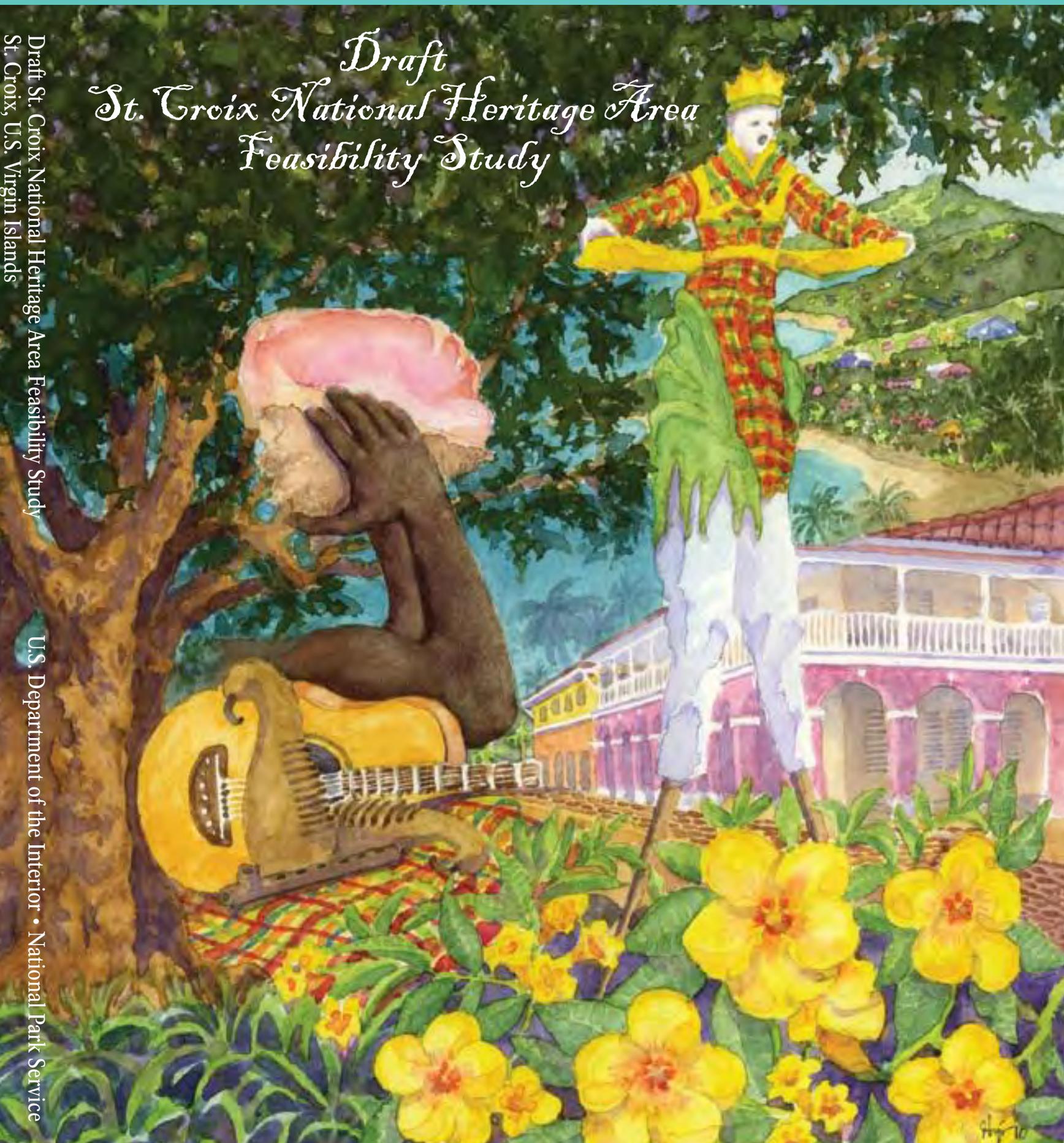


*Draft  
St. Croix National Heritage Area  
Feasibility Study*

Draft St. Croix National Heritage Area Feasibility Study  
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

U.S. Department of the Interior • National Park Service







**DRAFT**  
**ST. CROIX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**  
**FEASIBILITY STUDY**  
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

Lead Agency: National Park Service

This *Draft St. Croix National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* evaluates the feasibility and suitability of congressional designation of the island of St. Croix as a national heritage area according to the criteria established in the National Park Service’s “Draft National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines” (NPS 2003). This study includes a vision statement developed and supported by the public; an inventory of St. Croix’s heritage resources that collectively represents a nationally distinctive landscape; a study area boundary supported by the public; five heritage themes to connect the various resources and tell the story of St. Croix; three management alternatives; and an evaluation of the designation criteria.

