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St. John to Get New, State-of-the-Art Fish Market if Bill Approved by Senate Becomes Law

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Fish market. By. GETTY IMAGES

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ST. JOHN — After years of not having an official fish market, St. John will in the coming months be the location of a state-of-the-art fishing facility that will not only have an area for vending fish but a slipway for boats to dock.

The full Senate on Thursday approved an Act appropriating \$920,000 to the V.I. Port Authority for the construction of an aesthetically pleasing Cruz Bay fish market and to modify the existing concrete boat ramp and bulkhead at the Little Cruz Bay Dock, Cruz Bay Quarter; and appropriating \$580,000 to the Department of Public Works for the construction of a boat dock and

slipway at Enighed Pond on the island of St. John.

Named Bill No. 34-0089, the measure is sponsored by Senators Janelle Sarauw and Steven D. Payne Sr. The Act was presented to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary on Wednesday, where Mr. Payne said fishermen of St. John have had to endure the hardship of trying to earn a living and support their families in almost inhumane conditions for a very long time.

“They have had to clean and prepare their catch of the day on a makeshift dock at a makeshift market that they built on their own. The market was completely destroyed in 2017 by the hurricanes,” he informed lawmakers while seeking their support for what he described as a better working condition for the fishermen.

“Since then, after the Customs [and Border Protection] built their new facility, the gates to access their makeshift dock are constantly locked. These individuals actually have to climb fences just to get to that area to clean their ware, [and] get back on a boat to go around town. When they get around town, they have to get a cooler to bring their stuff up onto the sidewalks and try to sell their ware from off the sidewalk,” he said as he outlined the hardship of the fishermen.

Mr. Payne said that some of the fishermen have had their catch seized by licensing officials because they don’t have a license to sell on the sidewalks. “This type of hardship that individuals have to go through to simply feed their families, we cannot stand by and continue to allow this to happen,” he said.

Pointing out that there are fish markets on the two other main islands, Mr. Payne said the construction of the modern fishing facility is long overdue for the fishing and boating industry on St John.

Senator Milton Potter, chairman of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, strongly supported the project. “I think it’s important to have a safe, sanitary, quality area for fishermen to sell their produce and for the people of St. John to purchase their produce,” he said.

"It is difficult to not support an initiative like this. Also, it's important to improve our marine structure in the territory and this initiative does that," he Mr. Potter added.

All other senators unanimously supported the bill. It along with [several other measures](#) will be forwarded to Governor Albert Bryan for his approval or veto.