

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plastic Products Continue To Pose Threat To Marine Life In Territory, UVI Finds During Its 2nd Annual Great Mangrove Cleanup Project

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The 2nd Annual Great Mangrove Cleanup held on Saturday with the assistance of over 150 volunteers, witnessed a record 1,786 pounds of debris removed from mangrove shorelines in kayak-based and land-based cleanups of mangrove shorelines at the St. Thomas East End Reserves (STEER), UVI has announced. STEER is a marine protected area on the east end of St. Thomas.

"It was exciting to see so many people come out for this event, again this year. Working together we removed nearly 1,800 pounds of trash – that's a big impact," said Dr. Kristin

Grimes, assistant professor in the Center for Marine & Environmental Studies at the University of the Virgin Islands.

According to the release, the cleanup event volunteers who span ages 9-70 represented several institutions including the University of the Virgin Islands, Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, Charlotte Amalie High School, Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School, Ulla F. Muller Elementary School, Joseph Sibilly Elementary School, and home school students, along with individuals from 13 other organizations.

Plastic products accounted for majority of the trash collected. Approximately 246 plastic beverage bottles, 133 plastic pieces, 114 other plastic bottles, 113 plastic cups and plates, 92 plastic grocery bags, 89 other plastic bags and 83 other plastic or foam packaging, UVI said.

“Like last year, the most common item we collected were plastic beverage bottles. What that tells me, is that plastic beverage bottles are a consistent marine debris problem for St. Thomas, so we should all be thinking more about what we are drinking out of, where we dispose of it, and where it may end up,” Dr. Grimes added.

Other items collected included 111 glass beverage bottles and 82 beverage cans. A few appliances and other miscellaneous items were documented in smaller amounts. Two refrigerators, one television, one polaroid camera, 11 tires and 15 life jackets were recorded.

The Great Mangrove Cleanup was made possible by sponsors who included: The University of the Virgin Islands Center for Marine & Environmental Studies, Virgin Islands Department of Planning & Natural Resources, Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS), Virgin Islands Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (VI-EPSCoR), Virgin Islands EcoTours, St. Thomas Recovery Team, Pizza Pi, Yes Waste Management, Virgin Islands Marine Rebuild Fund, and The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration’s Marine Debris Program.

For more information about The Great Mangrove Cleanup, contact the Public Relations Office at 340-693-1059 or pr@uvi.edu.