

Wednesday, August 20, 2014
Attention: Mr. Jean Pierre Oriol
Acting Commissioner
Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources
Coastal Zone Management Program
Re: Coral Bay Summers End Marina

Dear Commissioner Oriol,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Summers End Group Marina both as a former resident and an environmentalist. I am lucky enough to have grown up in part in Coral Bay, St. John, and much of my family still lives there. For this reason alone I am loathe to see a project undertaken that will change the very nature of the Coral Bay I know and love—both in terms of the incredible people who live and work there (for this would surely signal a changing of the guard), to the type of visitor it would attract, to the radically altered landscape this project would impose.

These are important considerations, and valuable reasons to oppose the project, but my opposition does not end there. I now reside in the Boston area and have spent the past five years working in the environmental sector, most recently for the ocean conservation organization Oceana. Apart from the lack of energy that Summers End Group seems to have put into research of the St. John community's actual needs or the broader market for such an large marina in this particular location, there appears to be a correlating lack of research into the environmental impact such a project would have on the marine environment.

Greater Coral Bay is home to several reefs, as well as numerous mangrove clusters, which serve the critical role of hatchery for reef creatures large and small. Together these constitute some of the most fragile ecosystems on earth, while at the same time supporting some of the greatest biodiversity. Even well run, small-scale marinas are highly damaging to coastal ecosystems due to the density of fuel, human waste, and other toxins they produce in a small area. The ocean can process a certain amount of pollutants, but such concentrated and potent toxins have the tendency to create dead spots, especially when placed in the vicinity of such delicate environments as mangroves and coral reefs.

I strongly believe the proposed Summers End marina to be too large for the Coral Bay ecosystem to handle, and thus misplaced in that environment. I trust there will be comprehensive research of the environmental impact of this project before any action is taken on it, and I believe the results of this research will support my statement.

I love St. John, and Coral Bay in particular. It is a special place, a special community of people, and an incredibly beautiful natural environment. It is a thriving tourist destination as it currently exists, and it seems a dangerous gamble to trade those elements for the hope of attracting mega yachts. Just as the human community of Coral Bay is ill suited for the proposed Summers End Marina, the natural environment of Coral Bay is ill equipped to handle such an enormous installation and the many pollutants that will accompany it. I hope you will consider the value that a thriving marine environment adds to an island reliant on its natural beauty before taking any further action on this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

My best,
Mercedes Cover
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