



The Coastal Program In the Caribbean: *U. S. Virgin Islands* *Caring for Our Coastal Habitats*

Overview

The mission of the Coastal Program is to protect and recover Federal Trust Species (threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, and inter-jurisdictional fish) by supporting restoration of high-priority coastal habitats. The Coastal Program provides financial and technical assistance for voluntary, on-the-ground habitat restoration and protection projects through locally-based field coordinators. The Program works closely with other Federal, Territorial, non-governmental organizations, and private partners to carry out restoration projects. The small size and steepness of the watersheds makes consideration from ridge-top to reef important. Ongoing projects include restoration and enhancement of mangrove forest, mudflats, salt ponds, native beach dune forest, dry forest, riparian or gut moist forest, and coral reefs. Invasive exotic plant or animal removal in areas that provide long-lasting benefits to native

Coastal Program in the Caribbean Projects Restored or enhanced in FY 2005 - 2006

- 43 acres of St. Croix ground lizard habitat restoration through rat removal on Green and Ruth Cays done
- Tree nursery at Sandy Point NWR to provide native trees for beach forest restoration underway
- Invasive plant control in leatherback sea turtle nesting habitat underway
- 15 acres of dry forest restoration at Jack and Isaac Bays underway
- Estimated benefits to over 8 acres of coral reef habitat (as part of Jack and Isaac Bay reforestation)

species, and measures to reduce illumination of sea turtle nesting beaches are also favored. In addition to Federal trust resource species, restoration efforts may benefit native and endemic animals and plants, particularly those identified as rare by the Territory.

Priorities

Priorities are determined with partners using plans, such as the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy of the

Virgin Islands, CZM Areas of Particular Concern, the East End Marine Park Management Plan, and others, with strong emphasis on projects falling within the St. Croix geographic focus area. Priority will be given to projects with long-lasting practices that benefit multiple species or habitats. Examples of target habitats for restoration include dry forest, riparian or gut forest, salt ponds and mudflats, mangroves, offshore cays, sea turtle nesting beaches, seagrass beds, and coral reefs.

Projects may occur on Federal, Territorial, or private lands providing there is a commitment to maintain the conservation practice. Projects on or near National Wildlife Refuges, National Park lands, and other conservation properties will receive priority.

For More Information

For more information about the Coastal Program, contact Beverly Yoshioka at 787-851-7297 ext. 227 or visit us on the internet at <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/> to view our more detailed Caribbean program information sheet.

