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UVI's Glass Crusher Project Ready to Accept Glass Waste for Recycling March 27

Business / **Published On February 23, 2021 02:57 PM /**

Staff Consortium **February 23, 2021**

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Through its Glass Crusher Project, the University of the Virgin Islands announced Tuesday it's gearing up to accept glass waste from the community, to improve recycling efforts in the Virgin Islands. Commencing March 27, the university will host a glass collection effort on the last Saturday of each month at the former West Bay Supermarket parking lot, near UVI, from 9-11 am, the institution made known.

For years, UVI through its Coastal Cleanup initiatives has picked up glass beverage bottles and other trash that littered Virgin Islands beaches and shores.

The university said it purchased five glass crushers thanks to a \$50,000 grant secured from the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands. The glass crushers are capable of turning bottles

into sand and smaller glass pieces or cullets that have a variety of uses such as in art, landscaping, ice making, golf course bunkers, pool filtration systems, and high-end sand blasting. The sand can also be used to make asphalt patches for potholes, can be mixed into concrete and to make sand bags for the hurricane season.

The machine can crush a glass bottle in as little as 3-5 seconds into sand of about 4-5 different grain sizes. “However, there will be some fragments of small glass cullets in different sizes and sand; these will need to run through a sieve to separate all of the different fragments based on size,” said Howard Forbes Jr., coordinator, Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS).

“The machines are small and ideally cannot handle the large volume of glass waste produced by the USVI; however, our intent is to start small, and eventually work our way to scaling-this project upwards,” he said.

Forbes noted that they can only crush glass beverage bottles. “The bottles should not be broken as broken glass can choke or jam the machine; additionally, any liquids that are in the bottle should be emptied,” he added. “Examples of glass beverage bottles include wine bottles (metal cap and ring around the neck of the bottle should be removed), beer bottles, non-alcoholic glass bottles and spirits (rum, etc.). Unfortunately, other glass waste cannot be crushed by these machines.”

“My hope is that the purchasing of these machines, while they can't handle the large volume of glass waste produced territory-wide, this effort will hopefully inspire others to also take a stance to better the environment of the USVI,” Forbes said. “We do recognize that glass waste does not comprise the majority of waste in the USVI; however, it is a low-hanging fruit and can serve as the driving force for something much larger.”

“We know from 30 plus years of beach cleanup data and about two to three years of mangrove shoreline cleanup data that beverage bottles (both glass and plastic) usually account for a majority of that waste, said Forbes.

Plans are in place to secure two additional glass crushers for St. Croix.

“We are also coordinating with various community partners who would receive one of the machines through an equipment loan,” Forbes said. “My hope is to create drop off points where residents can drop off their glass waste so that it can be crushed and at some point, work out the logistics of transporting larger volumes of glass waste from businesses, etc. to these drop-off points.”

The GLSand machines were made by Expleco in New Zealand.

The Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS) is a part of the University of the Virgin Islands, located within the Center for Marine and Environmental Studies. VIMAS works with the Virgin Islands community to raise awareness about our natural resources and foster environmental stewardship, according to UVI.

Over the last 25years, VIMAS and federal and local partners have participated in Coastweeks, an international event coordinated through The Ocean Conservancy. During Coast Weeks, VIMAS agents coordinate beach clean-ups on all three islands within the territory and data is collected on what types and amount of trash is collected. In 2019, 45,359, pieces of trash, which amounted to 4,888 pounds, were removed from coastlines in the territory. Some of the common debris items collected included plastic beverage bottles, plastic bottle caps, straws, food wrappers, and cigarette butts.

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