

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Construction Of Major Frederiksted Resort In Doubt After NOAA Issues Report On Coral Damage

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ST. CROIX -- A National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) 191-page report and opinion on the negative impact that construction of a major hotel on St. Croix's west end would have on corals, could potentially derail development of the much-needed hotel.

The report concluded that the Amalago Bay project, also called the Williams and Punch Resort, which would see the creation of 3,000 jobs as part of the planned 378-room resort and casino, would cause destruction and adverse modification to critical habitat for threatened elkhorn and staghorn corals if the development moves forward as proposed.

According to the report released on Wednesday, the intended five-star hotel would also include 102 resident golf villas, a casino, 66 timeshare units with a pool and fitness club, 17 residential spa villas and retail stores, 56 hotel villas, rock jetties, an events facility and more. The project would also require the relocation of Route 63.

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, through a press release issued on Friday, said while the news was disappointing, damage to the environment and the Virgin Islands' natural resources is not an acceptable cost for any development project and that she is hopeful NOAA, USACE and the developers can come to an amicable resolution that would allow the development to move forward.

"While we need to promote economic development and economic growth in the territory, and particularly on St. Croix, where the local economy has been hardest hit, we need to ensure that we protect our natural resources and the environmental qualities that make our islands so beautiful both to our residents and to the millions of tourists that come to our shores each year," the freshman congresswoman said.

She added: "I hope that William and Punch and USACE can work together to address the concerns raised by NOAA and that a proper mitigation plan can be developed and implemented. My office will continue to monitor and keep the public up to date with respect to any other information that develops."

The start of the Williams and Punch Resort would see long-awaited jobs being added to the island's ailing economy, especially in the aftermath of the HOVENSA refinery's closure.

Feature Image: Concept drawing of the William and Punch resort.