

The Virgin Islands Consortium

There Will Be No Change To Name Of V.I. National Parks, NPS Says; Legal Authority Remains The Same

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Following a press release [issued by Senate President Myron Jackson](#) stating that the National Park Service (NPS) had suddenly reorganized the Virgin Islands National Park to the Caribbean National Parks, which Mr. Jackson said would have repercussions for Virgin Islanders employed at NPS as well as for the integrity of Virgin Islands heritage, the National Park Service Southeast Regional Office issued a statement to The Consortium on Thursday afternoon, strongly denying those claims.

Calling the changes a realignment which adjusts HR reporting lines and preserves the authorities of each park, Saudia Muwwakkil, an NPS spokesperson, explained, "Each Caribbean unit of the National Park System is significant to America's natural and cultural

heritage. The Southeast Regional director recently realigned the parks' reporting relationships to push decision-making closer to the field. The superintendents of each Caribbean park will now report to a group superintendent stationed in the Caribbean. This adjustment establishes a working relationship between the parks that breaks down silos and opens access to resources and expertise. There will be no changes to the parks' names or legal authorities."

Mr. Jackson, who received his information from Lorelei Monsanto, a member of the Virgin Islands Unity Day group, was livid in his expression via a press release issued Wednesday, and called on Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett to hold public hearings; a public meeting is planned for 6:00 p.m. tonight at the Cleone H. Creque Legislative Conference Room in Cruz Bay, St. John.

"The possible change of name of the Virgin Islands National Park to the Caribbean National Parks and news that superintendents will be located in Puerto Rico is unacceptable in this day and age," Mr. Jackson said in his release. "This centennial year should be about revisiting the Virgin Islands Park System in addressing the cultural resources, community values, heritage and land issues of the Virgin Islands. Why were we not consulted as a community? Why has the governor or the delegate not addressed the community on this drastic change?"

According to Monsanto, the change occurred on July 11, 2017. Monsanto said it calls for what used to be known as the Virgin Islands National Park to now be referred to as the Caribbean National Parks, and for its administrative leadership to be transferred to neighboring Puerto Rico.

But the NPS statement completely debunks those claims, clarifying in detail the list of changes that comes as part of the realignment.

There will be no change to the park's name or legal authority.

What does the realignment mean to employees?

- Park employees will not lose their jobs or be downgraded.
- Employees will have greater access to resources and support to do their jobs.

What does the realignment mean to the public?

This change will help the agency maximize taxpayer savings and manage resources more efficiently.

Each unit will continue to have a park superintendent.

MPS says its goal is for the parks to have greater access to resources.

NPS also gave some background:

Each Caribbean unit of the National Park System is important in its own right.

NPS says it has teams on the ground managing these resources at Christiansted National Historic Site (CHRI)/Buck Island Reef National Monument (BUIR)/Salt River Bay

National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve (SARI), Virgin Islands National Park (VIIS)/Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument (VICR), and San Juan National Historic Site (SAJU).

A recent management review of the Caribbean parks — similar to reviews occurring in other parks and regions — was completed in 2017. The review team found that NPS could run each of the Caribbean parks more effectively by sharing resources and expertise. The team found that by working together, the parks will:

- Maximize buying power for equipment, goods and services;
- Strengthen the parks across all divisions; and
- Streamline reporting to the regional office.

As of July 2017, the National Park Service realigned the reporting structure of the park managers under one Caribbean Parks superintendent.

NPS says decision to realign was based on feedback received from management, employees and stakeholders at each park during the review.

This change realigns the reporting structure of the three park managers.

Three GS14 park managers — located at St. Croix, St. John and San Juan — now report to the new GS15 Caribbean Parks Superintendent. The San Juan park manager position is currently vacant.

The three park managers report to a Caribbean Parks superintendent, and that superintendent reports to the regional director.

The realignment mirrors similar models in the National Park Service, like the Outer Banks Group (NC) and National Parks of New York Harbor, said NPS.

The Caribbean Park superintendent, if vacated, can be duty-stationed at any of the three park sites.

Central operational functions like administration, safety and law enforcement may report to the Caribbean Parks Superintendent; however, the park managers along with the Caribbean Parks superintendent will work together to finalize the structure.