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What Do You Think About the Proposed Redevelopment of Caneel Bay? The National Parks Service Wants to Know.

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Caneel Bay in St. John after Hurricane Irma. By. THE NEW YORK TIMES

The 30-day window for public comment on the redevelopment of Caneel Bay opened on January 20th, giving Virgin Islanders until February 20th to share their views, unless a timely request for a 15-day extension is received.

Up for consideration are two possible approaches.

The first is for the National Park Service to de-commercialize the area. When the Retained Use Estate (RUE) expires on September 30th this year, the NPS would take over management of the

property, maintaining the existing roads and trails and ensuring safe access to the beaches, but the agency would neither provide or allow lodging or resort-style services.

Any existing commercial operations would be allowed to run until the end of their permits. The alternative, NPS's preferred option, is to re-establish overnight lodging services on part of the RUE's original footprint, and to potentially develop two community spaces, where "residents, overnight guests, and Park visitors could more directly experience the local culture of St. John and the USVI," according to an NPS press release.

The comment period opens ahead of three planned public meetings on the issue - one virtual next Thursday, January 26th at 6pm, and two in-person meetings after that (5:30 pm on February 2nd at Giff Hill school Atrium, and 2pm on February 4th at a location TBD).

The public consultation over the future of Caneel Bay comes even as a lawsuit winds its way through the courts. Last June, EHI Acquisitions LLC filed a [quiet title civil complaint](#) against the U.S. government, claiming ownership of the land the RUE facilities sit on.

On January 12th, District judge Robert Molloy ordered the parties to mediation. A status conference has been set for April 4th, with a trial date in October- after the RUE expires.

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