At the request of the Park's Maintenance Department, the crew cleared vegetation, built and repaired stone steps, installed drainage ditches and water bars, and removed loose rock along the L'Esperance–Reef Bay Trail, Lameshur Bay Trail, Europa Trail, and Johnny Horn Trail. The effects of their work will reduce erosion and deterioration due to steep terrain, shallow top soil, and heavy rain. Their work on the L'Esperance–Reef Bay Trail allowed the Park to officially open this hiking trail (which was an old Danish road) to the public.

In addition to learning about trail maintenance and developing an understanding of their role as responsible stewards of the environment, the students learned important team building and leadership development skills living together at Cinnamon Bay Campground for the month. The crew's combination of local residents and non-Virgin Islanders also provided the participants with a unique and beneficial cross-cultural experience.

At the end of the four-week program, a total of six miles on four separate trails had been worked on. The Park deemed these trails now safe and in environmentally sound condition. Our National Parks continue to face severe maintenance challenges due to continued federal budget cuts. More and more, VI National Park relies on volunteer groups, like SCA to help maintain the natural and cultural resources of the Park.

Friends is in search of photos of Linda Smith Palmer's eco-comedy/singing/dancing puppet show, "Island Spirits." (The show was held at Cinnamon Bay Amphitheater years ago).

If anyone has snap shots of that performance please contact the Friends, (340) 779-4940 or amigos@friendsvinp.org.

Upcoming Events

Coastweeks began September 15th and will run through October 6th. Please see Tidings Notes for more information on how you can participate.

Soon Come! **Friends of the Park Store** will open this fall next to R & I Patton (in the previous Canvas Factory space) in Mongoose Junction. Help us celebrate this new venture at our grand opening, which will be held in conjunction with Mongoose Junction's Evening in the Courtyard on November 23rd from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Save the date! Kick off the St. John social season at the Friends annual gala scheduled for December 1st. We are considering a list of exciting new locations at which to hold this event, along with a new format that will allow for more time for merry-making.



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 (now with improved readability), by renowned St. John photographer Steve Simonsen, celebrates the natural beauty of St. John in 182 stunning photographs.

A PORTION OF THE PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF ALL BOOKS BENEFITS THE VI NATIONAL PARK AND HELPS TO PRESERVE THE SAME NATURAL BEAUTY THE BOOK CELEBRATES. PLEASE CALL, COME BY THE FRIENDS OFFICE, OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR ORDERING INFORMATION.

President's Message *By Joe Kessler*



There has been a long-standing discussion on St. John concerning the need to relocate the two public schools on St. John, and a request that the National Park Service provide land for this purpose. About five years ago, the NPS said that while they cannot give land to the VI government for a school, it would be possible to exchange, or swap land for this purpose. The NPS identified some park land located near estates Adrian and Catherineberg that they thought would be appropriate and provided a list of some territorial-owned land that they thought could be considered, in some combination, for a swap. Most recently, in response to sentiment in the community against the swap, the VI Delegate to Congress proposed legislation that would provide Park land for a school by means of a long-term lease.

The Friends recognizes the need to relocate the schools from their current cramped, inappropriate and dangerous locations, and have the new facilities include grades 10–12 so that the island's children do not have to leave St. John to attend public high school. Further, we agree that the location just inside VI National Park at Catherineberg is an appropriate loca-

tion – if no other suitable land is available outside the Park.

While we support a swap, the Friends has fundamental concerns about the long-term lease proposal: 1) Depending on the terms of the lease, the arrangement is the de facto sale or gift of this property to the VI government and will result in the net loss of VI National Park resources; and 2) it will establish a precedent that could in turn threaten national parks throughout the country.

We have heard from many Friends members about this issue and the opinions span the spectrum. Some members question the need to move the school, some question why we would support giving up park land in a swap, and some members would like us to support the long-term lease.

We believe that the Park is part of the St. John community, and as such should help solve community problems when it is within their power and mandate to do so. The swap is a reasonable compromise and there wouldn't be any net loss of Park resources. The lease, on the other hand, would cause a loss of resources and, perhaps most importantly, set a precedent that threatens other parks.

We will keep you abreast of this and other issues that affect VI National Park. Thank you for your continued and generous support. I hope to see you out in the Park.

Friends of 
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NATIONAL PARK**

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