

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letter To The Editor | There's A Crisis At The Susannaberg Landfill, But Who Cares...

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Staff **May 17, 2018**



Dear Editor:

I find myself wondering recently, am I playing “The Blame Game” or “Send the Fool Further? When I was little, we played a game entitled “Send the Fool Further.” It entailed having someone with a real or not so real problem trying to find a feasible solution. The person would take the issue to another individual whom they believe can help. That individual would listen and then send you to another person. The complainant, thinking that the listener was genuine, would move on to see the other person. This would continue because the person was so gullible, they believed that each person genuinely had their interest at heart. The Blame Game on the other hand, sees everybody blaming

somebody, other than themselves, for whatever is the situation. I am confused as to which of these two games, or maybe it's the two, that I find myself an involuntary participant in, at this time. My problem is real, and I am crying out for help. Let me enlighten you about my plight.

I write this article not to upset or offend anyone, or even to point fingers or cast blame. I write mainly to shed light on a rather painful and filthy situation. Born and raised on St. John, I have remained a contributing member of this community all my life. I currently reside in an area that is in close proximity to the Susannaberg landfill. After the passing of the two recent hurricanes, the landfill has also turned out to be the collection site for storm related debris. This has proven to be a monstrous headache for many. You can well imagine that living close to this area, has also become a nightmare for my family and other residents in the area. Why is this such a problem you ask? I will explain.

- The trucking companies that haul the trash are no longer moving the garbage. (They claim they are not being paid but I don't know if this is true).
- The hurricane debris has taken up an inordinate portion of the landfill.
- The garbage is not being sorted so everything is being piled together to include but not limited to household waste, electronics, white garbage (refrigerators, washing machines, stoves) galvanize and other building materials, vehicles, vehicle parts, and the list goes on.
- Flies, mosquitoes, rodents wild animals are in abundance and have taken up permanent residence.
- The stench is unbearable.
- People using the dump completely ignores the boundaries for the dump site and they are literally dumping in my front yard.
- The debris from Coral Bay is now being added to the mountainous pile at Susannaberg.

You must agree when I tell you, this is a health hazard for everyone in my household and the immediate community. I am cognizant of the fact that there has been a problem in getting the hurricane debris a permanent home off island. While this is so, the household garbage continues to accumulate at the site. The refuse is not being removed in a timely manner and this is exacerbating the problem. This is not just a problem for me, it is a Virgin Islands problem. We are mindful that tourism is our lifeblood, and the unsightly, garbage-strewn, unhealthy, rodent and mosquito infested environment can hurt not only our well-being, but our finances as well. Who goes on vacation to get sick? Who wants to wake up in the morning or drive by to and from work to be confronted with such a horrid mess?

I shared this information in the form of a letter with the following individuals and agencies. I will share their responses:

- The St. John Administrator, Camille Parris: Said he contacted several agencies and he is working on it.
- Waste Management: TOTAL SILENCE, no response
- Department of Public Works: They claim they have nothing to do with it, it's a Waste Management issue.
- Environmental Protection Agency: TOTAL SILENCE, no response
- Senator Marvin Blyden: TOTAL SILENCE, no response

- Senator Tregenza Roach: TOTAL SILENCE, no response
- Senator Janette Millin-Young: TOTAL SILENCE, no response
- Senator Myron Jackson: TOTAL SILENCE, no response
- Senator Jean Forde: Called back and visited the site on St. John, visited our home and spoke to us and planned to follow up with Waste Management.
- Senator Janelle Sarauw: Called back twice and said if nothing was done about it let her know.
- Senator Dwayne DeGraff – Returned call and plans to look into the matter.
- Senator at Large, Brian Smith – No response to letter. (I see him daily and try to engage him in conversation about the letter. He asked me what's in the letter and told me he knew how I felt because the dump is real bad and he will look into it!)

I am unable to sit on my porch or inhale clean air! I can only open my door briefly to go in or out or a bombardment of houseflies will swarm into my home! The rats at that site are the size of a household cat! I don't want them chasing me out of my home. This is no way to live! I need the blame game to end! I am running out of energy to fight any one, anymore! Please do not let my family run out of good health or even life! I am appealing to our Health Department, Public Works, and elected officials. The Office of the St. John Administrator, Waste Management and Environmental Protection Agency and the office of the Governor must get involved too. The lord knows that St. John received a whole lot of bad publicity in recent times when a family became sick because of an environmental mishap. I want to be proactive and get some remediation to a bad situation before somebody else - including me and my family gets sick! A word to the wise is sufficient they say. I am sharing my plight and I am now waiting on my government officials who I need to take some corrective action to assist in whatever way they can.

Submitted on Wednesday by: Deborah and Seldon Charles – St. John residents.

Feature Image: Susannaberg Landfill (Credit: St. John Tradewinds News)