

Mr. Jean Pierre Oriol  
Acting Commissioner  
Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources  
Coastal Zone Management Program

Sir,

We write to you as members of the boating community here in Coral Bay, long-term Coral Bay visitors (10 years), members of the Coral Bay Yacht Club and concerned and interested parties on the subject of the Summer's End Group's plan to do what appears to be a take-over of the Bay - the construction of an oversized marina, followed by extensive building plans on the land surrounding the Bay.

The Summer's End Group give a patrician nod towards the "boaters who abide by the rules and regulations" - and then in the next press release mention "illegal boating". Almost all of the boaters currently on moorings or at anchor in the Bay, and whom SEG wish to evacuate, are legally registered and care deeply about our interaction with the anchorage and the shoresides.

To address the statement made by SEG that the Bay is a "waste receptacle": you are no doubt aware of the exercise around four years ago in which ALL the boats in the bay were required to register, provide details (including GPS location of mooring) and be fitted with a working waste system. This was carried out as a joint venture between the Coral Bay Yacht Club, a Club extremely active in supporting the community, and DPNR.

Trash washing onto the shore and into the mangroves is regularly collected and disposed of, by volunteers for Coral Bay Community Council, as part of ongoing community care. The village roadways similarly - the same roadways that are insufficient to carry the huge amount of trucks, plant and materials and general traffic that would be necessary for the considerable construction planned. VIDPNR several years ago identified Coral Bay, among other locations, as being an Area of Particular Concern....an area to protect and conserve for its unique habitat and animal species "of particular interest or that are threatened or endangered and/or provide a scientific or educational value". It causes Particular Concern now to wonder why DPNR would not only hand over the supervision of the Bay to a private company with no experience of submerged lands management, nor marine environment or boating knowledge, but also appear to be encouraging development of a fragile area.

The statement by the Summer's End Group that "we love the environment too" does not ring consistent with their plan to change it radically. Cruz Bay is the town on this island, Coral Bay the sleepy village - and it is a telling fact that many visitors, both vacationing here and on day-trips from St Thomas, head past Cruz Bay to Coral Bay for this exact reason.

There is undoubtedly inequity here, as everywhere else in the world society is divided into the rich and the poor, but on the whole it does not make for animosity, it is simply accepted. Indeed, the richer families are in the main local families who have been settled here for hundreds of years. Those who wish to work do, those who don't wish to can be found everywhere, not just in Coral Bay. The local fishermen run fish markets, though a Farmers Market as such in the bay does not exist. However, Miss Josephine provides the Bay with a wonderful variety of healthy produce and plants from her gardens.

KATS (Kids And The Sea) and AATS (Adults And The Sea) provide education in boat safety and sailing, TO OLYMPIC STANDARD, also instilling a knowledge and respect of the marine and shore environments.

To comment on the SEG list of closed businesses as their 'proof' that the area is in decline: yes those businesses are gone but the only one particularly missed is the gas station. Of course the closure of the treasured Guy Benjamin School is a matter of regret, but with falling attendance and escalating costs it was not a surprise - though the community did fight long and hard to keep it open. Development plans for that area of the bay are subject for another day.

'Youth Flight'? The young persons in a small village will ever be wanting to experience the outside world and should be encouraged to learn and grow. This will always be 'home' to them and a place for them to return to unless it is changed beyond recognition by such a monopolistic and pervasive project.

The incipience of the 'Summer's End Yacht Club and Marina' plan has slowed or halted several projects for minor additions or improvements to the current Bay businesses and ideas for new business too. All is in hiatus, waiting, as some of those businesses are in the subject location and will be forced into closure should the marina project go ahead.

What would be an incredibly lengthy construction phase for a project of this size would also destroy the currently busy rental market, probably for years to come, with no guarantee of it ever returning. Who wants to vacation in a construction zone? Come to that, who wants to live in one?

The community seems to be mostly agreed (as proved in the AIA Community Design Assistance program carried out here) that a small dock and facilities on the sheltered east side of the bay would suffice, be safe from inclement weather and be appreciated. The Coral Bay Marine Store there serves the boating community well and as a retail outlet is in keeping with the surroundings. The grand and all-encompassing design of the SEG marina and attendant buildings (Phases 1 and 2 are only under discussion as yet, Phases 3 thro' 7 are appearing far more ambitious) is far more suited to a larger, less shallow and less fragile location with more shore land available for the necessary facilities and better access for the required

construction vehicles, plant and materials. Have the logistics of the construction even been considered? One question asked is "where do they hope to get just the concrete needed" as to get enough needed just for a house build or a driveway out here is sometimes a difficult and lengthy procedure.

SEG talks about their concern with the environmental impact of the project, but as yet have produced no geological studies prior to drilling the pilings, nor hydrological studies to state the extent to which the water and marine life may be affected, nor environmental studies with expected impact - as there unavoidably will be. Indeed, the full extent may not be known until construction begins or is part way through, by which time it is too late to halt the process and reverse any damage. It is a cause of great concern that these researches and reports are NOT already in place if SEG is serious and committed to going through with the plan. Only last year, in Securities Exchange Commission v. 'Cay Clubs Resorts and Marinas' five principals of the company were charged with defrauding more than \$300 million from nearly 1,400 investors nationwide for an unfinished 'luxury marina project' in the States. Something to be aware of while not casting slur on the characters of the SEG principals and legal team.

On our sailing journey down the coastlines of Spain and Portugal we came upon several abandoned and derelict marinas, abandoned either because of storm/hurricane damage and repair assessment greater than insurance cover, or simply because the company/companies planning and building the marina complexes ran out of money and could no longer continue. Those structures, truly were a blight on the surroundings, a deterrent to boaters rather than an attraction, in some cases a danger to exploring walkers and children and in at least two instances had been taken over by some very undesirable elements living in an encampment of semi-wrecked boats and shelters on the docks.

The village of Coral Bay, notwithstanding the derogatory views of the Summer's End Group and their advisors, is a flourishing and well integrated community and does not need a 'rebirth'. Or reinvention. Or remodeling. If left alone and in the care of the assiduous Community Council it will progress at a steady and manageable pace and self-regulate to the businesses and tourist attractions that it can support, and which are supported in turn by the year-round residents and seasonal visitors. The many visitors who come here simply because Coral Bay is what it is, a beautiful and peaceful haven.

In our humble opinion, formed by many years of cruising and experience of marinas good and bad in different countries, the proposed marina is far from being the asset to Coral Bay and its community that it is purported to be. It is planned for the wrong part of the bay, where it would be vulnerable to frequent storm damage, it is much too large (encroaching on current legal moorings and right-of-way entry channels), it is not in keeping with the environmental surroundings (luxury big-name retailers do not fit here among the wandering donkeys, goats and sheep) and the sinking of the 1330 pilings would undoubtedly destroy the immediate ecosystem, then

possibly having effect on the pristine bays of Hurricane Hole too.

Please, please think twice before allowing this mammoth project to go ahead - this is a rural and historical part of the island and should remain as natural as possible.

Thank you for your time and attention, Mr Oriol - it is indeed a challenging issue that greets your recent appointment!

Mark and Lesley Maunder  
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