

Concern About Marina on Park Resources

From: Friends of Virgin Islands National Park (friends_of_virgin_islands_nation@mail.vresp.com)

To: dlsilverman@yahoo.com

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Dear Friends,

Many of you may have already heard about plans to build a large marina in Coral Bay. The proposed development is located across from the old Voyages restaurant and next to Island Blues. It includes a 145 slip marina that will accommodate vessels up to 210 feet, take up nearly 40% of Coral Bay Harbour, provide fuelling and pump out services, and take over control of all moorings in Coral Bay. The land-based development phases include a number of high-end shopping and dining establishments, housing for staff, waste-water treatment facilities and a number of other facilities.

There is widespread concern about this development on social, economic, and environmental grounds. In addition, the viability of its location and its feasibility as a sustainable business is also called into question.

However, we are most concerned about the environmental issues and the impact this development will have on nearby VI National Park lands and VI Coral Reef National Monument waters both at Hurricane Hole and to the south of St. John. Adjacent Fortsberg lies within Virgin Islands National Park boundaries and Hurricane Hole and other park lands are less than a mile away as the gull flies and less than 1½ miles away by sea.

This marina would be a significant threat to NPS-protected lands and waters. It would eliminate up to eight acres of seagrass beds, create a sizeable obstruction to water flow in the bay, add an unknown amount and number of contaminants to the bay waters from all the vessels and generally lead to severe degradation of water quality. Mitigation measures proposed by the developers, such as planting seagrass where there is none presently (and where they probably would not grow), and planting mangroves in an area unsuitable for mangroves, are simply not adequate. There are no physical barriers in the sea and the degradation of the waters of Coral Bay will have a negative impact on the waters of nearby Hurricane Hole and beyond.

The monument contains significant biological flora and fauna, including several threatened and endangered species, which forage, breed, nest, rest, or calve in the waters. Humpback whales, pilot whales, four species of dolphins, brown pelicans, roseate terns, least terns, hawksbill sea turtles, leatherback sea turtles, and green sea turtles all use portions of the

monument. Countless species of reef fishes, invertebrates, plants and algae utilize these submerged lands during their lives, and over 25 species of seabirds feed in the waters. Between the near shore nursery habitats and the shelf edge spawning sites, habitats in the monument play essential roles during specific developmental stages of reef associated species, including spawning migrations of many reef fish species and crustaceans. These are threatened by the marina and the development has given no consideration to the potential negative cumulative impacts to park and monument resources caused by significantly increased vessel traffic.

The Environmental Assessment prepared for this marina gives no consideration to impacts to the monument's water quality, marine resources, wetlands (mangroves) coral reefs, sea grasses, fish, marine invertebrates, and species of concern protected by the Endangered Species Act. Likewise there is no consideration of impacts to park and monument soundscapes and lightscapes.

Our objective here is to make you aware of this threat to VI National Park and the Coral Reef National Monument, which we care so much about. This development has already received approval from the local Coastal Zone Management Commission and will likely go before the US Army Corps of Engineers in the near future. We will write you again when the Corps of Engineers opens the public comment period on this project and encourage you to make your voice heard. In the meantime I encourage you to go to www.coralbaycommunitycouncil.org or www.savecoralbay.com to learn more about this proposed project and its wider impacts.

Thank you for your concern regarding this threat to park and monument resources.

Regards,

Joe Kessler
President

Thank you for supporting Friends and our VI National Park. Park-owned land can never be developed - and with our help it will be preserved, protected and educating others future generations. This is what makes St. John so special, and your support so important.



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