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Harbor Dredging Project Nears Start as VIPA Receives Key Permit From USACE

With the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' approval, the Virgin Islands Port Authority moves forward with plans to dredge Charlotte Amalie Harbor, enhancing its capacity to accommodate larger cruise ships and boosting the local economy

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Cruise ships in St. Thomas, USVI. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The project to dredge Charlotte Amalie Harbor and accommodate larger cruise ships has advanced, according to V.I. Port Authority Executive Director Carlton Dowe. On Monday, he announced that VIPA has received the approved permit application from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This development is expected to improve access and navigability for cruise traffic,

enhancing the local economy and fostering continued growth and development in the region.

The dredging project aims to provide a controlling depth of 12.1 meters (40 feet) in the main channel, 11.5 meters (38 feet) in the turning basin, and 10.9 meters (36 feet) at the West Indian Company (WICO) berths. This enhancement will allow the U.S. Virgin Islands to attract the largest cruise vessels, maintaining its status as a premier cruise destination in the Caribbean.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. emphasized the project's significance, stating, "This is another big win for the U.S. Virgin Islands. With the Virgin Islands Port Authority and our federal partners, we are transforming our main infrastructure in ways that will make history. Dredging Charlotte Amalie Harbor isn't just about moving sand; it's about moving forward. By making room for bigger cruise ships, we are opening doors to more tourism and more investments. This is about boosting our economy and making sure our islands are not just a top-notch place to visit but also a leading economic force in the Caribbean."

VIPA plans to put the project out to bid within the next sixty days and anticipates that the project will begin by the second quarter of 2025. The dredging is expected to take approximately 15 months to complete.

To provide more details about the project, VIPA will host an Industry Day at noon on August 13, 2024. Marine, dredging, and general contractors are invited to attend the meeting, which will be held in the conference room on the third floor of the VIPA Administrative Building at 8074 Lindbergh Bay, St. Thomas. Interested parties may also attend virtually by emailing info@viport.com to receive a Microsoft Teams meeting invitation.

Mr. Dowe expressed gratitude to the Bryan administration for its support and for submitting two pieces of legislation to appropriate funding for the project. He also thanked WICO Chief Executive Officer Anthony Ottley and his team for the information provided and involvement in the process. Additionally, Mr. Dowe acknowledged the members of the 35th Legislature and Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett for their assistance in advancing the project.

The completion of this project is poised to enhance the U.S. Virgin Islands' capacity to accommodate larger cruise ships, thereby promoting increased tourism and economic growth in the region.