



TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

December 1993

Volume 6 Number 3

TO PUMP OR NOT TO PUMP

Probably the single largest environmental issue concerning the boating community here in the VI is that of pumping untreated sewage into our waters. While it is easy to say that sewage "treatment" plants have a much greater effect, we have to realize that our marine environment is becoming overstressed from so many directions that we must try to eliminate any stresses we can. The issue has become of major concern due to the large number of boats crowded into many of our bays and marinas.

The primary problem with resolving this issue in the VI has been the lack of pumpout facilities to service the boating community. Recently, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Environmental Protection Agency have identified funding to develop pumpout facilities in all coastal states and territories. In a joint effort, the Divisions of Fish and Wildlife, Environmental Protection and Environmental Enforcement of the Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources have developed the following plan.

In 1994 a survey will determine the number of vessels that require pumpout facilities, the number of boats currently fitted with holding tanks for the sewage, best locations for pumpout facilities in the VI, and marina operators or others who are willing to share the costs of developing these facilities. Starting in 1995, the funds will be available for actual construction of the facilities.

However, just having the facilities available will not ensure their use. Boaters will need to make a commitment to the environment and make the effort to use them. By changing our habits, marina owners and the industry will need to follow the lead and offer adequate services.

What can you do as a boater or other interested person to help move in this direction? You can encourage more marina operators to install pumpout facilities. You can encourage better maintenance of pumpout facilities. You can recognize and accept that there is a cost for use of these facilities. Use shoreside facilities whenever possible (this will reduce your need to pump out your holding tank as often). Educate your peers (let others know that you comply with sewage disposal regulations and that you expect them to do the same).

Many people, understandably, want nothing to do with pumping out their holding tanks. Yes, you're dealing with exactly what you think you're dealing with. Because you don't want to think about it, however, doesn't mean you can pump directly overboard, where "out of sight, out of mind" quickly takes over. The environment and your boating friends and neighbors still have to live with it. So please support these facilities when they become available.

Caribbean Flamingo

Phoenicopterus ruber



"Flamingos are, at the least, remarkable, at best sublimely beautiful, and at times strange, rather remote beings inhabiting a world only they can inhabit with enjoyment... Yet they always manage to be clean and beautiful... in appalling heat and glare, in surroundings fatal to any ordinary animal and inimical to even the most determined and well-equipped human investigator. Suddenly they appear..., delight us for awhile, and then are gone again." Leslie Brown, 1959.

The Caribbean Flamingo is the most brightly colored large flamingo in the world. For centuries this bird has been hunted for food and sport, leading to its present worldwide scarcity. Conservation measures were too late to save the flamingo population in the BVI. Native flamingos once bred by the thousands at the salt ponds of Anegada, and they frequented surrounding islands. Collection of eggs and hunting for meat caused the population to decline. The last few were shot for sport in the 1940's and none have resided in the BVI since.

In 1987 eight flamingos were imported to Guana Island as part of a reintroduction project. The numbers were not sufficient to initiate breeding and they disappeared in 1990. The results did indicate that with sufficient numbers, a population could be established. Since then, flamingos have been regularly seen in Anegada. Flamingos in Frederiksted may be from recent reintroduction attempts in PR.

QUOTE

"Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth.... Contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste." --Chief Sealth, 1854

GLOBAL EXPOSURE

Although the Virgin Islands is often considered to be off the beaten track of main line scientific research we regularly receive requests from all over the world for copies of our research reports. A typical letter received this month reads, "I am working on the diet of the small Indian mongoose introduced in an Adriatic island, in Croatia. I would therefore be extremely interested in having your widely cited (but impossible for me to get) book by Nellis & Everard (1983) entitled 'The biology of the mongoose in the Caribbean', published in Studies on the Fauna of Curacao and Other Caribbean Islands. No. 64." The letter was written by Dr. Paolo Cavallini, Dept. of Evolutionary Biology, Univ. of Siena, Italy.

FISHERY CLOSED AREAS

Closing areas to fishing for species of fish that aggregate to reproduce is an effective way to protect the fish while performing an act vital to the perpetuation of the species. In the past, overfishing of reproductive aggregations has led to the loss of key fish in the fishery such as the Nassau grouper.

There are three areas in federal waters surrounding our islands that have been designated as closed areas for this purpose. These include a 14 square mile area south of St. Thomas and a 3.5 square mile area east of St. Croix that are closed from December 1 to February 28 of each year to protect the reproductive aggregations of red hind. Likewise, there is an approximately one square mile area south of St. Croix that is closed from March 1 to June 30 of each year to protect the reproductive aggregation of mutton ("virgin") snapper.

For more information on these regulations and how to know where these areas are, please contact the Division.

.....
Trees were saved by printing on recycled paper

BOAT RAMPS

On Wednesday, December 15, 1993 the Altona Lagoon Boat Ramp Facility was officially opened. This facility was constructed by the Division using Sport Fish Restoration funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The facilities were constructed to provide recreational fishermen with the ability to launch their boats from shore without having to use less favorable sites. The location of this facility enables fishermen from central and northern St. Croix to have close, easy access to the sea with their boats.

FREE SPORT FISHING LOG BOOKS

A reminder that the Division makes recording your catch easier with our V.I. Sport Fishing Log Book. It is printed on waterproof paper and contains several useful reference pages. These books are available at no charge, but we ask that fishermen share their information with the Division so that we may gain a better understanding of the status of the sport fish populations in our waters.

WELCOME JOHN!

The Division has a new employee. John Morris comes to us as an Environmental Specialist Trainee from 8 years with the U.S. Army where he was a Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Specialist/Chemical Lab Technician. John is a graduate of Eudora Kean High School on St. Thomas. He will be working with the Fisheries Bureau on a number of projects. John has approached his new job with competence and also brings to us a very needed ability to work on diesel and other engines. When not on the job, John enjoys soccer, basketball, table tennis and writing poetry.



This newsletter was funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the Government of the VI.

GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
OF THE UNITED STATES

Department of Planning and Natural Resources
Division of Fish and Wildlife
101 Estate Nazareth
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
(809)775-6762 (ST.T.), (809)772-1955 (ST.X.)

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CHARLOTTE AMALIE, V.
PERMIT NO. 35

Address Correction Requested