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Governor Bryan Announces Historic 2,469-Acre Land Acquisition at Maroon Ridge and Annaly Bay

Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. announced the historic acquisition of 2,469 acres at Maroon Ridge and Annaly Bay, the largest land purchase in Virgin Islands history. The land, once a refuge for enslaved people seeking freedom, will now form part of the park system

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Annaly Bay on St. Croix, part of the 2,469 acres acquired for the Virgin Islands territorial park system.

On Monday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. announced that the territorial government had made the largest land acquisition in the history of the Virgin Islands, for the benefit of the territorial park system.

“This is about ensuring that Virgin Islanders have open access to these lands, not as bystanders, but as rightful stewards, beneficiaries and owners of their heritage,” Mr. Bryan said, announcing the acquisition of 2,469 acres of land at Maroon Ridge and Annaly Bay on St. Croix.

Calling the acquisition “meaningful” and the land “sacred ground,” Governor Bryan noted that historically, Maroon Ridge “was a place of refuge for those who broke the chains of slavery and sought freedom in its cliffs and forests.” The land, he continued, “carries the spirit of resistance and the strength of our ancestors.”



Governor Albert Bryan Jr. signs the resolution designating the land as protected, joined by TPPA and DPNR officials. (Credit: DPNR)

The Government of the Virgin Islands was not willing to leave the land “unprotected and vulnerable to development,” the governor said. Funds for the acquisition came from the Department of Commerce and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. NOAA's Climate-Ready Coasts Initiative, a program under the Inflation Reduction Act, awarded the Virgin Islands \$69 million last July to fund the acquisition of four properties at risk from development. The money will also be used to create “a working group to guide the implementation of nature-based solutions,” and to train local youth “to provide increased local capacity for conducting restoration products,” according to a [July 2024 announcement](#) from NOAA.

Kristina Edwards, director of the Division of Territorial Parks and Protected Areas in the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, noted that the Maroon Ridge acquisition has been “decades in the making.” She acknowledged the support and the efforts of a myriad of community organizations to bring the idea to fruition. “It has been truly remarkable to see this be accomplished,” Ms. Edwards noted. “I hope that everybody realizes how important this is.”

The next step for DPNR and the Territorial Parks Division will now be to host a series of community meetings and stakeholder surveys, to “see what it is people would like to see as part of the park system,” said DPNR Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol. Because of the nature of the funding, he noted that anything being done within the newly acquired property must be “mostly low-impact conservation related activities.” However, the consultations will be important because “we don’t want to make those decisions for the community in a vacuum.” The public engagements, Ms. Edwards said, will likely begin in the coming months.

