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## Bryan Signs Into Law Carrion-Sponsored Bills Establishing Territorial Park System

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Government House announced Tuesday that Governor Albert Bryan signed into law legislation that brings to life a Territorial Park System and revises a Territorial Park System Trust Fund Board, actions that the administration says will allow the government to manage and acquire land and recreational areas and implement the Maroon Sanctuary Zone on the West End of St. Croix.

During a signing ceremony at Government House on St. Croix Tuesday morning, Mr. Bryan also named the first four members to the seven-member Park System Trust Fund Board. They include Department of Planning and Natural Resources Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol, Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White and private-sector members Carlos Tesitor Jr. of St. Croix and Conn Davis II of St. Thomas.

The governor thanked Senator Samuel Carrion for sponsoring Bills No. 34-0267, which establishes the parks system, and 34-0268, which creates the Park System Trust Fund Board, and for the opportunity to sign legislation that can change the course of the Territory.

“Nothing gives me more pleasure than to set up a parks system that will determine a legacy of preservation for all Virgin Islanders to see in perpetuity,” Mr. Bryan said. “There are so many pieces of land in the Virgin Islands, whether St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix or Water Island, that we want to see preserved in perpetuity. To do that, what we needed to do was create the Territorial Parks System of the Virgin Islands.”

The governor said the territorial system is similar to the National Park Service, which has allowed for the preservation of the Caneel Bay Trail, the Christiansted Fort and other landmarks in the Virgin Islands.

“I would like to thank the Administration, my colleagues in the 34th Legislature, and all who supported this vital effort,” Mr. Carrion said. “I chose to devote myself to public service because I desired to enhance the quality of life for all Virgin Islanders. This park system initiative will aid in the preservation of our natural and cultural resources for future generations. Steps taken towards the expansion and development of our Territorial Park System in 2022 will one day be remembered as a significant event in the history of the U.S. Virgin Islands.”

He added, “Given growing concerns regarding beach access, environmental degradation, and the loss of significant historic and other sensitive sites, all those involved in advancing this measure should be proud. This legislation also makes DPNR eligible for millions in conservation grants to create new parks and to protect existing sensitive areas such as the offshore cays. It is essential that we preserve our lands and waters for the purpose of conservation, recreation, and economic growth.”

The legislation allows the Government of the Virgin Islands to take more than 30 properties and put them into the Territorial Parks System to be reserved for beaching, recreation, hiking trails, nature preserves and parks that will be protected from commercial development, Gov't House made known.

These areas include:

St. Croix:

- Great Salt Pond
- Cramer's Park
- Parcel No. 5 & 56 Salt River

St. John:

- Oppenheimer Beach
- Steven Cay

St. Thomas:

- Cas Cay
- Bovoni Cay
- No. 1 Neltjeberg
- Portion of Water Island at Sprat Bay

- No. 6 & 7 Hassel Island

“One of those places is Maroon Ridge right here on St. Croix. Since the 1980s we have had a set-aside that was by law in order for us to create a preserve and an easement for Crucians and Virgin Islanders alike,” Mr. Bryan stated. “Earlier this year we took notified the owner that we were implementing a zoning condition established in 1983 for a conservation easement of 1,000 acres for such a preserve.”

Mr. Tesitor is the president of the Trust for Virgin Islands Lands, a VI land preservation and conservation organization and who has experience operating a preservation trust fund.

Mr. Davis was appointed for his financial background and experience managing finances, which will be one of the principal roles of the Board, and for the fact that his family has used a preservation easement to donate land on St. Thomas to the Trust for Virgin Islands Lands.

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