



# State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

## Virgin Islands 2019



### Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2018 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$0
Forest Legacy	\$0
Forest Stewardship	\$90,000
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$0
State Fire Assistance	\$80,000
Urban and Community Forestry	\$110,000
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$280,000</b>

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The forestry programs in the US Virgin Islands have three primary goals. Goal One is contiguous forest conservation and management, which includes strategies to increase awareness of current forestry programs and develop educational materials on the importance of all forest types; collect data on wildlife usage of contiguous forest and corridors between forest patches; collect data on location and extent of wildfires; protect existing forests in important aquifers/watersheds; increase the number of parcels protected through conservation easement and fee simple acquisitions; increase number of trees planted; increase acreage under monitoring/control of invasive species; and reduce area of contiguous forests burned by wildland fires. Goal Two is urban forest management, which includes strategies to educate the public about the importance of protecting remarkable/heritage trees; identify and manage hazard trees; reduce the risk to forest health from invasive species; collect data to determine wildlife use of urban forest corridors; increase the number of trees planted in urban areas; develop and implement management plans for developed areas; train more certified arborists; and write and enact a Virgin Islands tree ordinance that implements many of these strategies. Goal Three is coastal forest ecosystems protection, which relies on the strategies of developing programs to educate the public about the importance of coastal forest ecosystems; collect data on and monitor the effects of climate change, especially on coastal forests; maximize forest cover to prevent erosion and sedimentation; and control invasive species in coastal forest ecosystems. Most of these strategies require the participation of other government agencies and programs and cannot be done through forestry programs alone. Thus, these goals, while ambitious, may be achieved through partnerships with both government and private agencies.

### Program Goals

- Contiguous Forest Conservation and Management
- Urban Forest Management
- Coastal Forest Ecosystems Protection

### Key Issues

- Decreasing contiguous forest loss
- Loss of transitional forests to development
- Increasing urban forest sustainability
- Increased hazard mitigation and storm preparedness
- Storm water, drought, and coastal erosion management
- Prevention of the degradation of coastal forest ecosystems
- Invasive species removal and mitigation

## Forest Facts and Accomplishments

<b>Selected Facts</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>FY 2018 Accomplishments</b>	<b>Value</b>
Population	108,612	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	57
Acres of Forest Land	45,163	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	7
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	54,990	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	7
Number of NIPF Landowners	1,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	0
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	7,500	State Fire Communities Assisted	0
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	13,824	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	0
Number of Rural Fire Departments	1	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	20	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	0
Forest Based Employment	125	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	0
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	5	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	4,381
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	180,500		

## Program Highlights

### **Conservation Education**

The VI Forestry Division participated in the annual EcoFair held on Earth Day. 630 students and teachers of 3rd-6th grade were quizzed and educated on native trees and plants. They were also taught the important benefits of trees and forest ecosystem.

### **Cooperative Fire Protection**

The make-up of the US Virgin Islands is unique in that the Territory consists of three major islands and a smaller inhabited island, each of which requires its own fire stations. The Virgin Islands Fire Service is divided into two districts: the St. Thomas/St. John/Water Island district and the St. Croix district. There are seven fire stations in the St. Thomas/St. John/Water Island district and four in the St. Croix district. All stations are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The VI Fire Service (VIFS) provides service to over 108,000 year-round residents and additional seasonal vacationers of 10,000 to 15,000. In the calendar year 2018, its active firefighters these active firefighters responded to brush fires that affected over several acres of land throughout the territory. The agency has three main areas of operations: Emergency Operations (Suppression), Arson Investigation and Prevention (Prevention), and Administration. There are seven fire stations in the St. Thomas/St. John/Water Island district and four in the St. Croix district. The Prevention Unit of the Fire Service conducted yearlong fire education workshops, performed fire extinguisher training and fire drills. During National Prevention Week, this Unit conducted a series of activities that reached over thousands of students. The goal of the Prevention Unit is to safeguard the community from fires and other related hazards through programs which will educate the public and enhance observance to fire regulations. The Administration Unit, through management of the available financial resources, provides the support for efficient operations of these two units. USDA Forest Service grant funds were used to purchase firefighting gears, firefighting supplies, educational supplies, and other items educational tools that were distributed to the students during Prevention Week.

### **Forest Legacy**

Work continues on Forest Legacy in FY2019. One property was identified by the Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (FSCC) as the priority to explore to submit for the national Forest Legacy competition, Inner Brass Island on St. Thomas. Work continues to complete appraisal and title search.

### **Forest Stewardship**

Forest stewardship continued this year with two new plans completed and approved by the Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (FSCC) covering 17 acres. The VI Department of Agriculture

nursery has been improved after Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Native tree production continues for reforestation efforts for Stewardship participants

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

The Virgin Islands tree ordinance known as the "Community and Heritage Tree Law of the Virgin Islands" was signed into law on January 6, 2019. Act 8149 is a landmark accomplishment for the Territory and has been in the works for many years.

For the FY of 2019 the Urban and Community Forestry Program has improved the related Urban and Community Forestry Council by replacing inactive members and creating a more active program. We have also created an Instagram page to highlight past, ongoing, and future Urban and Community Forestry projects, events, and trainings.

The VI Forestry Division collaborated with State Historic Preservation Office, Sports Park & Recreation, and non-profits: VI Good Food Coalition and Trees that Feed Foundation for Arbor Day events. Native trees were planted to help restore native populations and reforest the urban canopy after the forest loss from Hurricane Maria. Breadfruit trees were also given to the public for replanting.

Moreover, we are creating new working relationships with nonprofits, government agencies, and organizations that we have not previously worked with.

Additionally, we are working on updating our program to be more accessible online so that a we can reach a larger audience.

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## **Contact Information**



### **Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture**

Positive TA Nelson  
*Commissioner*  
RR1, Box 10345  
Kingshill, VI 00850  
340-778-0997  
[positive.nelson@doa.vi.gov](mailto:positive.nelson@doa.vi.gov)

### **US Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry**

Magaly Figueroa  
*SPF Program Manager*  
USDA Forest Service  
Jardin Botanico Sur, 1201 Calle Ceiba  
San Juan, PR 00926-1119  
787-764-7718  
[magaly.figueroa@usda.gov](mailto:magaly.figueroa@usda.gov)

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