

Chapter 1:

Introduction





BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ST. CROIX



St. Croix is in the Caribbean Sea, approximately 1,100 miles from Miami. The island is 21 miles long and 6 miles across at its widest point. The eastern and northwestern ends of the island are hilly and steep. Rolling coastal plains make up the southern coast. The tallest point is Mt. Eagle at 1,169 feet. Point Udall, the eastern tip of the island, is also the easternmost point of the United States.

St. Croix was likely formed from volcanic mountains on the sea floor that were later uplifted and exposed. Thick coral reefs grew in the submerged valley between these mountains, forming what is now the fertile coastal plain. The diverse marine and terrestrial communities of St. Croix include extensive coral reefs, productive seagrass beds, wetlands, closed canopy moist forests, dry forests, woodlands, desert-like shrublands, and herbaceous communities (active and abandoned pasturelands).

St. Croix is the most agricultural of the U.S. Virgin Islands. The island was first colonized because the combination of its fertile coastal plain and climate was ideal for the cultivation of sugar cane. West Africans were taken as slaves and brought to St. Croix to work

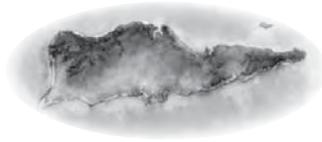
on the cotton and sugar plantations. The island's economy was dominated by the sugar industry until slavery was abolished in 1848. Today the economy lags behind the other U.S. Virgin Islands, and the median household income on St. Croix is about half that of the national average. Major revenue sources include the Cruzan Rum and Captain Morgan Distillery, a large oil refinery, tourism, and government sector jobs (U.S. Census 2000).

Inferences from archeological investigations conducted throughout the Caribbean as well as South and Central America provide evidence dating the earliest cultures on St. Croix possibly as far back as 4,000 years. Christopher Columbus had the first recorded armed conflict between Europeans and Amerindians when he visited St. Croix on his second voyage. In the following years a total of seven colonial flags have flown over St. Croix (Spain, Great Britain, Holland, France, the Knights of Malta, Denmark, and the United States).

The United States purchased what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, Water Island, and several other smaller islands) from Denmark in 1917 for \$25 million. St. Croix, the largest of the U.S.



Bethlehem sugar
factory ruins.
NPS-SEAC photo.



Right:
View of Buck Island
from Pt. Udall.
NPS-SEAC photo.



Below:
Effigy vessel from
St. Georges.
NPS-SEAC photo.



Virgin Islands, is an unincorporated territory of the United States. The island is divided into seven subdistricts, but areas of the island are often identified by the former colonial estates. The island has two primary towns: Frederiksted with a population of 3,765 and Christiansted with a population of 2,865. The 2000 U.S. Census estimated the total population of the island to be 53, 234.





BACKGROUND

PURPOSE OF THIS FEASIBILITY STUDY

The purpose of this feasibility study is to determine if the island of St. Croix meets the suitability and feasibility requirements for designation as a national heritage area. The National Park Service has prepared this study at the request of the Secretary of the Interior as directed by Congress in the St. Croix National Heritage Area Study Act (Public Law 109-338, October 12, 2006). Subtitle B, the section of the act pertaining to St. Croix, can be found in appendix A.

A NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

A national heritage area is a locally managed place designated by Congress where natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity that are shaped by geography. These patterns make national heritage areas representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved with them. Continued use of a national heritage area by people whose traditions helped to shape the landscape enhances the area's significance (NPS 2003). National heritage area designation will not impact private property or fishing rights.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen sponsored legislation that directs the National Park Service to study the suitability and feasibility of establishing a national heritage area in St. Croix. Local supporters view the potential designation as a way to strengthen

the island's identity; promote a sense of cultural pride in the island's youth; sustain the island ways of life on St. Croix; improve the economy and quality of life of St. Croix residents; share St. Croix's story with the world; and preserve protect, and promote St. Croix's heritage resources.

