

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Racetrack Faces Another Setback as FEMA Withdraws Funds Over Ownership Dispute

FEMA has rescinded funding for the Randall “Doc” James racetrack, citing its former private operation by VIGL during Hurricane Maria; the Virgin Islands government is appealing as FY2026 budget discussions become crucial for alternative funding.

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Randall “Doc” James Racetrack in June 2015 before it was demolished. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Horse racing enthusiasts in St. Croix may have to wait even longer for the return of their preferred pastime. Though the government has regained control of Randall “Doc” James

horse racing track on St. Croix, the territory remains in what Governor Albert Bryan recently described as a [“bit of a little fight with FEMA”](#) where funding is concerned.

The status of that fight was queried by Senator Novelle Francis on Thursday, when the Office of Disaster Recovery appeared before the Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure, and Planning. “What is the situation with the FEMA funding that had been earmarked to support and assist with the build out of the racetrack?” he asked ODR director Adrienne Williams-Octalien.

Originally, reconstruction of the racetrack on each island was being funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. However, “FEMA recently sent correspondence to us telling us that the racetrack on St. Croix is no longer eligible for those funds because it was not the responsibility of the territory at the time of the disaster,” Ms. Williams-Octalien said. Then, it was under the jurisdiction of VIGL, with whom the Government of the Virgin Islands [has since severed ties](#).

“They’re going to de-obligate those funds,” the ODR director disclosed. “We sent an appeal to them and we probably will try to continue to appeal it. But that, as it stands right now, is the decision.”

Senator Kurt Violet was visibly disappointed. He recalled that efforts were initiated to transfer the funds obligated to St. Thomas for the Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack over to St. Croix. “A letter was sent from Sports, Parks and Recreation to FEMA making the request. Was it approved?” he asked.

When no answer was immediately forthcoming, Senator Violet remarked that “it sounds like St. Croix’s race track really has zero dollars approved...Monies de-obligated for St. Croix, St. Thomas monies haven’t been approved yet.”

With FEMA funding uncertain, attention will likely now turn to the FY2026 budget, due before the legislature in the coming weeks, for more information on a potential funding source for the racetrack.