

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Salt River National Park Site Cleanup To Continue In January 2015

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The final cleanup phase of the demolished hotel on the south of the Hemers Peninsula side of the Salt River Bay National Historical Park, located on St. Croix, will continue in January 2015 until the cleanup has been completed, the park has announced.

With funding provided by the US Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, the National Park Service and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources have been given the green light to complete the project, which has been on hold since August 2011.

Heavy machinery will start arriving onsite in the early weeks of January to commence debris and rubble removal. Access to and from the site will use the Haul Road from

Route 79—Benny Benjamin Road.

Contractors working on the site have been able to recycle about 100 prefabricated concrete slabs, and hundreds of tons of steel have been shipped off island. While work is being conducted, access to the Hemers Peninsula side of the park will be restricted to areas outside of the green cyclone fence on the south side of the peninsula.

The project, which is a part of the planned construction of a Coastal Studies Outpost on top of the 1100 square foot hotel foundation slab, has a scheduled completion date of March 2015.

Background

After the National Park Service completed its Phase I Archaeological Survey of the Salt River National Park in November, 2014, the group concluded that none of the cultural sites known before the hotel project began survived the hotel construction project, development of which took place in several phases from 1950-1986.

According to information from the Archaeological Overview and Assessment for Salt River Bay (2007), Hemmers Fryd remained in sugar cultivation until the 1920s, when it became a stock estate. In the 1950s, the land was sold and the estate was subdivided and prepared for residential development. The peninsula itself and the shoreline along the bay were slated for development as a tourist resort hotel and marina complex (Joseph 1989:27). A large salt pond was dredged for use as a marina, and a peninsula was built to the west. Part of the old shoreline was enclosed to create a new salt pond, and the northwest bay shore was extended. The hill on the northeastern portion of Hemer's Point was bulldozed and graded, exposing bedrock in some place.