THE STUDY AREA

The study area for the potential St. Croix National Heritage Area includes the entire island of St. Croix and its offshore marine environments (see chapter 5, criterion 9). The study boundary is based on an assemblage of natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources that are spread across this area that together represents distinctive aspects of American heritage through the remarkable culture of the Crucian people. Many of these heritage resources were identified by the local citizens of St. Croix, including more than 100 unique sites that relate to the major heritage themes of the island. Many of these heritage resources are described throughout this study, and the sites identified by the public can be found in appendix D.

The rationale for extending the boundary beyond the island itself is because of the integral connection between the people of St. Croix and the marine resources that surround the island. These marine environments and productive fisheries have played an important role in shaping St. Croix's heritage and are essential to many of their traditions, customs, and folklife. Not only have St. Croix's extensive coral reefs, numerous bays, lagoons, offshore islands, and productive fisheries helped to sustain the Crucian people, but they are also a source of great pride to share with visitors.



The Caribbean Sea was also fundamental to the beginning of St. Croix’s heritage by providing the migration routes necessary to bring native Central and South Amerindians to the island more than 4,000 years ago. Today, the crystal-clear Caribbean waters that surround St. Croix continue to attract people from around the world, further enriching the cultural diversity of the island.

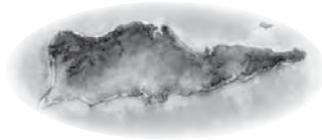
The study area extends 3 nautical miles out from the island to the U.S. Virgin Islands territorial boundary. This boundary includes most marine habitats that surround the island. The potential heritage area does not include the shallow and deep-water coral communities of Lang Bank that extend 10 miles east from the island because of the 3-mile territorial boundary limit (NOAA 2007). Although the potential heritage area boundary follows the territorial boundary, designation as a heritage area would have

no effect on private property rights, fishing rights, land-use zoning, property taxes, or governmental jurisdictions.

Map 1 shows the study area boundary for the potential national heritage area. A map showing the extent of St. Croix’s marine environments can be found in chapter 2.

A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

National heritage areas expand on traditional approaches to resource stewardship. They typically support community-based initiatives that connect local citizens to the preservation and planning process. By embracing a community-based approach, national heritage areas can bring together diverse efforts, such as education, recreation, heritage tourism, and historic preservation. Committed to both protecting and promoting the natural,



cultural, historic, and scenic assets of a specific area, national heritage areas play a vital role in maintaining both the physical character and cultural legacy of the United States.

Through the efforts of a local coordinating entity, residents, businesses, governments, and nonprofit organizations come together to improve the regional quality of life through the protection of shared cultural and natural resources. This cooperative approach allows national heritage areas to achieve both conservation and economic growth in ways that do not compromise local land use controls.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Designation of a national heritage area does not provide the coordinating entity or any federal agency authority to regulate land or land uses. Participation in projects and

programs is always voluntary, with zoning and land-use decisions remaining under the jurisdiction of local governments. In addition, the coordinating entity is also prohibited from using the federal funds it receives through enabling legislation to acquire real property (NPS 2003).

A national heritage area is not a unit of the national park system, and no land is owned or managed by the National Park Service. National Park Service involvement is always advisory in nature, and the agency does not make management decisions. After a national heritage area is designated by Congress, the National Park Service partners with local community members to *help* plan and implement activities that emphasize heritage-based interpretation, conservation, and development projects. The National Park Service also provides administrative oversight of federal funding that the national heritage area receives.





THE FEASIBILITY STUDY PROCESS

SUGGESTED STEPS IN A NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY

Step 1 is to define the study area to identify natural, cultural, and/or political limits that best encompass important resources related to the history of the region and potential themes that may be identified. (Addressed in chapter 1)

Step 2 requires a public involvement strategy to promote public understanding of the study; to maximize public participation and their contributions to the study process; and to assess public support for designation and local capacity and commitment to undertake heritage programs. (Addressed in chapter 1)

Step 3 is to determine if St. Croix contributes in substantial ways to our country's national heritage, and if so, determine if themes exist that would connect the various heritage resources to help the public understand, appreciate, and celebrate the island's importance. (Addressed in chapter 3)

