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Bill to Designate St. Croix a National Heritage Site Closer to Reality Following U.S. Senate Hearing

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Frederiksted, St. Croix on February 12, 2015: An animal mill and wind mill on display at the Estate Whim museum. By. GETTY IMAGES

Last updated on Thursday, Sept. 22 at 11:16 a.m.

The U.S. Senate on Wednesday heard testimony on a bill that aims to designate the entire island of St. Croix a National Heritage Area. This is the second time since being introduced in 2003 that the bill has made it past the U.S. House of Representatives and onto the U.S. Senate. In February of 2021, the measure [won House approval](#), with Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett stating at the time, "It is imperative that we protect and restore historic sites and buildings in our historical district of St. Croix through public-private partnerships."

Committee Chair Senator Angus King presented the Senate companion bill S.4222 during a hearing of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks on Wednesday.

Mr. King said he was “proud” to present the companion bill which was re-introduced by the current V.I. Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett in 2021.

“I think it is important for us to work together to ensure that the voice of our citizens in the territories are also heard,” he remarked. It was one of 14 bills voted on Wednesday.

The effort to achieve this designation started with former Congresswoman Donna M. Christensen in 2003 with a bill to authorize a feasibility study for the NHA designation on St. Croix.

In a press statement following the vote, Ms. Plaskett said, “More than 10 years ago, in September of 2010, the National Park Service completed this study and concluded that St. Croix meets the evaluation criteria for this designation.”

“I thank Senator King for his support of the designation of St. Croix as a National Heritage Area. I will continue to advocate for this legislation to finish the long-standing work of my home island to utilize our spectacular natural and historic resources to spur increased, relevant and culturally appropriate economic development,” she said.

If passed, the bill would assign the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office as the local coordinating entity to oversee and develop programs and projects that recognize, protect and enhance important resource values in the Heritage Area and would make funding available to develop recreational and educational opportunities to inform and engage youth on the heritage of St. Croix.

Following further consideration in the Senate and if passed, the measure will be forwarded to U.S. President Joe Biden before coming law.