The document evaluates three alternatives for the future coordination of a St. Croix heritage area. The “no-action” alternative, alternative 1, is a continuation of the existing efforts and serves as a basis of comparison with the other two alternatives. National heritage area designation and the local coordinating entity options are evaluated in alternative 2. Alternative 3 explores the concept of a privately organized heritage area.

This *Draft St. Croix National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* has been distributed to agencies, interested organizations, and individuals for their review and comment. The public comment period for this document will last for 30 days. Please see “How to Comment on this Study” on the next page.



U.S. Department of Interior - National Park Service



## HOW TO COMMENT ON THIS STUDY

Comments on this study are welcomed and will be accepted for 30 days. Comments may be submitted either over the Internet or in writing. Please only comment once.

Please include your name and address on any correspondence, particularly any email messages, to be sure that you are included on our mailing list.

Commenters are encouraged to use the Internet if at all possible.

Internet comments can be submitted at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sero> and then choose the St. Croix National Heritage Area Feasibility Study.

Written comments can be mailed to:

National Park Service  
Denver Service Center – Planning  
Kate Randall, Project Manager  
12795 W. Alameda Parkway  
PO Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225-0287

Verbal comments may be made at public meetings. The dates, times, and locations of public meetings will be announced in the media following the release of this document.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment — including your personal identifying information — may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Interior, National Park Service, has prepared this *Draft National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* to determine the feasibility and suitability of designating the island of St. Croix as a national heritage area. This study meets the requirements of the “Draft National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines” (NPS 2003) and the National Environmental Policy Act.

The United States purchased St. Croix and the other U.S. Virgin Islands (St. John, St. Thomas, Water Island, and several smaller islands) from Denmark in 1917. Today the island is an unincorporated territory of the United States. Located in the Caribbean Sea, approximately 1,100 miles from Miami, St. Croix covers 84 square miles and contains the easternmost point of the United States. 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.

### LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior to undertake a national heritage area feasibility study for St. Croix in the St. Croix National Heritage Area Study Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-338). The goal of the study was to determine if the island of St. Croix meets the criteria established in the National Park Service’s “Draft National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines” (NPS 2003) for designation. Funding for the study was initiated in fiscal year 2007.

A copy of the St. Croix National Heritage Area Study Act can be found in appendix A.

### THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ST. CROIX

St. Croix contains an assemblage of nationally significant natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources that relate to the larger story of American heritage. The largest of

Right:  
Sugar factory ruins  
and baobob tree at  
Butler Bay.  
NPS photo.



Below:  
Salt River Taino  
ballcourt stone.  
NPS-SEAC photo.

the three U.S. Virgin Islands, St. Croix lies at a geographic crossroads, connecting the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean currents with the prevailing westerly and easterly trade winds. This ideal location, along with the fertility of the island and the productivity of its surrounding waters, has attracted and sustained people from around the world. Similar to the United States' broader heritage, St. Croix became a collage of cultures due to the long-standing exchange of traditions, customs, and beliefs between Amerindians, Africans, West Indian, South Americans, and Europeans. Today, the people of St. Croix



embrace their unique cultural mix, coexisting in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.

St. Croix embodies a wealth of natural, historical, and cultural features that represent the unique blending of American, African, and European heritage. The island has an extensive network of sites set aside to protect these resources — places that are accessible to the public to learn about and experience first-hand the stories of the island's distinctive cultural connections. For instance, Salt River Bay protects the first recorded conflict between Amerindians and Europeans. The area surrounding the bay also contains archeological evidence of the most extensive and intensive prehistoric occupation in the U.S. Virgin Islands, possibly dating back as far as 4,000 years.

