

PROTECTING OUR USVI

CORAL REEFS

REEF VALUE

\$187 million

up to 97%

OUR USVI CORAL REEFS ...

ARE WORTH \$187 MILLION ANNUALLY, which includes values from tourism, recreation, culture, amenities, commercial fisheries, and coastal protection.¹

SERVE AS NATURAL BREAKWATERS, diminishing wave energy by up to 97% and providing \$47 million in annual flood protection benefits to people, properties, and economic activity.²

79% of USVI residents are aware that coral reefs protect the USVI from erosion and natural disasters.³

As a result of Earth's changing climate, scientists predict more frequent and severe storms in the coming years. Without the protection provided by reefs, more money will be needed for infrastructure repairs in coastal areas, which will be increasingly costly to the territory.

NOURISH OUR BODIES AND SOULS.

USVI residents enjoy, rely on, and care about the ocean.³



92% agree that coral reefs are important to USVI's culture



79% swim



78% recreate at the beach



17% dive



45% snorkel



> 40% fish or gather marine resources

TOP THREATS

IRRESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT & RUNOFF



VESSEL GROUNDINGS



UNSUSTAINABLE FISHING



STORMS



UNSUSTAINABLE TOURISM & RECREATION



CLIMATE CHANGE



DISEASE



MARINE DEBRIS



Our reefs are **DECLINING IN HEALTH** due to

HOW SENATORS CAN HELP



BRING CORALS INTO THE CONVERSATION.

Consider coral reefs and possible connections to each policy/decision and whether it will affect the health of our coral reefs. Support reef-friendly policies, comprehensive land and water use planning, and enforcement of best practices.



CREATE A SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MECHANISM

that generates funds through tourism to protect coral reefs.



DRAFT AND ADVOCATE FOR LEGISLATION

naming USVI coral reefs as a priority protected habitat accompanied by funding for coral reef research, outreach programs, and protections.

HOW DPNR & PARTNERS PROTECT AND RESTORE OUR REEFS

The mitigation and management of threats to coral reefs are currently managed by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources and partners in the territory.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THESE ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

Development and implementation of the territory's first **coral restoration plan**, including innovating techniques to grow corals on land and underwater to restore degraded reefs.

Development of **watershed management plans** to mitigate land-based sources of pollution to nearby coral reefs.

Facilitation of a group of **community-based conservation organizations** focused on outreach and education.

Funding for **removal of derelict vessels and marine debris** from territorial waters.

Management and enforcement of territorial and federal **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**.

Creation of **laws protecting coral reefs** such as the single use plastic straw ban, harmful sunscreen ban, and building and zoning best management practices.

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¹Van Beukering et al. 2011 ²Storlazzi et al. 2019 ³Gorstein et al. 2019