

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIMAS to Host Annual Coast Weeks Beach Clean-up

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The Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS) will mobilize scores of volunteers for its annual Coast Weeks beach clean-up on September 21, UVI has announced. This initiative is being held in commemoration of the Ocean Conservancy's 34th International Coastal Cleanup being celebrated under the theme "Turn the Tide on Trash – Every Tiny Piece Matters"

These annual beach clean-ups serve to assist VIMAS with data collection as they work to better understand what types of trash are commonly found on Virgin Islands' beaches and how much, UVI said.

This year's event will see volunteers beginning their clean-up efforts at John Brewers Bay and then proceeding to other beaches.

While traditionally the international event is recognized on the third Saturday in September, VIMAS will extend its activities well into October.

St. Thomas beach clean ups scheduled to date include:

Saturday, Sept. 21 - Brewers Bay

Saturday, Sept. 29 – Coki Point Beach (underwater and land based cleanup)

Saturday, Oct. 5 - Red Hook Salt Pond

St. Croix beach clean ups scheduled to date include:

Saturday, Sept. 21 - Southgate Beach

Saturday, Sept. 21 - Dorsh Beach

Saturday, Sept. 21 - Altona Lagoon

A more detailed schedule will be developed in the upcoming weeks.

"The annual Coastweeks events has been in facilitation within the territory for a little over 30 years with the intent to not only to remove debris from our coasts but to collect data on the types of debris and quantity," said Howard Forbes Jr., St. Thomas coordinator.

Highlights from last year's cleanup events show that approximately 24,000 pieces of trash, which amounted to 3,500 pounds, were removed from coastlines in the territory. Some of the common debris items collected included plastic beverage bottles, plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, and cigarette butts.

"The VI Waste Management Authority is pleased to partner with the UVI Center for Marine and Environmental Studies, Coast Weeks Kick-Off Cleanup," said Melody Rames, public affairs officer of Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority. "We are privileged to live in one of the most beautiful regions on the planet. As such, every person living in the Virgin Islands has a responsibility to do their part to protect, clean, maintain, and preserve our paradise so we can leave an enduring legacy for generations to come."

The general public is encouraged to participate in the Coast Weeks activities. Clean-up supplies and water will be provided for volunteers. "We are encouraging the Virgin Islands community to make a commitment pledge to help reduce their plastic footprint," said Forbes. "Even if you are not able to attend a cleanup event, you can still do your part by making a pledge to remove simple single-use plastics from your life such as straws or bags," he added. Interested persons can take the pledge at <https://www.cleanseas.org/pledge>.

For the first time, Coca-Cola has joined VIMAS in sponsoring the local initiative. "Coca-Cola in USVI is proud to partner with the University of the Virgin Islands on this year's coastal clean-up activities," said Hugo Torres Vasquez, general manager of USVI Coca-Cola. "We are committed to reducing marine debris and will continue to collaborate on

meaningful and innovative solutions to reaching zero waste.”

The Department of Tourism is also pleased to be a partner and sponsor of the coastal cleanup initiative. “It is imperative that we keep our home and beaches clean for the citizens and visitors,” said Alani Henneman Todman, USVI director of communications. “Conserving the natural beauty of our destination for future generations should be the mission of every Virgin Islander, as we live in paradise.”

VIMAS is a division within the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Marine and Environmental Studies program. VIMAS works with the Virgin Islands community to raise awareness about our natural resources and foster environmental stewardship.

For more information about the beach cleanup or other VIMAS related activities, visit <http://vimas.uvi.edu> and contact the Public Relations Office at (340) 693-1059 or pr@uvi.edu.