Step 4 involves inventorying natural and cultural resources of the island to determine if St. Croix is a nationally distinctive landscape; if the resources are important to and retain integrity for the identified themes; and if there are outstanding opportunities for conservation, recreation, and education. (Addressed in chapter 5, criteria 1 and 3, and appendixes C,D, and E)

Step 5 is to evaluate alternative ways to manage the potential national heritage area and the effects of not designating the island as a national heritage area. The purpose of this evaluation is to identify the most feasible management approach and examine the effects of the status quo. (Addressed in chapter 4)

Step 6 is to delineate the boundary of the potential national heritage area. This step is based on an evaluation of the study area to determine if all or part of it should be included in the designation. (Addressed in chapter 1)

Step 7 is to determine the administration and financial feasibility of managing the potential national heritage area. This is an evaluation of the preferred management alternative described in Step 5, and includes development of a conceptual financial plan for the proposed coordinating entity of the national heritage area. (Addressed in chapter 5, criterion 6)

Step 8 involves an evaluation of public support for designation and local commitments to partnerships on heritage projects and programs. The level of support and commitment is important to determine the capacity of local citizens to undertake the responsibilities of a future national heritage area. (Addressed in chapter 5, criterion 7)

THE TEAM

An interdisciplinary team of National Park Service (NPS) staff from its Denver Service Center and the Southeast Archeological Center were assembled to conduct this study at the request of the NPS Southeast Regional Office. Since 2008, the study team has worked closely with a group of local representatives on St. Croix, as well as hundreds of island residents, through extensive public engagement (see the “Involving the Public” section below).

The local team included representatives from the Virgin Islands Departments of Education, Agriculture, Tourism, Planning and Natural Resources; the University of Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service; the National Park Service; and the office of the Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress. The team was invaluable to the study effort — assisting with public outreach efforts during the course of the study; facilitating public meetings to identify a coordinating entity for the potential national heritage area; providing important contacts with other local agencies, citizens, and organizations; and sharing insights about the island's heritage resources.

This study has been prepared according to the NPS “Draft National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines” (NPS 2003). These guidelines provide a step-by-step process to evaluate the suitability and feasibility for designating St. Croix as a national heritage area according to 10 interim evaluation criteria (see chapter 5). These criteria were used to evaluate the island's heritage resources, determine if opportunities exist to conserve and better understand those resources, and determine if there is public support and commitment to manage the potential heritage area. This evaluation can be found in chapter 5 of this document. The National Park Service's study process to evaluate the criteria includes eight major steps, which are summarized on the left.



The results of these steps are synthesized throughout the chapters of this document. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the feasibility study; chapter 2 describes St. Croix's history, natural environment, and socioeconomic environment; chapter 3 describes the island's heritage themes; chapter 4 evaluates the management alternatives; and chapter 5 evaluates the 10 interim evaluation criteria.

INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

Open public engagement was fundamental to every step of this feasibility study process. The reason for such an integrated public involvement approach is because ultimately a future national heritage area designation requires strong support and active participation from its local citizens. Without engaging the public throughout the study process, it would have been difficult

to foresee a successful national heritage area on St. Croix. To achieve this goal, a public involvement strategy with the following objectives was developed for this study:

- Promote public understanding of national heritage areas and how they are managed.
- Inform the public about the study and maximize their participation in the process.
- Assess public support for a national heritage area designation.
- Determine if there is local capacity and commitment to coordinate a future national heritage area.

A variety of public involvement efforts were undertaken throughout the study process to achieve these objectives, including town meetings, workshops, radio interviews, newspaper articles, booths at local events, brochures, flyers, and newsletters. Comment cards and an interactive website



Public meeting at Sunny Isle Pavilion. NPS photo.



TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

Summary of Public Meetings Held by NPS			
Date	Location on St. Croix	Venue	Number of Participants
July 24, 2008	Christiansted	American Legion Hall	61
July 25, 2008	Frederiksted	Pier 69 Courtyard	50
July 28, 2008	Mid-Island	University of the Virgin Islands	30
September 24, 2008	Christiansted	Senior Center	25
September 24, 2008	Frederiksted	Rotary Club	16
September 25, 2008	Christiansted	American Legion Hall	25
September 27, 2008	Mid-Island	Sunny Isle Pavilion	15
Total Number of Participants			222

were also developed that allowed people to conveniently submit their input on a wide range of topics, ranging from heritage resources of the island to partnership opportunities for a future coordinating entity. The U.S. Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress, Donna M. Christensen, conducted meetings and announcements in addition to the National Park Service’s outreach efforts.

