

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WICO Warns It Can't Keep Pace With Cruise Demand as Passenger Projections Rise 29% for FY2026

With 1.2M passengers expected next year, the West Indian Company faces flat revenue and berthing limitations. Officials say only dredging Charlotte Amalie Harbor and expanding ship accommodation can meet growing cruise industry demand.

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The WICO Dock in St. Thomas, USVI. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Amid changes to the organization's executive leadership and governance body, the West Indian Corporation is grappling with challenges relating to its capacity to meet cruising demand.

During Friday's board meeting, newly appointed interim chief executive officer Charlene Turnbull projected a 29% increase in passengers in the upcoming fiscal year. FY 2026 will bring approximately 1.2 million passengers, to the territory, she told the board.

Lack of berthing capacity is placing an upper limit on arrivals, however. Ms. Turnbull told board members that some ships have had to be shunted to Crown Bay due to lack of ability to accommodate them. "We cannot keep pace with the market's demand for ship calls," she said. A report from board finance committee chair Hugo Hodge showed WICO revenue practically flat year-on-year; slight growth from \$7.878 million to \$7.897 million is perhaps a reflection of the company's physical constraints.

The dredging project for the Charlotte Amalie harbor, currently in the most preliminary of stages, is expected to eventually improve WICO's berthing capabilities. A local contractor has [just been engaged](#) to demolish the former Addelita Cancryn Jr. High school, clearing the way for the site to be used to store reclaimed material when the actual dredging work begins.

The dredging itself will deepen the main channel of the Charlotte Amalie harbor to 40 feet, with the turning basin at 38 feet and the berth pocket 35 feet. In total, over 200,000 cubic feet of material is expected to be removed, according to a [presentation received last year](#) by the Virgin Islands Port Authority, the entity coordinating the project.

Until that work is completed, WICO is doing what it can to make adjustments and ease congestion. This includes a project currently underway that will allow the berthing of larger ships, slated to be completed by the end of the year.