Since Columbus's first contact with St. Croix and its native inhabitants, seven flags have flown over the island. Before becoming part of the United States, the Island was claimed by Spain, Holland, France, England, the Knights of Malta, and Denmark. With each of these shifts in colonial occupation, new traditions grew out of ongoing interactions between Europeans, Amerindians, and Africans. A number of protected estates, forts, museums, and historic districts across the island preserve St. Croix's turbulent colonial history. Today, Crucians celebrate Transfer Day, which marks the transfer of St. Croix from Denmark to the United States.



Africans, who were brought to St. Croix to provide slave labor for the European colonies, showed their resilience and resourcefulness in the face of great adversity. As Africans and their descendants adapted and survived the harsh conditions of enslavement and discrimination, they contributed to the economic, social, and cultural development of St. Croix. Slavery was abolished on St. Croix in 1848 after a series of slave revolts, 15 years before the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States. Today, African heritage is found throughout the rich traditions and



customs of the Crucian people. For example, Emancipation Day celebrates when 30,000 enslaved Africans marched in Frederiksted to successfully demand their freedom. This holiday is celebrated throughout the island with festive music, local dances, old-time tea meetings, reenactments, donkey races, and vibrant contemporary cuisine—reflecting an evolution of customs that can only be attributed to the distinctiveness of the Crucian people.

The story of St. Croix’s heritage is not limited to the places and events described above. St. Croix’s national significance is further supported throughout the pages of this feasibility study. The study team determined — through its extensive research of the island and interaction with the people who live there — that there is not one single thing that sets St. Croix apart, but rather an assemblage of authentic natural, cultural, historic, and scenic features that celebrate the heritage of the Crucian people. This heritage is not only a testament to the vitality and uniqueness of St. Croix, but to our nation’s rich and varied heritage overall.

## STUDY FINDINGS

The feasibility study team concludes that St. Croix meets each of the 10 interim evaluation criteria for designation as a national heritage area, based on the “Draft National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines” (NPS 2003). As described throughout this study, St. Croix contributes in substantial ways to our country’s national heritage. It also contains an assemblage of natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources that make up a nationally distinctive landscape. The rich and varied stories about St. Croix lend themselves to an intriguing set of themes that connect people to the various heritage resources of the island. Furthermore, the designation of St. Croix as a national heritage area has strong public support, and there is a local capacity and commitment to undertake the responsibilities of initiating a future national heritage area.

**Left:**  
The seven flags of  
St. Croix.  
NPS photo.

**Below:**  
Preparation of  
traditional foods.  
Photo credit:  
Nate Olive

Christiansted public meeting.  
NPS photo.



## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The study team underwent an extensive public involvement effort to 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; and determine if there is local capacity and commitment to coordinate a future national heritage area. Efforts included town meetings, workshops, radio interviews, newspaper articles, booths at local events, brochures, flyers, and newsletters.

Comment cards and an interactive website 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 public input that the study team received was overwhelmingly supportive of the designation and committed to the success of a St. Croix National Heritage Area.

A summary of public involvement can be found in chapter 1. Documentation of public support can be found in appendix B.



## VISION STATEMENT

The public crafted and refined the vision statement below during public meetings and a visioning workshop. Participants in the workshop endeavored to make the vision statement specific to St. Croix by adding terms like “kallaloo” to describe their Crucian culture. (Kallaloo is a Caribbean stew containing many ingredients, much like the diverse mix of cultures that make up the Crucian people.) The vision clearly communicates the strong sense of place and identity in the public’s vision for the potential St. Croix National Heritage Area.



*St. Croix’s authentic natural, cultural, historic, and scenic features are a celebration of our people, young and old alike, and a testament of our splendor. This is our shared heritage where Crucians — past, present, and future — represent a colorful kallaloo of our nation, the Caribbean, and the world.*



## HERITAGE THEMES

During the scoping phase of the project, the study team collected input from the public on the nationally significant places, people, traditions, customs, and beliefs. The information was analyzed and five

distinct categories emerged. During the following round of public meetings, the study team presented these categories and the preliminary thematic framework. At these meetings the public provided overwhelmingly supportive feedback on the thematic framework and additional information on the intangible values associated with each of the themes. The heritage area themes are listed below. A complete description can be found in chapter 3.

