



# November–December, 2008 REPORT

*To promote conservation of environmental resources, provide education,  
and advocate for environmentally responsible actions.*

## Message From the Chair

Greetings SEA members and friends,

On Wednesday, November 12 the St. Croix Environmental Association will hold its 22<sup>nd</sup> annual membership meeting at the Buccaneer's Mermaid Restaurant. We will be celebrating SEA's longevity, our recent successes, and our plans for the coming year. I hope you can join us at 6:00 pm for conversation and a pot-luck dinner, and our program beginning at 7:00.

A special feature of our annual meeting program this year will be our guest speaker, Lieutenant Governor Gregory R. Francis. On several occasions, Lieutenant Governor Francis has encouraged SEA to form early collaborations with developers and event promoters in order to avoid surprises and undesirable last-minute conflict over environmental issues. That approach worked well with The Palms hotel expansion.

SEA prefers a proactive approach where we can alert developers early in their planning process to the potential environmental issues they may face. Proactive, collaborative work on environmental issues is better for the developer, better for SEA and the environment, and better for the Virgin Islands. We appreciate the interest and the ongoing efforts of the Lieutenant Governor in bringing SEA together with developers and in encouraging private, public and non-profit collaboration.

SEA thanks the Buccaneer for once again donating the use of the Mermaid Restaurant and the time of the restaurant staff to host our meeting. We appreciate their continuing generosity and support for SEA.

Please join us beachside at the Mermaid Restaurant. Registration, cocktails, and pot-luck dinner begin at 6:00 p.m. followed at 7:00 by our special program, business meeting and awards ceremony. A cash bar will be available. Seating is limited so please make your reservations early by calling the SEA office at 340-773-1989.

Thank you!

**Don Diddams**  
Board Chair

## Message from the Director

### Summary of SEA Testimony on the William & Punch CZM Permit Application

SEA staff and directors have been in communication with the principals of William and Punch and representatives of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation for well over a year on the conceptual design of this project. While we appreciate the opportunities for community engagement afforded by William & Punch during this design phase, SEA staff and directors are disappointed that our recommendations generally are not reflected in the final Environmental Assessment Report (EAR). SEA is particularly disappointed, because with preparation of a responsive EAR and avoidance or minimization of environmental impact where practicable, and compensatory mitigation where not, the project may have been able to move forward without major opposition on environmental grounds. SEA's comments and recommendations include:

- SEA recommends that CZM require an adequate evaluation of alternatives for all aspects of the proposed project.
- SEA agrees with DPNR Division of Fish and Wildlife staff finding that the information provided by the applicant is insufficient to fully evaluate potential environmental impacts of the project.
- SEA agrees with the 1994 legal opinion of U.S. District Court Judge Stanley S. Brotman when he wrote *that no permit may issue until all necessary studies and plans have been submitted and approved by the Division of Coastal Zone Management and/or the Committee.*
- SEA recommends that the William and Punch Environmental Assessment Report with appended responses to deficiencies be deemed by the CZM Commission to remain not sufficient to adequately assess environmental issues outlined in the CZM permit application;
- SEA recommends that the CZM Commission not approve the major CZM permit application of William and Punch, LLC in its current form.

We offered to work with William & Punch to complete the mandated requirements for future CZM Commission review.

**Paul Chakroff**  
Managing Director

## Southgate Update

September brought welcome rainfall to St. Croix filling Southgate Pond. Coots and Moorhens responded quickly by beginning to build nests in mangrove trees all around the pond. October brought more rain and, unfortunately, the hurricane winds of Omar roared through the Territory on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

At Southgate the north-facing beach forest took the brunt of the wind and wind-driven salt spray and sand. Seagrape, the most predominant species, is well adapted to these conditions and suffered little damage. Taller trees such as Breakbill and White Cedar were more heavily impacted. Broken branches and uprooted trees now block the drive at the western end of the beach.

Also, one lovely sailboat that was moored offshore broke loose and came aground on the shoreline. There is no evident damage to the hull nor are there signs of leaking petrochemicals. We hope that the owner will soon be successful in removing the boat before additional damage is sustained. More worrisome are the three catamarans that had been pulled up on the eastern end of the beach which became airborne during the storm and landed deep in the beach vegetation. Removal of these boats will likely be difficult and will require caution to avoid additional damage to the trees. Please contact SEA if you are the owner of one these unfortunate cats.

Sand eroded by storm waves is quickly returning to the beach – part of a natural process that can be seen in a



Grounded sailboat at Southgate.

less dramatic form on a daily basis. Sand erosion is a common threat to sea turtle nests but because most nests at Southgate were located high on the beach berm under vegetation there were few nests harmed by Omar.

Mangroves within the wetland lost leaves and a few small branches but very little permanent damage was done. By the 28<sup>th</sup> Coots were building new nests and

laying eggs that will begin to hatch in about three weeks.

Witnessing the resilience of natural systems to recover from natural disasters is inspiring and thought provoking. I feel very fortunate to have that opportunity in my work.

Carol Cramer-Burke, Program Director



Catamarans land in the bush after being airborne.

## Mini Quest 2008

Two thousand eight was the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for the Mini Quest. Mini Quest is a one-day training session, held yearly on the islands of St. Croix and St. Thomas, for public and private school teachers from all grade levels. It was my second year attending as SEA's representative and I am happy to report that, Quest 2008 was great!

