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U.S. Office of Insular Affairs Official Tour Limetree Bay, Other Locations During USVI Visit

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The shuttered Limetree Bay Refinery By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The U.S. Department of the Interior announced Monday that Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs, Keone Nakoa, traveled to St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John last week where he met with territorial leaders and federal officials to discuss current priorities in the territory.

Nakoa met with Wayne Bryan, director of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency Fusion Center; Roger Merritt, director of the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority; and Jean-Pierre Oriol, commissioner, Department of Planning & Natural Resources, according to the release.

Federal partner meetings included a meeting led by NPS Superintendent Nigel Fields and staff who provided a tour with discussions and updates on Caneel Bay redevelopment, the land exchange for which OIA provided technical assistance, hurricane restoration projects, and law enforcement activities within the park.

OIA said that the delegation toured the Limetree Bay Refinery, which has been closed since early 2021, and met with community groups to discuss the impacts of the refinery on the community. Nakoa and staff also met with Mike Evans, Refuge Manager for Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge, and Kristen Hodge, director of the U.S. Virgin Islands Joint Recovery Office for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, where the delegation learned about ongoing disaster recovery efforts from Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

“I thank the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands and our federal partners in the USVI for taking the time to talk with me about how best the Office of Insular Affairs can work with the USVI government, the people of the USVI, and other federal agencies with offices in the islands,” stated Nakoa. “This was my first opportunity to meet with our partners and colleagues in-person in the Virgin Islands and to see first-hand their unique circumstances and opportunities for the Interior to have the greatest positive impact. “The USVI is the only U.S. territory in the Caribbean for which OIA has responsibilities, and we appreciate being able to visit and to hear from leaders on the ground.”

OIA Division Director for Policy Basil Ottley, OIA Budget Analyst Julianna Rice, and USVI Desk Officer and Field Representative Dwayne Petersen, traveled with Nakoa, as well as OMB Program Examiner Michael Hildner and Interior Budget Analyst Patrick Joos who both cover the Insular Affairs portfolio for their respective offices.