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House Passes Plaskett Bill to Designate St. Croix as National Heritage Area; Law Would Provide Funding, Economic Boost

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Aerial shot of St. Croix from the most easterly point of the United States, Point Udall By. PINTEREST

The U.S. House of Representatives on Friday passed the St. Croix National Heritage Area Act, included in H.R. 803, which designates St. Croix as a National Heritage Area (NHA).

“National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress as places where historic, cultural, and natural resources combine to form cohesive, nationally important landscapes. St. Croix is rich in culture, history and offers the resources ideal for establishing an NHA,” said Ms. Plaskett. “The effort to achieve this designation started with former Congresswoman Donna M. Christensen in

2003 with a bill to authorize a feasibility study for the NHA designation on St. Croix."

The congresswoman said the measure, if signed into law, "would assign the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office as local coordinating entity to oversee and develop programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance important resource values in the Heritage Area. In addition, it would make funding available to develop recreational and educational opportunities to inform and engage our youth on the heritage of St. Croix."

Ms. Plaskett also sees economic benefits to the designation. A study by the National Park Service detailed economic benefits to NHAs, with tourism listed as the main driver. "The economic impact of visitors to NHAs is the primary source of economic benefit quantified in this analysis," said NPS in its [findings](#). The direct consequence of visitor expenditures become business receipts, which in turn, are used to pay wages, salaries, and taxes. The initial direct round of spending ripples through the regional economy supporting additional economic benefits."

"As this bill makes its way through the U.S. Senate we are asking our local government to support its passage for President Biden to sign into law," said Ms. Plaskett. "It is imperative that we protect and restore historic sites and buildings in our historical district of St. Croix through public-private partnerships."