

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

The Virgin Islands has lost more than 50% of its mangrove forests, considerable amounts of its seagrass beds, a number of saltponds, and many of its coral reefs in the last 50 years. In an attempt to protect these habitats from further damage, the Government of the Virgin Islands has designated a series of marine reserves and wildlife sanctuaries on the southern end of St. Thomas. The three sites include: the Compass Point Pond Marine Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary, the Cas Cay/Mangrove Lagoon Marine Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary, and the St. James Marine Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary.

COMPASS POINT POND (Area A on map)

Saltponds are very important wildlife feeding and roosting habitats. They are also important in protecting water quality by allowing sediment to settle out of runoff from the land. Compass Point Pond was cut off from the sea a number of years ago by the construction of a road. Many of the mangroves died and wildlife was forced to go elsewhere. After designation of this pond as a protected area in 1992, it was reopened to the sea and natural water levels were restored in the pond. Almost immediately fish and crabs populated the pond and shortly afterwards, many shorebirds were observed feeding and residing around the pond. With the return to natural water levels, conditions are now suitable for reestablishment of mangroves in the pond.

CAS CAY/MANGROVE LAGOON (Area B on map)

Within this area no fishing or take of any natural resources are allowed with the exception of baitfish within 50 ft. of the shoreline of Cas Cay if a permit is obtained from DPNR. No internal combustion engines are allowed in the inner lagoon channels. Elimination of internal combustion engines from the inner lagoon will stop the damage to the mangrove root communities that result from boat wakes and fuel/oil discharges. Roosting and nesting wildlife will suffer fewer disturbances from engine noise.

This area is one of the most valuable areas remaining in the V.I. for juvenile reef fish, lobster, birds, and wetland plants and animals in general. By protecting this area from the harvest of fish and wildlife, we hope to restore once thriving populations of the animals found there. This in turn will enhance populations in neighboring areas as animals migrate out of the protected area.

ST. JAMES MARINE RESERVE (Area C on map)

Under the rules and regulations for this area, it is unlawful to remove any marine or other wildlife. However, it is legal to catch fish by hook and line or use a cast net for fry within 50 feet of the shoreline (except for Cow and Calf rocks) if a permit is obtained from DPNR.

This area provides protection for a diversity of interrelated habitats. Mangroves and seagrass beds provide refuge for juvenile fish and invertebrates and the coral reefs support the adults that migrate out to the nursery habitats. By protecting contiguous,

interrelated habitat, the chances are greater that habitat management measures will result in a positive benefit to both the habitat and the fish and wildlife that utilize and depend on them for their existence.

The intent of designating marine reserves and establishing restrictions is multipurpose. Marine reserves will:

- contribute to commercially viable fishery resources by protecting a portion of the spawning stock from exploitation,
- preserve coral reef and seagrass habitats for larval, juvenile and adult fish and invertebrate by protecting ecosystem functions; and
- help our economy by providing marine viewing areas for commercial dive operators, recreational divers, students of marine life, and scientific researchers.



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For more information on marine reserves and wildlife sanctuaries please contact our offices.

