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NPS Steps Up Environmental Efforts at Caneel Bay with Second Phase of Hazardous Waste Removal

Beach access maintained as cleanup expands to remove over 300 cubic yards of contaminated material

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Caneel Bay, St. John. By. GETTY IMAGES

The National Park Service announced on Friday that it has awarded a contract for the second phase of environmental cleanup at the Caneel Bay Resort.

This latest phase follows earlier efforts to address hazardous conditions left behind from past environmental contamination and damage caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

In this second phase, cleanup work will focus on the removal of contaminated soil and sediment from the maintenance area and a nearby drainage channel, known as Area 2, according to the release. NPS anticipates that approximately 288 bank cubic yards (BCY) of contaminated soil and 40 loose cubic yards of sediment will be excavated. "Bank cubic yards" refer to soil volume in its undisturbed, natural state, while "loose cubic yards" refer to the expanded volume after excavation.

Cleanup operations are scheduled to begin on-site in 2025, with funding provided through the Department of the Interior's Central Hazardous Materials Fund (CHF) and additional resources from the Inflation Reduction Act. During this period, Honeymoon Beach and Caneel Beach will remain open to visitors, the NPS said. However, certain parking areas may be temporarily closed to accommodate staging of equipment and sealed materials, and visitors may experience increased noise from heavy machinery. The NPS and its contractors are taking measures to minimize disruption and prevent contaminant spread, such as covering material stockpiles when not in use, stated the release.

In addition to the primary contractor, the Park Service said it has retained an independent Project Monitor to oversee the work and ensure that cleanup goals are met. The Project Monitor will collect confirmation samples, which will be analyzed by an independent laboratory with National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) certification for metals and pesticides. All hazardous materials removed from the site will be disposed of in a certified landfill in the continental United States.

The latest efforts build on the success of the first phase of cleanup, which was completed earlier this year. From January to April 2024, NPS safely removed approximately 58 tons of asbestos-containing debris from three key areas around Caneel Bay: Little Hawksnest, Scott Beach, and Turtle Point. This hazardous waste was transported and disposed of at a permitted landfill in Florida, with all necessary safety protocols strictly followed to ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

These efforts are part of a broader environmental response conducted under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), with planning and procedures based on findings from the Virgin Islands National Park's 2021 Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) Report and a subsequent addendum in 2022. These documents, available to the public, documented the presence of hazardous substances at the site, paving the way for NPS's ongoing efforts to restore and secure the area.

For more information about the cleanup at Caneel Bay, including access to detailed reports and updates, visit [NPS's Caneel Bay Assessment Page](#).