

Launch of Plastic Recycling Program Should Result in Significant Reduction in Plastic Pollution in USVI, Officials Say

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ST. JOHN — Officials who attended a Friday ceremony for the launch of Ocean-Bound Plastics Recycling Program on St. John hailed the effort as an important step forward in reducing the territory's carbon footprint.

Senator Donna Frett-Gregory said the program will not only ensure a significant reduction of harmful pollution in the territory's waters, but also assist with reducing the plastic footprint at the landfills.

"This should be a life-changing experience for us in the Virgin Islands," she said while delivering remarks at the ceremonial launch of the initiative that is undertaken by Island Green Living and its

partners. She further commended the company for leading the way in the territory with its green initiatives.

“Communities like us that have a finite space must take protecting our environment and our natural beauty a priority,” she said. “It is my fervent hope that the launch of this program will be the beginning of a structured recycling program throughout this territory.”

Ocean-bound plastic is plastic waste that is abandoned in the environment and transported to the ocean either by rain, wind, tides, river flow and floods. The recycling program's aim is to capture as much of this waste as possible. The project will allow the materials gathered to be repurposed rather than pollute the sea. Already, the company has crushed 1.2 million cans.

Also speaking at the function was Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, who said that while there have certainly been advances in sustainable materials, “it’s our duty to keep pollution out of our waters and off our streets.”

“We need to be intentional with our consumption and actively engage with our recycling to reduce pollution to protect our beautiful environment and fight the climate crisis to ensure that we sustain the planet for future generations,” said Ms. Plaskett, who informed the audience that the estimated global plastic waste volume for 2050 is 12 billion metric tonnes. “So we need to do our part for generations to come.”

She disclosed that the territory will be receiving funding to help in those areas from a number approved federal funding measures. “Under the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act, based on traditional funding formulas, the Virgin Islands will expect to see more than \$37 million over five years to improve water infrastructure in the region and to ensure clean, safe drinking water is right in all communities,” she said.

Through the same legislation, the Virgin Islands will benefit from the bill’s \$3.5 billion national investment in weatherization, which proponents say will reduce energy costs for families.

Governor Albert Bryan said that in his vision for the Virgin Islands, sustainability has always been a big piece of it. He suggested that people should return to some of the better traditional lifestyles centered on a message of sustainability. “Like how do we do more with less,” he said.