

# SAVE SALT RIVER BAY

St. Croix, US Virgin Islands

Dear (stakeholder name),

We are writing to you today to **raise awareness regarding the potential environmental, cultural, historical and economic impact of the development of the proposed location for a new Marine Research Education Center (MREC) in Salt River Bay, St. Croix, USVI. We are asking for your help to recommend the relocation of this project to Christiansted or another less endangered area than Salt River Bay.** The “MREC” project, proposed by the National Park Service (NPS) in conjunction with Rutgers University, The University of North Carolina-Wilmington, the University of South Carolina, and the University of the Virgin Islands, will have a devastating impact in the following areas:

1. Violating a designated National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve and Natural Landmark by building over 150,000 sf. of a research campus, lab, housing and auditorium. **Salt River Bay was identified by the National Trust for Historical Preservation as one of the eleven most endangered sites in the US and Territories.** Runoff and erosion due to building on this land will impact the very coral the MREC is seeking to study and protect.
2. **Dredging Salt River Bay and Bio Bay to accommodate a research marina will destroy the delicate ecosystem currently in place.** Studying and experiencing Bioluminescent Bay’s remarkable creatures will be destroyed....there are currently less than eight bays like this in the world!
3. In 1990, the NPS stated that the area currently being considered for the MREC project was where an **archeological discovery of an Amerindian burial ground (AD 660 – 1015), located adjacent to Cabo de las Flechas, “may be the most significant find of the nature in the Caribbean”.** Again, how can we let history and culture be destroyed? Instead of continuing to study this area for historical and cultural significance, the plan is to bulldoze and cover it in the name of science.
4. **Salt River Bay houses over 25 endangered and threatened animals, species and plants.** Building on this site will disturb, displace and in some cases destroy many of these treasures we should be fighting to protect and appreciate.
5. **The planned site is located in an unprotected area, ripe for destruction by hurricanes and tropical winds.** Hurricane Hugo destroyed the last marine research center on the island, and neither the universities or USVI have yet to repair or remove this blighted structure due to “limited financial resources”. History too often repeats itself. Should the fate of this project fall victim to this type of destruction, the area – once designated a National Historic Park and Landmark - will become an eyesore for generations to follow.

We propose that alternatively locating the MREC in Christiansted or our other alternative suggestions would not only protect the Salt River Bay but would help foster revitalization of the economic and social vibrancy of the island. Relocating the project to Christiansted would allow the island the opportunity to

revitalize a depressed area, encourage new investment, promote job growth, and protect one of the only bioluminescent bays in the world.

We are not dismissing the potential good that could come from this project; however we cannot ignore the potential cultural and environmental impact to Salt River Bay if this project is not moved to an alternative location. The project's planned location actually contradicts the very principles the NPS and MREC group claim they are preserving and studying. We greatly encourage you to review the supporting documentation detailing the negative impact a development would have on Salt River Bay, found at our site [www.savesaltriverbay.com](http://www.savesaltriverbay.com).

We share a moral obligation to make informed decisions and to act in a manner that is best for the island and its people. We need to promote investments in our future that do not sacrifice the cultural, historical, and environmental legacy we are entrusted to protect. Locating the MREC in Christiansted represents a unique opportunity to effect change for the betterment of our island by revitalizing our struggling infrastructure while simultaneously safeguarding our natural and historic treasures.

**Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter and your help in relocating the MREC project from the planned Salt River Bay location.**

Sincerely,