

Contact: Sharon Coldren, President

Press Release: Coral Bay Community Council invites residents to participate in the Coral Bay Watershed Management Plan Update project on June 18th at 6pm

(Coral Bay, St John, VI, June 10, 2019) The Coral Bay Community Council (CBCC) is hosting a community meeting on Tuesday, June 18th from 6 to 7 pm at Caribbean Oasis restaurant in Coral Bay for residents, homeowners, business owners, and all others interested in living and/or working in Coral Bay while undertaking actions and repairs that will protect our environment and particularly our beautiful blue ocean.

Water quality contamination from stormwater runoff, wastewater and fertilizers and other chemicals can harm our waters. The quality of all our lives depends on balancing people's needs with nature's needs. Watershed Management is a method for having open discussion of all the factors and their inter-relationships and creating partnerships for action. Factors include the community vision, water flows and hydrology, stormwater management, land use, infrastructure, marine uses, history and culture, resource and waste management, wetlands restoration, and more. This graphic explains the important components:



The meeting will start the process of doing the 5-year update of the Coral Bay Watershed Management Plan, last done in 2014, under a \$99,000 grant from the US Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART program to CBCC. The USVI DPNR Coastal Zone Management Program is also providing assistance.

At this meeting on June 18th, CBCC and its contractor, Watershed Consulting Associates, will explain the roles that residents, homeowners, business owners, government agencies and others can take in this planning effort now and over the next 16 months, and as the important research and recommendations for actions over the next five years to protect the environment in our watershed are accomplished.

Working together on the management plan will continue and expand the critical alliance among residents, government, businesses and the scientific community regarding a renewed vision for a resilient future for the Coral Bay and USVI watersheds, especially during this time of post-hurricane rebuilding.

As background, the first Coral Bay Watershed Management plan was published in 2008, and focused strongly on prevention of sediment and other stormwater contaminants reaching Coral Bay's coastal and marine habitats and the sea life they sustain, including mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, fish and sea turtles. The recommendations outlined in this plan were used to prioritize and implement stormwater mitigation projects in six subwatersheds in 2009-2011. The plan was updated in 2014, targeting floatable debris and turbidity. The Watershed Management Plan has been instrumental in helping CBCC secure federal grants for stormwater mitigation, solid waste, drinking water, and wastewater issues by providing measurable objectives and strategies for these areas of work. For example, it serves as a resource for prioritizing BMP (Best Management Practice) projects to improve stormwater drainage in Coral Bay neighborhoods. The 2008 and 2014 plans can be viewed on the CBCC website at <http://www.CoralBayCommunityCouncil.org>.

The purpose of the 2019 grant project is to update the comprehensive management plan, incorporating stakeholder and government agency input, and include a visioning effort that recognizes and highlights diverse viewpoints. Under this 2019 update, CBCC will also publish and distribute a user-friendly Watershed Management Vision summary.

The Coral Bay Watershed Management Plan is part of the overall Coral Bay Watershed Management Project. *The goals of the Coral Bay Watershed Management project are to empower the community to:*

- 1) effectively reverse the past environmental degradation caused by poor construction practices, badly designed roads, disturbed wetlands, and other development choices; and*
- 2) to envision and plan for future physical and economic development that does not exceed the carrying capacity of the land and environment, while still providing all infrastructure needs such as water, wastewater systems, solid waste management, roads and public services.*

It is expected that many residents, homeowners, business owners, and others who care about Coral Bay will want to participate in Coral Bay St. John Watershed Management Plan Update project as it moves forward in 2019 and 2020. This meeting on Tuesday, June 18th from 6 to 7 PM at Caribbean Oasis Restaurant is the start.

Because all four public meeting spaces in Coral Bay were destroyed in Hurricane Irma, and none has been rebuilt yet, our local restaurants have stepped forward to volunteer as meeting spaces at no charge. Caribbean Oasis is the site for this meeting, and it will be possible to enjoy the restaurant's offerings while at the meeting.

For more information, contact CBCC at 340-776-2099 or email cbcc@coralbaycommunitycouncil.org.

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