We had an opportunity to speak with several teachers about the prospect of SEA coming to their classrooms to deliver environmentally based lessons to the children. Several of the teachers gave me contact information and SEA will be in touch with them shortly. The volunteers and I were able to sign up 19 teachers from various schools on the island. In total we had about 50-75 teachers stop by the Environmental Learning Lab (ELL) to see our demonstration. I spoke to many of them about our demonstration and gave them the VIREO information pamphlet, SEA's brochure and my business card.

For this year's inquiry based experiment display, we demonstrated and explained natural and human introduced Greenhouse Gases. This topic worked well to introduce the VIREO information pamphlet, which sparked a lot of interest.

Volunteering with me for the day were two wonderful women, Kim Ishida and Sharon Grimes. With their help, I was able to have a successful and productive second Mini Quest demonstration. Overall, I think that Quest was a great success.

Vanessa Forbes, Environmental Educator



# ST. CROIX ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Phone: (340) 773-1989 Fax: (340) 773-7545



[www.stxenvironmental.org](http://www.stxenvironmental.org)

## Activities and Events Offered by St. Croix Environmental Association

*SEA offers a variety of free or low-cost activities to explore and better understand our island's environment. Residents and visitors are welcome! SEA strives to provide knowledgeable guides for such activities as shore walks or hikes to better understand our native flora and fauna; visits to the bird rehabilitation program; organic farm visits; star-gazing; and snorkeling trips, to name just a few. If you would like to know more about SEA activities, volunteer as a guide or make suggestions, please call SEA at 773-1989.*

**Saturday, November 8, 2008, 9:00—11:00 a.m.: Toni Lance, Certified Falconer and Bird Rehabilitation Expert** will guide us to meet and greet her current residents, including a Peregrine Falcon, who has lost part of a wing. This is a very special opportunity for an up-close look at birds usually seen only from afar. Everyone is welcome. Donations appreciated to help feed the birds. Pre-registration required; please call SEA at 773-1989.

**Wednesday, November 12th 6:30-9:00 p.m.: SEA Annual Meeting** at the Buccaneer Hotel Mermaid Restaurant. Potluck dinner, business meeting. **Lieutenant Governor Gregory R. Francis** will be the guest speaker at SEA's annual meeting. Registration, cocktails, and pot-luck dinner begin at 6:00 p.m. followed at 7:00 by our special program, business meeting and awards ceremony. Seating is limited so please make your reservations early by calling the SEA office at 340-773-1989.

**Saturday, November 15, 2008, 7:30– 10:00 a.m.: International Migratory Bird Day Celebration at Great Pond.** Local bird enthusiasts **Lisa Yntema** and **Carol Cramer-Burke** will be your guides to identify a variety of migratory birds. Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Please wear shoes that can get wet—a hat, sunscreen, insect repellent and drinking water are recommended. Free posters for all participants. **Call 773-1989 to register.** Free for SEA members, \$10 for non-members.

**Friday November 21, 2008, 7:00—8:30 p.m.: IYOR Free Movie Night.** FREE Family Movie Night with FREE popcorn! Featuring “**Shark Tale**” at UVI's Great Hall

**Saturday November 22, 2008, 10:00—12:00 noon: IYOR Snorkel Clinic at Southgate.** Learn to snorkel or advance your skills! Join us for snorkeling, games and prizes! Snorkel gear, drinks, and snacks provided by IYOR 2008 and SEA. *IYOR 2008 is a project of the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators (VINE).*

**Saturday, December 6, 2008, 8:00– 10:00a.m.: Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge.** Come explore and learn about the dry forest plants with botanist **Rudy O'Reilly**. Bring hats, sunscreen, water, and a swimsuit for after the walk! Pre registration is required. SEA members free, non-members \$10. Call SEA 773-1989. *Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge is managed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service.*

**Saturday December 14th, 2008, 10:00—12:00 noon: IYOR Snorkel Clinic at Fort Frederick.** Learn to snorkel or advance your skills! Join us for snorkeling, games and prizes! Snorkel gear, drinks, and snacks provided by IYOR 2008 and SEA. *IYOR 2008 is a project of the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators (VINE).*

### SEA Says Thanks!

Many thanks to Toni Lance, Lt. Governor Gregory R. Francis, Lisa Yntema, Carol Cramer-Burke and Rudy O'Reilly for leading SEA activities, and to all of the volunteers who helped make our many events and activities successful.



**Save the Date!**  
February 28, 2009  
6pm

The Palms at Pelican Cove

**MASQUERADE BALL  
& AUCTION**

Music • Dancing  
Costumes • Green Games  
Silent Auction

Call the SEA office to reserve  
773-1989



**Check out our website!** All newsletters and the recycling directory (see *Island Resources & Links* tab) are available. Current list of activities and events are also posted.

**ATTENTION SEA MEMBERS**

**Our NEWSLETTER is now available by electronic mail.**

**Simply send us an e-mail at [stxsea@gmail.com](mailto:stxsea@gmail.com) if you would like to receive your newsletter electronically.**

**THE ST. CROIX ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION**

The SEA Report is a bimonthly publication of the St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA), a chapter of the Virgin Islands Conservation Society (VICS). VICS is a nonprofit membership group affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation.

SEA's hours are Monday through Friday 9AM to 5PM.

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*To promote conservation of environmental resources, provide education,  
and advocate for environmentally responsible actions.*