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Plaskett Calls For Re-imaging of St. Croix's South Shore With Available Federal Funds: 'Our Community Cannot And Will Not be Left Behind'

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett is calling for the re-imaging of the St. Croix south shore where the beleaguered oil refinery currently sits, and said local and federal leadership as well as private sector stakeholders should take advantage of federal funding opportunities that would facilitate the south shore's transformation with a new industry.

She also criticized the current owners of the refinery for what she described as their lack of communication with the Environmental Protection Agency on the refinery's efforts to meet environmental safety standards.

Her statement came one day after the EPA announced that the refinery [would not resume operations](#) without obtaining a new comprehensive Clean Air Act permit. Ms. Plaskett said she met with EPA officials Thursday.

The new permit, called a Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permit, would require detailed air quality analyses and the use of the best available air pollution control technology, the EPA said.

According to the federal agency, the refinery is located "near historically marginalized communities that are overburdened with pollution, including pollution from this refinery that led EPA to issue an emergency order to pause all operations in May 2021."

"I have spoken at length with EPA's leadership as well as the White House about the engagement of federal government agencies and what they can do to provide support the Government of the Virgin Islands to reimage the Southshore of St. Croix, the site of the refinery," Ms. Plaskett said.

"Given the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to actively transitioning from fossil fuels to clean energy, aiding underserved communities, creating good paying jobs – which squarely fits the needs of the St. Croix community – this appears to be an ideal time for local and federal government along with private sector to utilize the enormous grants available in both the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act to create an entire new economic / industrial system on the islands. Although the initial news of the permit requirement may seem to be negative, this situation presents our territory with a transformational opportunity."

She said the owners of Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation, whose principals include Charles Chambers and David Roberts have not done particularly well in communicating with the EPA regarding their efforts to ascertain that safety lapses were being addressed.

"Given the issues raised by EPA on previous occasions, I continue to raise concerns regarding the level of engagement by the present owners of the refinery with federal and local partners," she said. "We must work collaboratively across all levels of government to ensure we understand our options and are aware of the resources available. Our community cannot and will not be left behind."