

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Community Helps Dept. Of Sports Parks And Recreation Repair And Restore USVI Recreation Areas

VIC News / **Published On March 26, 2018 10:16 AM /**

Staff **March 26, 2018**



ST. THOMAS -- On Saturday, Smith Bay residents and community organizations were hard at work in the area cleaning up and repairing recreation areas, Government House said on Sunday.

They cleared hurricane debris and overgrown bush and trees from Lionel Smut Richards Ball Park, the Smith Bay Tiny Tots Playground and the road to Coki Point Beach. They mowed the grass in these areas and removed broken and damaged fences, according to Government House.

Before the cleanup, the heavy downpours during hurricane season and the subsequent accumulations of rain water hampered work in the waterlogged field. Two weeks ago staff of the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation (DSPR) dug trenches to drain the field and it had dried out enough to let teams begin vital work to restore and repair.

Numerous volunteers from the Smith Bay Community Action Foundation, the Rotary Club of St. Thomas East, Perfect Heart Inc., the Virgin Islands Police Department and Wyndham Margaritaville Vacation Club as well as U.S. Army Recruiter and Staff Sergeant Vernon James and his recruits, representatives from the Virgin Islands Clergy Peace Coalition and the V.I. Soccer Federation all came together in a counter flood of community spirit to carry out the work.

"We're here today, and we'll continue monthly cleanup initiatives as we approach another hurricane season," said Virgin Islands Police Department Sergeant Roy Chesterfield, who also serves as President of the Smith Bay Community Action Foundation. "We want to keep our neighborhoods both clean and safe."

According to Government House, workers employed under the Disaster Dislocated Workers Grant through the Department of Labor also volunteered although this weekend cleanup campaign effort was outside their work week commitment.

"Repairing these areas are important for the youth. I already participate in disaster relief Monday through Friday and I don't mind volunteering for the sake of being a part of our islands' recovery," said Jermie Maynard, who is working with the DSPR under the Department of Labor's program to employ Virgin Islanders dislocated by the hurricanes.

Longer-term plans include improving drainage at the flood-prone ball park before a complete overhaul of the site can take place. Going beyond the Smith Bay area, the DSPR aims to repair and restore other damaged recreation areas across the Territory. Most of the recreation areas in the St. Thomas/St. John district are now open to the public, although some sites have limited access.

"This is a collaboration of the public and private sectors," said DSPR Assistant Commissioner Calvert White. "The main goal is to get our children and the community back to enjoying our facilities because leisure and recreation are beyond necessary, especially to relieve stress and remain engaged following two Category 5 hurricanes."

Those interested in volunteering for other cleanup efforts to repair and reopen Territorial recreation areas should contact Assistant Commissioner White at 340-774-0255.