

V I R M C

VIRGIN ISLANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COOPERATIVE

Established 1982

A Collaboration of Resource Management Institutions Focusing On:

COORDINATED RESEARCH

INSTITUTION BUILDING

CO-MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

RESOURCE POOLING

SKILLS TRANSFER

INTERDISCIPLINARY PARTNERSHIPS

NATURAL RESOURCE INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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VIRMC's BEGINNING

ORIGINAL VIRMC MEMBERS

VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
NATURAL RESOURCES)
UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
WEST INDIES LABORATORY
(ST. CROIX)
ISLAND RESOURCES FOUNDATION
(ST. THOMAS)
EASTERN CARIBBEAN NATURAL AREA
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
(ST. CROIX)
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
(PUERTO RICO)
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
(PUERTO RICO)
INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL FORESTRY
(PUERTO RICO)
UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
CARIBBEAN FISHERY MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL (PUERTO RICO)
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS
GOVERNMENT (MINISTRY OF
NATURAL RESOURCES)
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL
PARKS TRUST

The *VIRGIN ISLANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COOPERATIVE (VIRMC)* was established in 1982 by public and private sector institutions in the U.S. Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Under the leadership of the Virgin Islands National Park, VIRMC initially included 13 cooperating institutions (see box) who recognized the need for a collaborative approach to the management of natural resources in the Virgin Islands.

VIRMC's institutional framework emerged simultaneously with UNESCO's designation of the V.I. National Park on St. John as an international Biosphere Reserve (the Park was dedicated as the V.I. Biosphere Reserve in 1983). Stimulated by the need to build a constituency for the new Biosphere Reserve, the National Park encouraged establishment of a program of cooperative applied research on Virgin Islands-based resource management issues.

An immediate challenge taken up by the original VIRMC partners was to identify a collaborative approach for assisting the National Park Service, specifically the Park's efforts:

- to set guidelines for developing the National Park on St. John as an international Biosphere Reserve, a "model" for the Virgin Islands and the Eastern Caribbean, and
- to undertake surveys of coastal and marine resources, principally on the island of St. John.

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VIRMC I (1983 - 1988)

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Using the Virgin Islands Biosphere Reserve as the study site, in 1983 VIRMC launched an ambitious five-year, half-million dollar research program financed by the **U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**. A sequence of 30 research studies, largely focused on the marine resources of the Virgin Islands Biosphere Reserve, was ultimately carried out by 33 investigators from nine VIRMC-affiliated institutions. The resulting technical reports totaled over 2,300 pages and constitute one of the most intensive data collection efforts ever carried out in a protected area in the Eastern Caribbean. Projects emphasized:

- interdisciplinary research techniques
- filling major gaps in the database on the Park, the island of St. John and surrounding buffer zones
- guidelines for resolving resource management conflicts
- establishing a baseline for monitoring selected terrestrial and marine environmental indicators.

Most observers concluded that the VIRMC strategy for implementing a coordinated program of focused research and resource planning using the Virgin Islands Resource Management Cooperative to support the Virgin Islands Biosphere Reserve had worked very well. The challenge has been to refocus VIRMC and link its extension to the Biosphere Reserve *and* to critical resource management needs in the Territory. VIRMC's reemergence in the 1990s focuses on repeating its previous success with a new emphasis on:

- community participation
- the Virgin Islands Territory as a whole -- the "zone of cooperation" surrounding the Biosphere Reserve -- and
- an updated and expanded VIRMC membership, with VIRMC itself being shaped as a research and learning institution.

FOR A FULL LISTING OF THE VIRMC I RESEARCH STUDIES,
CONTACT ISLAND RESOURCES FOUNDATION OR THE VIRGIN
ISLANDS BIOSPHERE RESERVE OFFICE IN ST. JOHN.
