

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Park Service Seeking More Public Input on Proposed Land Exchange With GVI For High School on St. John

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The National Park Service is seeking public input on the environmental assessment for a potential land exchange between Virgin Islands National Park and the territorial government of the U.S. Virgin Islands on St. John. The 30-day comment period runs August 23 through September 22.

According to NPS, the purpose of this project is to respond to a request from the territory that the National Park Service convey to it 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 for territory-owned Whistling Cay. The project is needed because the territory has determined that the Catherineberg parcel is the

preferred site on St. John for a new public school, due its central location along an existing roadway and its relatively gentle slopes.

This potential exchange provides the opportunity for local officials to achieve their long-standing effort to construct the first public K-12 school on the island of St. John, NPS said. Education is a component of the NPS mission and therefore, this request from the territory aligns with NPS goals.

[This past spring](#), the public was invited to provide comments on the purpose, need and objectives of the proposed action during 30-days of public scoping. At that time, the NPS referenced key issues, including visitor use and cultural resources which are more fully evaluated in the environmental assessment.

NPS noted that St. John lacks a public secondary school and students must commute daily to the neighboring island of St. Thomas to complete their high school education. Over the past three decades, the territory and the U.S. government have discussed approaches to expanding education on St. John. Hurricanes Irma and Maria increased the urgency of finding a solution as the storms destroyed the only public elementary school on St. John. Teachers currently instruct their elementary students in temporary structures erected on adjacent recreational space shortly after the 2017 storms.

Members of the public can submit written comments by visiting <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/stjohnlandexchange>

Written comments may also be hand-delivered or mailed to the park headquarters at: Potential Land Exchange, Superintendent, Virgin Islands National Park, 1300 Cruz Bay Creek, St. John, VI 00830.

In addition, the park will have a printed copy of the environmental assessment for review and comment cards at the park headquarters (1300 Cruz Bay Creek, St. John, VI 00830) during the Visitor Center hours of 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m, Mondays through Fridays.