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CZM Approves Waste Management Authority's Convenience Centers for St. Croix

Three new waste facilities in Concordia, Mon Bijou, and Cotton Valley aim to improve solid waste collection and reduce landfill-bound waste with innovative designs and public education campaigns

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V.I. Waste Management Authority's convenience center in Peter's Rest, St. Croix.

On Tuesday, the St. Croix Coastal Zone Management Committee approved federal consistency determination applications for the Waste Management Authority's three new proposed convenience centers on St. Croix.

First presented at a public hearing in August last year, WMA is seeking to establish convenience centers at the existing weigh sites in Estate Concordia, on the western end of St. Croix, in Mon

Bijou, towards the center of the island, and in Cotton Valley to the east. Each of the sites will have adequate land buffers to mitigate potential negative impacts on neighboring properties, while the Cotton Valley site will be monitored in case any archaeological artifacts are discovered during the excavation process. Each site will also have a cistern to ensure adequate water to keep the area clean. The 20,000 gallon cisterns at the site in Concordia and Cotton Valley also have the potential to serve as an emergency supply for the surrounding community, according to WMA representative Amy Dempsey.

“The construction of these facilities on St. Croix is the first step necessary for Waste Management to basically begin waste diversion in St. Croix,” said Alex Bruney of the WMA. The public will be able to separate their waste at the new facilities, creating the opportunity for WMA to repurpose, process, or ship off-island waste that would otherwise end up in the landfill. A comprehensive public education campaign would accompany the construction of the new facilities to ensure that the objective of reducing landfill-bound waste is met. “These facilities are...a drastic improvement in the way that we're going to be handling solid waste collection within the territory moving forward,” Mr. Bruney said. “It will just get better from here.”

To ensure adequate supervision at the new convenience centers, they will not be open 24 hours a day. The authority seeks to “maintain some type of control over what is being brought to the facility,” Mr. Bruney noted. Security measures, including adequate site lighting and surveillance cameras, will also be installed. “That is all part of the design that's incorporated in the RFP,” he explained.

CZM Commissioner May Cornwall had some questions about the plan to handle potentially contaminated water runoff, and suggested that WMA look into “some way to capture storm water...on the site that then redirects to something that cleans it before it goes into the sewer system or into the environment.” She also suggested that the agency coordinate with the VI Fire and Emergency Services to ensure no conflicts arise over the development of the adjacent sites in Cotton Valley.

Mr. Bruney was careful to note that this was only the beginning of WMA's waste management strategies. For residents of communities who do not use the convenience centers, at-home trash separation is something that will be implemented at a later date, he said. “We have to start somewhere in order to be able to handle solid waste collection and disposal differently within the territory,” he declared. For now, the new convenience centers are the way forward, the authority believes.

From the discussion during Tuesday night's decision meeting, the CZM commissioners also believe this to be the case. They unanimously approved WMA's application for determination of federal consistency for the project.