

April 16, 2009



Earth Day events on three islands

The Energy Office, a division of the Governor's Office, will be taking part in several different events surrounding the celebration of Earth Day. The first event will be on St. Thomas on Friday. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is collaborating with the Department of Education in celebrating Earth Month. Part of that collaboration is the 5th annual *Pro-Enviro Fair* on the St. Thomas campus of the University of the Virgin Islands. The fair will be held from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Public and private schools in the St. Thomas/St. John district are invited. Staff from the Energy Office will be there to present information to an estimated 1,000 students from grades K-6 and about 300 students from the upper grades.

On Monday, the Friends of V.I. National park will hold an Earth Day Environmental Fair at the National Park Ball Field in Cruz Bay, St. John, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The goal for groups, like the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators, (VINE) in hosting this event, is to educate, inform, and inspire youth about the importance of preserving and protecting our environment. Energy Office staff member Kasim Andrews is a member of VINE and will be demonstrating solar cars to the youngsters. All St. John schools have been invited to attend. Last year over 350 St. John students attended.

Two members of the Energy Office staff will be featured speakers at the 2009 Earth Day Conference on April 22, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the St. Croix campus of the University of the Virgin Islands. The U.S. EPA's Caribbean Division, in conjunction with Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Waste Management Authority, and Water and Power Authority have planned this conference to highlight environmental gains achieved, continuing challenges faced, and best management approaches to achieve more. The

conference is free, but space limited; to attend you must register at www.netionline.com.

Leila Muller will be the Energy Office's main representative for the EcoFair being held at the St. George Botanical Gardens on April 22 and April 23. More than 1,500 students are expected to attend this event sponsored by the St. Croix Environmental Association and the V.I. Waste Management Authority.

Reef Jam calls attention to reefs

The 2nd annual Reef Jam festival will be May 24th at Rainbow Beach from 1 to 10 p.m. The event is part of the effort to raise awareness of coral reef values and promote coral reef stewardship and conservation. With over 1,000 attendees crowding Rainbow Beach last, more than \$7,000 was raised for local coral reef education and conservation efforts.

This event will include the music of three bands Siete Son, Kurt Schindler and a local reggae artist. Marine education, good food, and limin at the beach are agenda items. Funds generated from the event will go toward marine conservation and education in the form of a mini-grant program. As was the case last year, entry will be \$5 for the entire day.

VI is part of energy pilot program

The Virgin Islands has been selected for participation in a U.S. pilot project, which will focus on the development of clean and renewable energy, according to Governor John P. deJongh, Jr. The announcement was made by the International Partnership for Energy Development in Island Nations (EDIN) on the final day of the U.S. Department of Interior's Conference on Business Opportunities in the Islands. The conference, which was recently held in Hawaii, was attended by both V.I. Energy Office Director Bevan Smith and WAPA Executive Director Hugo Hodge, Jr. Directors Smith and Hodge were attending the conference as co-chairs of the USVI-EDIN Energy Action Team, which was formulated to bring about a fundamental and sustained transformation in the way renewable and energy-efficient resources are planned and used in the Virgin Islands.

EDIN is an international partnership that seeks to further the use of energy efficient and renewable energy technologies in island nations and territories. "Since our Territory is made up of islands requiring electrical distribution

systems on both districts, we are vulnerable to energy price fluctuations given our full dependence on foreign oil for energy production,” deJongh said, adding that this project will allow the Virgin Islands to work with the U.S. Department of Energy National Laboratories to remove barriers to clean energy development, attract private capital for the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, and development of a knowledge base for industry through technical assistance and training.

“Our selection as the United States pilot project reflects a commitment of both EDIN and the deJongh Administration in bringing about fundamental changes to the way energy is used in our Territory,” Director Smith said. The effort will focus on redeploying the maximum amount of renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies to achieve specific and measurable clean energy targets. A specific work plan is under development which will identify key needs, projects and goals that EDIN will help the government achieve, he added. “The Virgin Islands was selected for participation as the pilot project in the United States due to the demonstrated commitment by the leadership to advancing clean energy goals and the readiness of the Territory to implementing projects within the pilot program’s timeframe.”

WMA announces community enrichment grants

The V.I. Waste Management Authority is holding public meetings this week to introduce the Authority’s Community Enrichment Grant Program. The VIWMA has designated \$50,000 for each island for this year’s grants. The program is to provide opportunities for youth groups, schools, non-profit and community and civic groups to take an active role in the improvement of the environment of the Virgin Islands by utilizing these funds for environmental improvement programs.

These projects would encourage beautification, resource recovery (including recycling and composting), litter abatement, public education, planting of trees and shrubs, clean-ups, and other similar projects.

The St. Croix meeting was scheduled for Wednesday; the St. Thomas for Thursday and the St. John for Friday.

Applications will be available at all VIWMA offices April 20, and will be accepted until Friday, May 22. Grantees will be notified of their selections by June 5, 2009. For more information, contact the Office of Communications Management at 712-4950/4951.

The Energy Office has grant applications also on its webpage at www.vienergy.org. Along with grant applications for Energy Office programs there are grant applications for the U. S. Department of Agriculture Department renewable energy programs. The grant applications can be accessed by clicking on grants in the menubar at the top of the page.