



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Monday, August 25, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRYAN ADMINISTRATION SECURES MORE THAN 2,000 ACRES IN HISTORIC PARKLAND EXPANSION

ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands — Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. and the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) have completed one of the largest land acquisitions in territorial history, securing 2,469 acres at Maroon Ridge and Annaly Bay on St. Croix.

The \$17.5 million purchase, finalized Aug. 15, was funded through the U.S. Department of Commerce and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under the Inflation Reduction Act. The newly acquired property will expand the Territorial Parks System and be managed by DPNR's Division of Territorial Parks and Protected Areas.

"This investment is about conservation and about honoring the struggles of those who came before us," Bryan said. "It ensures that future generations of Virgin Islanders will have access to lands that tell our story, reflect our heritage and strengthen our pride."

DPNR Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol said the acquisition shows the governor's commitment to protecting the territory's environment. "Governor Bryan made expansion of our parks system a priority, and this purchase delivers on that vision," Oriol said. "This is proof of what can be achieved when federal partners, local government and community advocates work together."

Kristina "Kitty" Edwards, director of the Division of Territorial Parks and Protected Areas, said the acquisition fulfills decades of advocacy. "Virgin Islanders fought for years to see these lands protected," Edwards said. "Today is a victory for them and for everyone who values our natural and cultural heritage."

Melissa Hill, USVI and Florida project manager for the Trust for Public Land, said the partnership with the Bryan administration and NOAA was key to finalizing the purchase. "TPL is proud to have worked alongside the administration to ensure this extraordinary property is preserved as a Territorial Park," Hill said.

The acquisition was made under the guidance of Legislative Act 8609, which directs the government to identify and conserve historically and culturally significant sites. Officials said it sets a precedent for large-scale land preservation and underscores the Bryan administration's commitment to conservation, culture and public access.

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