

St. Thomas East End Reserves (STEER) Accomplishments Report

The management of the St. Croix East End Reserves (STEER) over the last two years has been a coordinated, informal co-management effort on the part of the community, Friends of Christmas Cove, Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Given the absence of a designated manager and staff, the successes below are attributable to the staff, management, funding and expertise of these organizations, combined with both fiscal support and expertise from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). While the niches filled by the partners (DPNR – funding, planning and management, UVI - planning and research, TNC – planning, coordination, research and outreach) have resulted in a limited but successful model thus far, continued management of STEER is dependent on available staff and funding. Below is a list of impactful STEER activities and accomplishments from 2013 through 2015.

Many management activities and research activities detailed in both the STEER Management Plan and the STEER Watershed Management Plan are ripe for implementation, but lack funding or capacity for execution. Continued financial support from NOAA as well as the establishment of local finance mechanisms are needed for long-term, sustained management of STEER. The Nature Conservancy received funding through 2015 from NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) to coordinate management activities in STEER while building community support and interagency collaboration to achieve self-sustaining, community-based co-management of STEER. In October 2015, STEER coordination, including meeting planning, was transitioned to DPNR's Division of Coastal Zone Management.

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2014 STEER Accomplishments

- Groundwater wells installed in the mangrove interface between Bovoni Dump and Mangrove Lagoon by UVI and partners, results indicate that mangroves provide a surface water and contaminant buffer between the Bovoni landfill and Mangrove Lagoon
- Marker buoys installed to delineate STEER boundaries
- Maintenance and expansion of social marketing using <http://steer.reefconnect.org> and associated Facebook and twitter accounts
- STEER Newsletter created and circulated
- STEER Core Team and stakeholder meetings conducted on a project-by-project basis



Outplanting of *A. cervicornis* in STEER (K. Lewis), Stakeholders conducting STEER Human Use Mapping (A.M. Hoffman)

2015 STEER Accomplishments

- Watershed implementation project to limit flooding and contaminant transport at Independent Boat Yard by NOAA, DPNR, and partners
- Water quality outreach sign developed by TNC and partners to highlight watershed activities
- Transition of STEER coordination to DPNR, including STEER Core Team meetings and STEER stakeholder meetings
- STEER logo developed by Friends of Christmas Cove and DPNR
- <http://steer.reefconnect.org> received a facelift to increase appeal and functionality
- 4,098 *Acropora cervicornis* and 46 *Acropora palmata* fragments were outplanted in STEER at the Great St. James outplanting site



STEER logo (D. Holstein), STEER water quality interpretive sign (B. Laverriere)