

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Three Virgin Islanders Honored By EPA For Making Difference In Territory

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John McCarthy **April 25, 2015**



ST. THOMAS – Three individuals and organizations from across the territory were honored for their achievements in protecting the public health and the environment, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Caribbean Solar Company in St. John, Mario A. Francis in St. Thomas and The Nature Conservancy in St. Croix were all given the Environmental Champion Award by officials from the EPA in New York City this week.

“The EPA is thrilled to honor the work of these environmental trailblazers,” said Judith Enck, the EPA regional administrator. “These Virgin Islanders work tirelessly to protect

human health and the environment, inspiring us all to strive for a more sustainable future.”

Enck was joined by Donovan Richards, chair of the New York City Council's Committee on Environmental Protection, to present the awards to this year's recipients at a ceremony at the EPA's offices in Manhattan.

The Environmental Champion Award winners from the U.S. Virgin Islands are:

* Caribbean Solar Company, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands

Since its founding in 2012, Caribbean Solar Company has installed over 500,000 watts of solar energy and helped offset 576 tons of CO2. The company built a reputation as a high quality solar installer in the Virgin Islands. The Islands have one of the highest electricity rates in the world and alternatives, such as solar energy, can make the utility considerably more affordable. Caribbean Solar Company provides financing options that offer the possibility of going solar to a broad base of island residents.

* Mario A. Francis U.S. Virgin Islands Urban & Community Forestry Council, Inc. St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

Mario A. Francis is Chairman of the Urban and Community Forestry Council in the U.S. Virgin Islands for the past two decades. He created the Council's newsletter, The Tree Speaker, and has represented the Council at many local, regional and national conferences. More than 20 years ago he founded the Junior Gardening and Ecology Academy, an eight-week annual summer course that teaches children ages 6-15 about the environment and sustainability. Campers do everything from kayaking to dolphin watching to gardening.

*The Nature Conservancy St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

Since 1995, the Nature Conservancy's USVI Program, has worked to protect and restore priority conservation areas, helped recover important native species, and provided scientific assessments and training to islanders. Most recently, the Conservancy has grown thousands of endangered staghorn and elkhorn coral in USVI nurseries and is placing 20,000 coral back onto coral reefs this year. The Conservancy also helped launch the USVI Reef Responsible Sustainable Seafood Initiative and certified over a dozen local restaurants to date.