The National Park Service hosted a series of town meetings across the island to gather public input on the various steps of the study. Public turnout was excellent during these meetings, and participants were highly

engaged and oftentimes deeply passionate when talking about the heritage of the island. Table 1 provides a summary of these meetings, including dates, locations, and number of participants.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE PUBLIC MEETINGS — THEMES AND RESOURCES

Important outcomes of these meetings were the development of heritage themes and the identification of heritage resources



across the island. The five theme categories that were developed included early cultures; slavery and emancipation; the seven flags of St. Croix; geography and the natural environment — crossroads of the Caribbean; and modern-day St. Croix — cultures in contact (see chapter 3). For each of these themes, local citizens were asked to identify on maps the location of places, objects, and events that are important to understanding that particular aspect of St. Croix’s heritage. The following series of maps and resource inventories included in appendixes D and E provide a summary of public input received. Although many of these sites identified by the public are important to the St. Croix story, some are not open to the public, lack interpretation, or lack the integrity to be included among the first tier of heritage resources included in chapter 5, criterion 1.

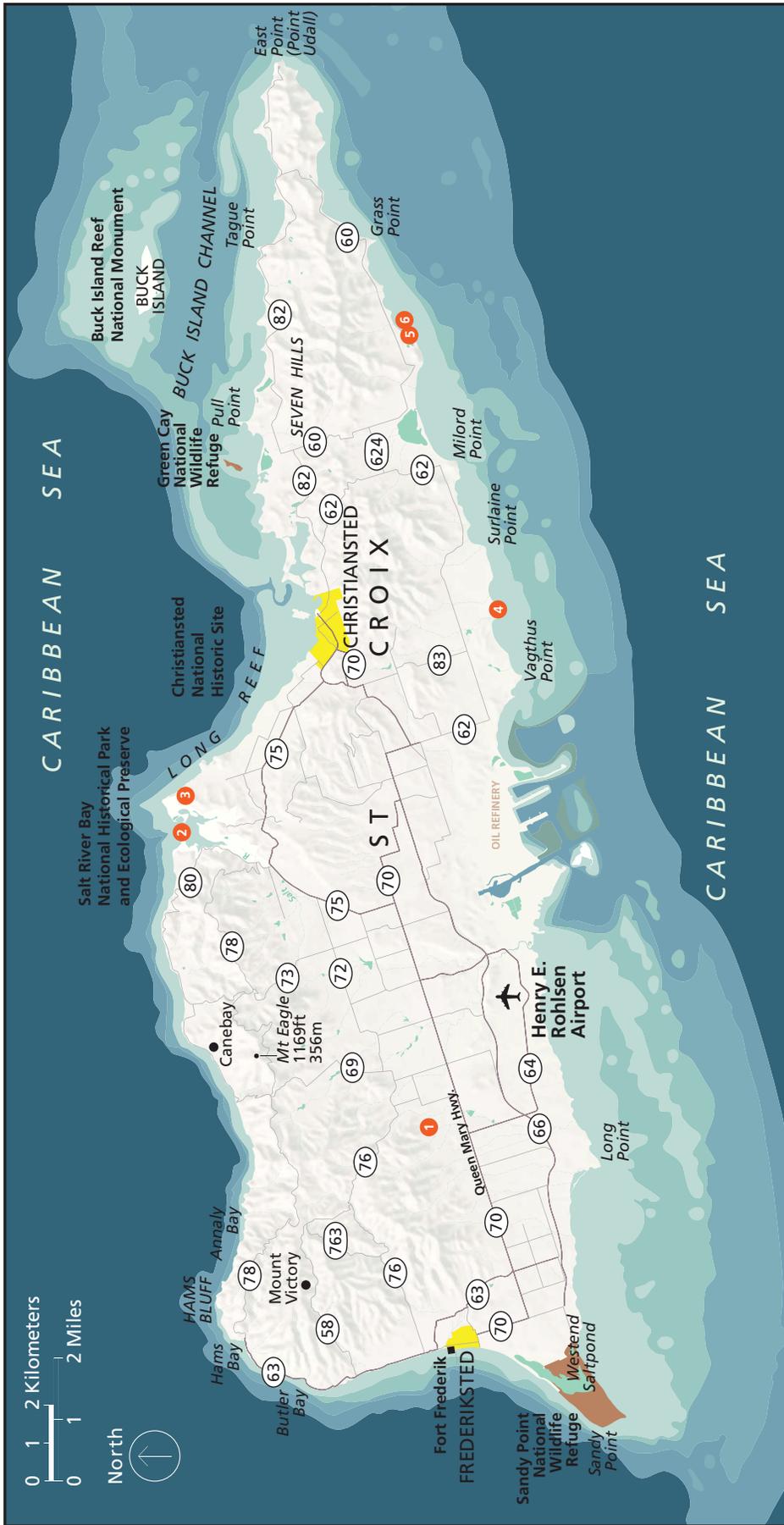
Meeting participants were also asked to describe their traditions, customs, and beliefs, which are a valuable part of St. Croix’s heritage. Below is a list of the topics discussed during this outreach effort. The sidebars found throughout this document, which are listed below in the words of local Crucians, provide an opportunity to better understand many of the meanings, as well as the meanings of many of the places found on the initial theme maps.

