

TREASURE

OUR

u.s. virgin islands

COASTS

and

ESTUARIES

*A*PPROXIMATELY TWO MILLION TOURISTS VISIT THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS EACH YEAR. ST. THOMAS IS THE #1 CRUISE PORT IN THE CARIBBEAN AND A PORT OF CALL FOR MOST MAJOR CRUISE LINES. THIS VIBRANT TOURISM INDUSTRY DEPENDS UPON CLEAN WATER AND HEALTHY CORAL REEFS AND MANGROVES. THE COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT (CZMA) PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THE ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL VALUE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS' COASTAL AREAS. THIS LAW, WHICH IS ADMINISTERED BY THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA), RECOGNIZES A NATIONAL INTEREST IN OUR COASTAL AND OCEAN AREAS. IT ALLOWS STATES AND TERRITORIES, NOT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO BALANCE CONSERVATION OF THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT WITH HUMAN USES.

THE CZMA IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

The CZMA establishes programs to balance the use and protection of America's coasts. The Coastal Management Program gives states and territories a flexible framework to address a broad range of community development, economic, and natural resource issues at the state and local level.

Georgia Coastal Management Program

Approved: 1979

Lead Agency: Department of Planning and Natural Resources

The Virgin Islands coastal program works to protect coastal land and waters, such as beaches, bays, lagoons, wetlands, dunes, and bluffs, out to the limit of the territorial sea. Through planning, permitting, public education, and other management techniques, the program reduces conflict among competing uses for the territory's coastal land and water resources, including coral reefs.

Accomplishments of the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Program include:

- *developing a prototype plan for the Fish Bay Watershed to reduce sediment flowing into coastal waters;*

miles of coastline
175

coastal population in 2000
108,612

fy03 czma core (section 306)
funding
\$956,000

fy03 czma enhancements
(section 309) funding
\$79,000

fy03 coastal nonpoint
implementation
\$229,000



- *completing management plans for three Areas of Particular Concern (the Christiansted Waterfront on St. Croix, the Coral Bay Area of Particular Concern on St. John, and the Mangrove Lagoon/Benner Bay Area of Particular Concern on St. Thomas) to provide greater conservation, protection, and restoration of these natural ecosystems and critical marine resources;*
- *forming the Christiansted Waterfront Revitalization Advisory Committee to create a plan for revitalizing the once thriving waterfront;*
- *engaging schools and civic and community groups in Coast weeks activities for more than ten years;*
- *educating residents, tourists, students, and other stakeholders on the value and benefits of sustaining and protecting the coastal and marine resources of the territory by encouraging public involvement in activities including nonpoint source pollution workshops, coastal clean-ups, and watershed outreach projects.*
- *receiving full approval of its Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program in 2002.*

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

The Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Program, in collaboration with many local and federal partners, obtained legislative approval and established the St. Croix East End Marine Park. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with Housing Parks and Recreation and efforts are underway to redesign an existing building at Cramers Park as a Visitors Center. The Virgin Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee has been selected to receive a 2003 Coastal America Partnership Award for the outstanding partnership effort demonstrated to manage its marine resources. This award marks the third national award that the territory has received for its efforts in establishing the St. Croix East End Marine Park, the Territory's first marine park.