Marine Reserves And Wildlife Sanctuaries



Department of Planning And Natural Resources

Division of Fish and Wildlife

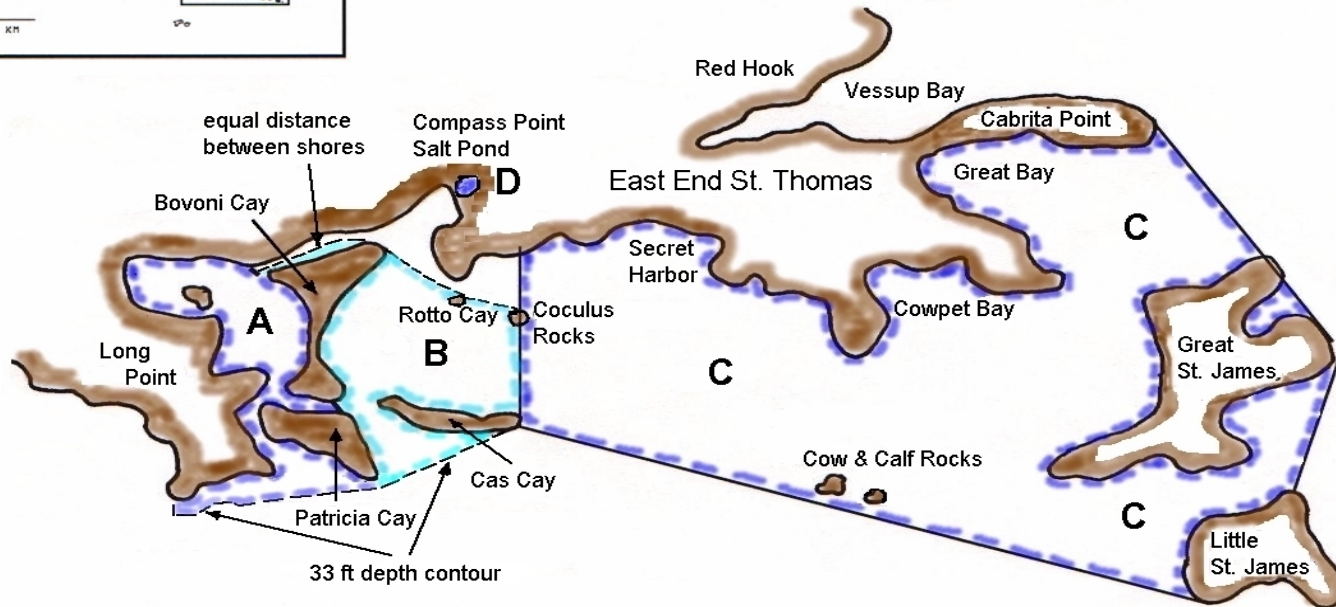
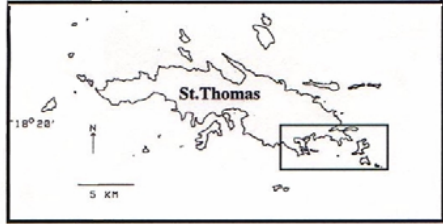
Bureau of Environmental Education

6291 Estate Nazareth 101
St. Thomas, VI 00802
340-775-6762

45 Mars Hill, Rainbow Plaza
Frederiksted, St. Croix, VI 00840
340-772-1955

www.fishandwildlife

Cas Cay/Mangrove Lagoon, St. James and Compass Point Marine Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries



REGULATIONS

A. Inner Mangrove Lagoon: No fishing or take of any natural resources is allowed. No internal combustion engines are allowed. Electric motors, sails or paddles are acceptable. Engines cause wakes, noise, and pollution.



B. Cas Cay/Mangrove Lagoon: No fishing or take of any natural resources is allowed, except that use of a cast net for baitfish within 50 feet of the north and west shorelines of Cas Cay is allowed only with a permit from DPNR Enforcement (774-3320).



C. St. James — No fishing or take of any natural resources is allowed, except that baitfishing using a cast net within 50 feet of the shoreline (except for Cow and Calf Rocks) and fishing by hook and line is allowed only with a permit from DPNR Enforcement (774-3320).

D. Compass Point Salt Pond — No fishing, hunting, or take of any natural resources is allowed within this marine reserve and wildlife sanctuary.



For A, B, C, and D - No take of conch, lobster, and whelk



These areas have been protected for a variety of reasons, all of which will benefit your use and enjoyment of our marine natural resources.

These marine reserves will:

1. Contribute to commercial and recreational fishery resources by protecting a portion of the spawning stock from exploitation.
2. Preserve important coral reef, mangrove, and seagrass habitats for larval, juvenile, and adult fish and invertebrates such as lobster and conch.
3. Provide coastal and marine viewing and recreation areas for the general public, snorkel and SCUBA divers, school groups, and scientists.

For more information on these marine reserves and wildlife sanctuaries, please call the Division of Fish and Wildlife, DPNR, at 775-6762. To obtain permits or to report violations, please call the Division of Environmental Enforcement at 774-3320. Thank you and enjoy!