

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Community Volunteers Remove Over 3,000 Pounds of Hurricane and Other Debris From Coral Bay Mangroves

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Volunteer with debris pulled out of the mangroves at the 2021 St. John Great Mangrove Cleanup in Coral Bay. By. KITTY EDWARDS

ST. JOHN — The University of the Virgin Islands announced Tuesday that over twenty community volunteers removed more than 3,000 pounds of debris from the shoreline during the 2021 St. John Great Mangrove Cleanup. Volunteers ages 22-77 cleaned 0.25 miles of mangrove debris from the shoreline in Coral Bay on Saturday, July 24. Much of the debris found had lingered as a result of the hurricanes.

“This is the most debris removed by weight from community clean-ups of USVI mangroves, to-date,” said project lead, Dr. Kristin Wilson Grimes, research assistant professor of Watershed Ecology at the UVI Center for Marine and Environmental Studies. “This was a tremendous effort by volunteers, despite the rain we experienced on Saturday. It really speaks to what a dedicated group can achieve together.”

According to UVI, by number, the top items removed were beverage bottles (1,074; plastic, glass, and cans), plastic pieces (579) and construction materials (461). There were many unusual finds, including a scuba tank, kayak, dog collar, one container of airsoft pellets, a grill, 2 patio chairs, a car battery, a full can of paint, one toilet seat, a wood sailboat boom, 9 tires and 23 “lost soles” (flip-flops and other shoes).

The event builds on the success of previous Great Mangrove Cleanups on St. Thomas and St. Croix over the past three years, the institution of higher learning stated. Those events engaged more than 375 volunteers and removed more than 7,300 pounds of marine debris from territorial shorelines. With the 2021 St. John Great Mangrove Cleanup, community volunteers have now removed 5.4 tons of debris from mangrove shorelines across the territory since 2018.

The 2021 St. John Great Mangrove Cleanup was sponsored by the UVI, the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the Coral Bay Community Council, the Coral Bay Yacht Club, the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service, Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority, Virgin Islands EPSCoR, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) Marine Debris Program.