

Gittens Seeks U.S. Army Corps' Help to Restore Fort Frederik Beach and Revive Shoreline Fishing Tradition

Sen. Gittens has asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to assist in restoring Fort Frederik Beach with a proposed breakwater project aimed at halting erosion and reviving a shoreline fishing tradition lost to storm damage and security limits.

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Frederiksted town, St. Croix. By. GETTY IMAGES.

ST. CROIX — Senate Vice President Kenneth Gittens has formally requested assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore the eroded shoreline at Fort Frederik Beach, one of Frederiksted's most iconic coastal areas. His proposal seeks not only to combat ongoing environmental damage but also to revive shoreline fishing opportunities that have long been part

of local culture but have declined due to post-9/11 security restrictions at the nearby Frederiksted Pier.

In a letter to the Army Corps, Gittens outlined the concept of a horseshoe-shaped breakwater made from stone boulders. Such a structure, he said, would help preserve sand, reduce safety risks in the water, and create space for a catwalk or pier extension where residents and visitors could once again enjoy recreational fishing.

“As a retired law enforcement officer, I understand and respect the Homeland Security protocols that limit public access to port facilities after hours,” Gittens stated. “At the same time, I am committed to exploring creative and community-centered alternatives that allow our residents, young and old, to enjoy fishing as a family pastime. This effort is not just about reclaiming a beach; it’s about reclaiming a piece of our culture and identity.”

The senator has also engaged with the V.I. Coastal Zone Management Commission to discuss the urgency of safeguarding Fort Frederik Beach. “There is a general agreement that something must be done to protect the beach as soon as possible,” he said. While the Army Corps is being asked to provide technical expertise, Gittens stressed his intent to continue working with local agencies and to invite community participation in the process.

For decades, Fort Frederik Beach was the premier family swimming destination in Frederiksted. Its shoreline, once pristine and safe, began to deteriorate after the twin blows of Tropical Storms David and Frederick in 1979, followed by Hurricanes Hugo in 1989, Irma, and Maria in 2017. Today, thousands of cruise passengers and local families still visit, but much of the beach’s original appeal has been lost to erosion and storm damage.

According to Senator Gittens, the proposed breakwater could help stabilize the shoreline, creating conditions for sand replenishment and ultimately restoring Fort Frederik Beach as both a recreational hub and a cultural landmark for St. Croix.