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:

HOW SENATORS CAN HELP







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.

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.

PROTECTING OUR USVI

CORAL REEFS



LEARN MORE

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HOW SENATORS CAN HELP

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VALUE OF USVI REEFS

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YOU KNOW

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amenities, commercial fisheries, and coastal protection.¹

OUR USVI CORAL REEFS ...

SERVE AS NATURAL BREAKWATERS,

which includes values from tourism, recreation, culture,

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

ARE WORTH \$187 MILLION ANNUALLY,

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





Stony coral tissue loss disease is a lethal coral disease that affects over **50% of all Caribbean coral species** and kills nearly 100% of infected corals without treatment.

DISEA

Arriving in the USVI in early 2019, the disease is now on almost every reef in the territory, killing our healthy corals and leaving behind dead coral skeletons in a matter of weeks or months. To date, there is no known direct cause of the disease but it is transmitted through water and direct contact.

USVI quickly responded by creating an inter-agency Virgin Islands Coral Disease Advisory Committee to lead tracking and response efforts and communicate best practices to the public.

This novel disease outbreak will require intensive resources for years to come. Funding and staff capacity are needed to respond with in-water treatments, continue to address the top local threats to reefs, and implement the territory's upcoming coral restoration plan.

¹ Van Beukering et al. 2011² Storlazzi et al. 2019³ Gorstein et al. 2019