### Early Cultures

This theme highlights early Amerindian presence on St. Croix. It emphasizes migration of Amerindian peoples within the region, settlement on St. Croix, and European contact.

### Slavery and Emancipation

This theme highlights the experience of Africans as slaves and free people on St. Croix. It emphasizes the history of slavery on St. Croix and the influences on St. Croix culture.

### The Seven Flags of St. Croix

This theme highlights the seven flags (United States, Spain, Holland, France, England, the Knights of Malta, and Denmark) of colonial administration of St. Croix. It emphasizes the political, economic, and cultural contributions of the many different colonial powers.

### Geography and the Natural Environment – Crossroads of the Caribbean

This theme highlights the unique geography and natural environment of St. Croix. It emphasizes the island’s rich biological diversity, its idyllic location for attracting and

sustaining people from diverse cultures, and the ongoing efforts of Crucians to balance sustainable land uses with the protection and enjoyment of the island's extraordinary natural environments.

### **Modern-Day St. Croix Cultures in Contact**

This theme highlights the multicultural society of St. Croix and emphasizes how these cultures and traditions combine to form a vital part of the living fabric of the St. Croix community.

## **MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES**

This feasibility study evaluates the following three alternatives — No Action (alternative 1), National Heritage Area Designation (alternative 2), and a Privately Managed Heritage Area (alternative 3).

In Alternative 2: National Heritage Area Designation, the two organizations — St. Croix United for Community, Culture, Environment, and Economic Development (SUCCEED) and the St. Croix Landmarks Society — that submitted applications to serve as the coordinating entity were evaluated. Based on the results of the evaluation, both organizations successfully demonstrated their capability to serve as the coordinating entity. However, SUCCEED received the highest overall score thereby demonstrating a higher likelihood of achieving the goals of the national heritage area. If a national heritage area is designated and if SUCCEED is named the coordinating entity, it is assumed that St. Croix Landmarks Society will participate in the St. Croix National Heritage Area coalition.

A description of the management alternatives can be found in chapter 4. An explanation of the evaluation process and methodology can be found in appendix F.



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## GUIDE TO THIS DOCUMENT

This *Draft Feasibility Study* is organized into five chapters plus appendixes. Each section is described briefly below.

### CHAPTERS

**Chapter 1: Introduction** provides a brief description of St. Croix and an overview of the study's purpose, legislative history, and legal requirements. This chapter also describes the public involvement strategy and outcomes including the vision statement, themes, and heritage resource inventory.

**Chapter 2: Study Area History and Description** includes a brief history of the island, starting from the islands first inhabitants through today. The chapter also describes the natural and socioeconomic environments.

**Chapter 3: Themes** describes the five themes developed through the public involvement process and their alignment with the NPS Thematic Framework.

**Chapter 4: Management Alternatives** describes and evaluates three alternatives — no action, national heritage area, and privately organized heritage area. The chapter also evaluates coordinating entity options for the national heritage area alternative.

**Chapter 5: Application of the NPS Heritage Area Criteria** evaluates the feasibility and suitability of congressional designation of the island of St. Croix as a national heritage area according to the four steps and ten criteria established in the National Park Service's "Draft National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines" (NPS 2003).

### APPENDIXES

**Appendix A: St. Croix National Heritage Area Study Act.** — This appendix includes the legislation prompting this study.

**Appendix B: Public Support** — This appendix includes a list of organizations that have participated in the study, letters of support from 24 organizations and government agencies, eight letters of support from members of the 28th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, and a resolution to support the designation of a St. Croix National Heritage Area passed in the 28th Legislature of the Virgin Islands.

**Appendix C: National Register of Historic Places Listings for St. Croix** — This appendix includes the many sites on St. Croix that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Appendix D: Inventory of Resources Identified by the Public and Thematic Alignment** — This appendix includes an inventory of the resources identified in the public involvement process and their thematic alignment.

**Appendix E: Public Input Received during the University of Georgia's ECOTourism Study on St. Croix** — This appendix includes data collected from public workshops on St. Croix as part of a separate but complementary ecotourism study.

**Appendix F: Coordinating Entity Evaluation** — This appendix includes the request for information from applicants, selection factors, and a letter from the Southeast Regional Director of the National Park Service to the coordinating entity selected for the potential St. Croix National Heritage Area.