- Crucian language
- traditional clothing and festival costumes (e.g., Mocko Jumbie)
- diverse ethnic cuisine (e.g., seasoned rice, kallaloo, pâté, ginger beer, guava berry, coquito)
- agriculture (e.g., sustainable farming, family gardens, cattle ranching)
- music and dance (e.g., quelbe songs, cariso, bamboula, calypso, quadrille, reggae, scratch)
- arts and crafts (e.g., musical instruments, furniture, baskets, rugs, masks, jewelry, calabash)
- festivals and parades (e.g., St. Croix Agricultural and Food Fair, Tea Meeting, Jump Up, Bull and

- Bread, Mango Melee, Crucian Christmas)
- trees (e.g., baobab, mango, sausage, yellow cedar)
- friendship with Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands
- obeah (i.e., folk magic)
- medicinal plants
- open-air church meetings
- Lent and Easter week celebrations
- funeral traditions
- proverbs and sayings
- oral traditions
- fishing and camping
- masquerading
- cultural headdresses
- donkey races
- kite making and flying
- rum making
- burning candles
- indigenous people
- pirates
- Rastafarian culture
- conch shell blowing
- sports — cricket, horse racing, and baseball



Mocko Jumbies.
NPS-SEAC photo.



- Legend**
- 1. St. George Village
 - 2. Salt River
 - 3. Cape of Arrows
 - 4. Half Penny Bay
 - 5. Indian Pictograph
 - 6. Robin Bay

* Many sites associated with this theme are sensitive and therefore not on this map.

Map 2: Early Cultures
 U.S. Department of the Interior / National Park Service



Legend

- 1. Frederiksted
- 2. Emancipation Day
- 3. Fort Frederik
- 4. Buddhoe Park
- 5. Frederiksted Scale House
- 6. Whim Plantation
- 7. Botanical Garden
- 8. Northwest Caves
- 9. Caldonia
- 10. Mt. Victory School
- 11. Annaly Bay
- 12. Annaly Bay Tide Pools
- 13. Maroon Ridge
- 14. Diamond School
- 15. Queen Mary Highway
- 16. Bethlehem Sugar Factory
- 17. Kingshill School
- 18. La Vallee
- 19. Estate Morningstar
- 20. Estate Sion Hill
- 21. Peter's Rest School
- 22. La Grande Princesse School
- 23. Bulow's Minde
- 24. Orange Grove Estate
- 25. Christiansted
- 26. Christiansted Scale House
- 27. Danish West India & Guinea Company Warehouse
- 28. Fort Christiansvaern
- 29. East Hill School

Map 3: Slavery and Emancipation
U.S. Department of the Interior / National Park Service