

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Lecture On Shipwrecks Off St. Croix's Coast Associated With Slave Trade To Be Presented On Thursday

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ST. CROIX – Professors from two American universities will make a presentation Thursday about searching for shipwrecks off the coast of the island that are associated with the trans-Atlantic slave trade, according to the U.S. National Park Service.

Steve Lubkeman of George Washington University and Paul Gardullo of the National Museum of African American History and Culture will make the presentation, the NPS said.

“There are literally hundreds of these wrecks off of the coast of St. Croix,” Joel Tutein, the superintendent of the National Park Service told *The Virgin Islands Consortium* on Sunday.

The project is expected to last two weeks and seeks to locate historic wrecks in protected waters, the National Park Service said. Asked what is meant by “protected waters,” Tutein said it refers to the fact that many of the wrecks occurred in areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service and in shallow-water areas protected by the reef that rings St. Croix.

Lubkeman and Gardullo will be accompanied by colleagues from the Southeastern Archaeological Center and Submerged Resource Group of the National Park Service.

The goal of the program is to better understand the physical remains and social history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade through locating documented vessel remains associated with particular journeys when the trade was active, the NPS said. A second arm of this project hopes to engage the public in helping to protect, record, and examine these wrecks as their final resting places become known and documented.

The National Park Service said the trans-Atlantic slave trade ran to and from St. Croix under the Danish Crown from 1733-1803, with many other nations, including Portugal, participating in this trade during this time.

The African Slave Wrecks Project was started by Lubkeman two decades ago, and has been active in several African countries, including Mozambique and South Africa. The project partners with the National Black SCUBA Divers Association to train local youth to help in the care and recording of their national heritage.

Recently the program was deployed at Biscayne National Park in Florida, where no wrecks associated with trans-Atlantic slave trade were recovered.

“We hope that during this first phase of the project at the St. Croix National Parks will bring to light some of our unknown remains,” the National Park Service said in a statement.

The lecture will be held in the Danish Guinea West India Company Warehouse-Slave Market Building from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday. Parking in the Christiansted National Historic Site lot will be “free” and open for this event until 7 p.m.

Please note that a meeting of “The Friends of the National Parks of St. Croix” will meet from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. just before the lecture in the same location.

For more information please search: www.nps.gov/CHRI