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## For Access to Some Beaches in St. Thomas, You Must Produce a Picture ID or Have Your Picture Taken; Sen. Blyden Says Policy Violates Coastal Zone Permit

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**Mermaid's Chair Beach in St. Thomas. By. MATT WADE**

ST. THOMAS — Senator Marvin Blyden is said to have expressed deep concern Wednesday for issues regarding public access to Botany Bay, Mermaid's Chair, and Sandy Bay beaches. In a recent letter to the project director for Botany Bay, the senator outlined the areas in which the beaches' visitor policy violates their Coastal Zone Permit.

The policy in question outlines that visitors must submit their IDs or submit to having their picture taken in order to access the beach areas; that visitors are not allowed to drive vehicles on the mile-long road to get to the beaches, and that visitors do not have access to Botany Bay. "Based on my

research, I have found that all the above practices are in violation of the terms of the Coastal Zone Permit as issued and modified by the Virgin Islands government,” Mr. Blyden said.

Coastal Zone Management Permit No. CZT-05-06(L) specifically requires that unrestricted access to Botany Bay, Mermaid’s Chair and Sandy Bay beaches be provided to visitors, the senator said. The fifth modification to the permit, issued by then-Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources Commissioner Dawn Henry by correspondence dated October 25, 2018, further required that shuttle service for pedestrians be provided to and from Sandy Beach and the property entrance three times daily at 8:30 a.m., 12 noon and 3:30 p.m.

Failure to abide by these stipulations has effectively restricted access to Sandy Beach for those who are not physically fit and able and completely denied access to Botany Bay itself. Furthermore, discussions about the matter with D.P.N.R. have shown that they do not consider the policy to be in accordance with the requirement of unrestricted access.

“As such, I strongly urge you to take immediate action to bring your operations, as they regard public beach access, into compliance with the requirements of your permit and, therefore, with Virgin Islands law,” said Mr. Blyden in his letter. The senator intends to visit the area frequently to ensure that beach access and transportation is provided to visitors and encourages members of the community to safely do the same, according to the release.

Mr. Blyden invites the community to email his office at [mblyden@legvi.org](mailto:mblyden@legvi.org), leave messages for his office at 340-693-3567, or send a message to his Facebook page for more information on this matter on other efforts.