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Environmental Group Launches Air Quality Monitoring Network in St. Croix Communities, Seeks Residential Partners

A community-driven initiative aims to track and improve air quality following refinery incidents

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Purple Air monitor.

The Terra Ay Ay Environmental Action Group, a project of The St. Croix Foundation for Community Development, has announced the installation of the first of what is hoped will be many air quality monitors across several St. Croix communities.

The need for such a project was underscored by the adverse events following the 2021 incidents at the Limetree Refinery, which significantly impacted the well-being of residents, according to the group. A Community Impact Survey conducted in the aftermath revealed alarming details, including “hundreds of residents” in West End neighborhoods describing “noxious odors that left them gasping for breath or stricken with debilitating headaches on a daily basis in April and May.” Residents of one community in particular – Kingshill – recounted “low-lying chemical clouds that crept through windows and doors to infiltrate their homes,” according to the survey report.

Based on the data collected from the survey, along with findings from a 2014 report by the Eastern Caribbean Center of The University of the Virgin Islands, the Terra Ay Ay project has carefully selected neighborhoods for the installation of air monitors, with the first currently operating in the town of Frederiksted. Residents in these areas, which have been historically affected by industrial operations, will be able to access real-time data on air quality through the project’s [website](#).

The Terra Ay Ay Environmental Action Group says the project is not just monitoring, but is also aimed at fostering community involvement and education. With one sensor up and running, the group is now seeking residential hosts for additional monitors, and is also collaborating with local educators to involve students as citizen scientists, teaching them the precepts of data collection and analysis. The group hopes to turn scientific inquiry into a community-wide endeavor.

The Terra Ay Ay Environmental Action Group is a collaborative effort involving key local organizations such as Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism (CHANT), St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA), and Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition (VIGFC). Together, these entities strive for the protection, conservation, mitigation, and restoration of St. Croix's natural resources. By reconnecting the community with nature, the Terra Ay Ay project aims to foster environmental and community resilience, heralding a new era of proactive environmental stewardship in Saint Croix.