

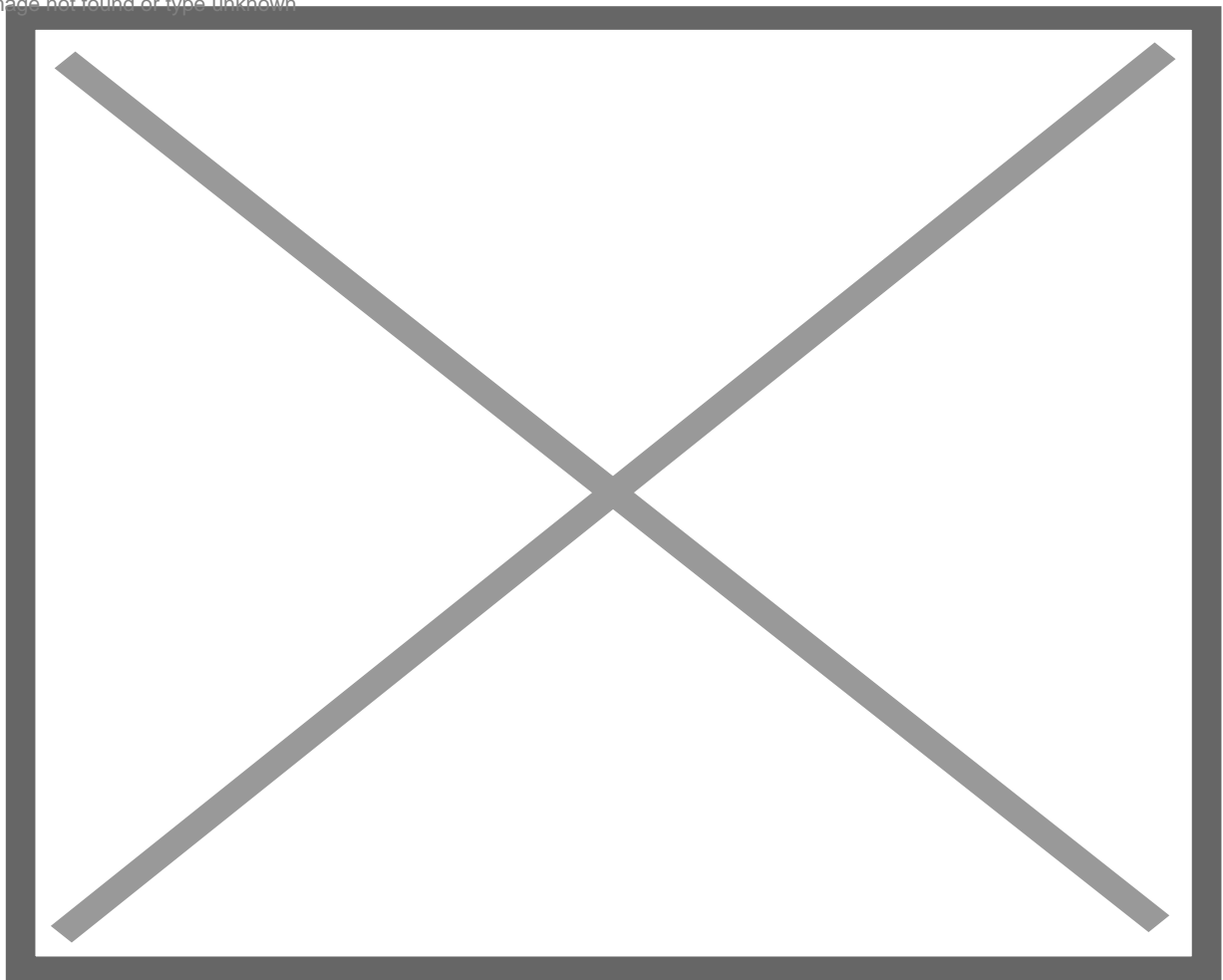
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National Park Service and GVI Considering Land Swap to Build K-12 School on St. John; Public Comment Period Now Open

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Whistling Cay By. GETTY IMAGES

The National Park Service is seeking public input on a potential land exchange between Virgin Islands National Park and the territorial government of the U.S. Virgin Islands on St. John. The NPS said it is preparing to conduct an environmental analysis of the proposed land exchange and requests your assistance to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities. The 30-day comment period begins March 28 and ends on April 27.

The purpose of this NPS project is to respond to the request from the GVI to exchange a parcel of NPS-owned land, known as the Catherineberg Estate (Tract No. 01-137A), as a possible location

to support the island's local educational needs. In exchange, the GVI has offered the island of Whistling Cay (Tract No. 02-101) for consideration.

The project is needed because the government of the Virgin Islands has determined that public education on St. John is lacking and is currently only available through the eighth grade. To complete a public high school education, students must commute by boat each day or relocate to St. Thomas during the school year.

For nearly three decades, the GVI and the U.S. government have discussed approaches to expanding education on St. John. Steps taken between 2012-2014 identified the 11-acre park parcel within the Catherineberg Estate as a possible location to support the island's education needs. In November 2019, Governor Albert Bryan offered the small island of Whistling Cay for consideration in an exchange, re-energizing negotiations. This potential exchange provides the opportunity for local officials to achieve their long-standing effort to construct the first K-12 public school on the island of St. John. Education is a component of the NPS mission and therefore, this request from the GVI aligns with NPS goals, the NPS said.

Meeting Information

As part of the civic engagement process, the NPS will host a virtual meeting open to all members of the public on Thursday, April 7 at 6:00 p.m. AST to provide information about the project scope and issues and answer questions. Members of the public can attend the virtual event or submit written comments by visiting <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/stjohnlandexchange>.

How to Comment

Comments are to be submitted electronically at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/stjohnlandexchange> or mailed to Potential Land Exchange, Superintendent, Virgin Islands National Park, 1300 Cruz Bay Creek, St. John, VI 00830. The 30-day comment period begins March 28 and ends on April 27.