GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Ministry Takes Enforcement Action Against Illegal Sand Mining

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Deputy Premier, and Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Honourable Julian Fraser RA, is reminding the public of the importance of preserving the Territory's environment, in light of reports of an upsurge in sand mining activities.

The ministry has received numerous accounts of sand mining at Long Bay, Beef Island which is compromising the walkway to the western end of the beach, undermining beach restoration efforts and affecting the long-term health of the beach. Recent reports have also been received of sand mining in other areas including Capoon's Bay.

The Deputy Premier said, "Our beaches support our quality of life, providing immense recreational, spiritual and health benefits. They are also our main tourist attraction and we need to work together to preserve them and protect them at all cost. It is a duty that collectively, we owe to the environment, our children and grandchildren."

Residents are reminded that sand mining is a criminal offence prohibited under the Beach Protection Ordinance, 1985 (CAP 233).

The Ordinance states that any person who removes any natural barrier against the sea or who digs and takes away or assists in digging or taking away any sand, stone, gravel or shingle from the foreshore is guilty of an offence.

It is also an offence to remove from any land, including private land, any sand, stone, gravel or shingle if it is likely to result in erosion by the sea. Offenders are liable on summary conviction to a fine of $500 or to imprisonment for a term of 6 months or both. In addition, any boat, vehicle or animal used in connection with the commission of an offence is liable to forfeiture.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Dr. Ronald Berkeley also joined his voice to further appeal to the community and remind persons to stop the practice.

The ministry has enlisted the support of the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force to further investigate and prosecute these incidents to the fullest extent of the law.

The ministry is also working to increase monitoring of beaches and will install educational signage at Long Bay, Beef Island about sand mining and other prohibited activities as part of the pilot beach management plan.

In the interim, to immediately arrest any further mining at Long Bay, Beef Island, the ministry has sought permission to temporarily close the Little Mountain Estate access to the beach. Arrangements are being made to accommodate early morning access for elderly persons and others who utilise that entry on a daily basis.

The Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change envisions sound stewardship of our natural resources by implementing a robust legal and policy framework that fosters sustainable best management practices.