

The Virgin Islands Consortium

National Park Service To Cut Mahogany Tree Damaging Historic Building

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ST. CROIX -- The National Park Service on Sunday, December 6 will remove one of the mahogany trees at the rear of the historic Steeple Building in Christiansted, a press release NPS issued on Thursday has revealed. Above, the Steeple Building, affected by a mahogany tree to its left.

The mahogany tree being removed is behind the historic Steeple Building (circa 1744) to the rear of the buildings at the eastern corner. According to the release, the tree's root system has infiltrated under the historic building and is causing significant damage to the south wall; and large, horizontal cracks are damaging the structure.

The roots have also lifted up the rear wall, causing structural cracks and moisture to undermine the building's foundation and wall structure. Unfortunately, the release went on, the tree is too close to the building and not only poses a threat to the structure's 270-year-old history, but also works as a storm threat to the the building and power lines on Hospital Street.

The release further states that NPS takes the removal of the tree extremely serious, and will add two mahogany saplings, grown by seed from the park's trees, in the D. Hamilton Jackson Park, sometime in the future. Additionally, in keeping with NPS's policy that dictates planting more trees than are removed, NPS will add an additional 50 trees to the Hemmer's Peninsula portion of the Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve during the spring of 2016.

The tree's stump will be left in place and systematically removed under the oversight of NPS's Southeast Archaeological Center archaeology team, from December 7-18, 2015. The team will be conducting extensive archaeological compliance to facilitate the tree and root system removal as well as to inform the drainage mitigation actions for the historic building. NPS is advising that there will be a temporary closure of Hospital Street while the tree is being removed, which is expected to last for 1 hour.

Westbound traffic will be rerouted up Queen Street, to bypass the section of Hospital Street during the tree's removal. NPS anticipates this closure to occur between 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.