TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Coastweeks 1997: Celebrate, Educate, Participate

Coastweeks '97, a nationwide celebration of our coasts, is set to begin September 20 with the kickoff of the International Coastal Cleanup that day. For the 16th consecutive year, communities across America will celebrate the importance and value of our coasts by conducting beach cleanups and other special events during the three-week period. Coordinated nationally by the Center for Marine Conservation (CMC), and locally by the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Coastweeks '97 will include the International Coastal Cleanup and National Estuaries Day.

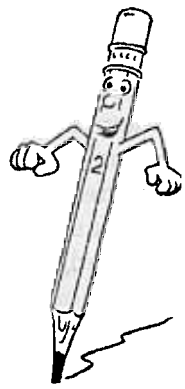
On September 20, the International Coastal Cleanup -- a global effort to remove and catalogue litter and debris from beaches, coastlines, waterways, and underwater areas -- will take place. The one day annual event is expected to draw over quarter of a million volunteers in 55 U.S. states and territories and over 90 countries.

Coastweeks was created in 1982 by Massachusetts resident Barbara Fegan, who developed the event as an educational tool to focus on the value of coastal natural resources. In 1994, Fegan passed coordination of the national Coastweeks celebration to the Center for Marine Conservation. Coastweeks is endorsed and supported by numerous national and local organizations and state and federal agencies. The event is celebrated each year in the fall, beginning on the third Saturday and continuing through Columbus Day.

Coastweeks 1996 was celebrated locally by 400 private and public school children who gathered data by collecting garbage from several east-end beaches.Government departments, private businesses and dive shops also cleaned the beaches and removed debris form our beaches..

For more information about Coastweeks '97 activities in the Virgin Islands, please contact Donna Griffin, Division of Fish and Wildlife, 340-775- 6762 or the Center for Marine Conservation at 1-800-CMC- BEACH or on-line at www.cmc-ocean.org.

Environmental Education Teacher's Workshop



Pencil in September 24, 1997 on your calendar if you are a teacher interested in teaching your students about our natural resources. The Division of Fish and Wildlife has reserved the Department of Education Curriculum Center from 5:30 to 7:30 pm for this event. The goal of the workshop is to make educators aware of services about environmental issues available to them and their students.

This workshop will feature a variety of representatives from various agencies. Each representative will give a brief description of services offered by their agency. Agencies will include: Division of Fish and Wildlife, Environmental Education Bureau, DPNR - Coastal Zone Management (CZM), UVI Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS), National Park Services (NPS), UVI - Cooperative Extension Service, UVI - Water Resource Research Institute (WRRI), Environmental Association of St. Thomas/ St. John (EAST), Junior Gardening and Ecology Academy and the V.I. America's Cup Challenge Marine Program.

The future of our natural resources depends on a community knowledgeable about issues concerning our environment. Education is one of the first steps towards protecting our island paradise. Participation in coastal beach cleanups and recycling are examples of activities which help the environment. Every little bit helps towards preserving a viable environment for our children.

For more information about the workshop, please contact Donna Griffin at the Division of Fish and Wildlife Redhook office at 340 - 775 - 67632. We also ask that, if you are interested in attending the workshop, please give us call to reserve a seat and bring along another teacher as a guest.

Quote

" For whatever happens to beast, soon happens to man. All things are connected."

- Anon

EARTHWATCH

What is EARTHWATCH? Earthwatch is the world's largest organization matching members of the public with scientific and conservation projects worldwide. It acts as a bridge between science, business, and the community. For 25 years they have been providing support for scientific field research projects by matching paying volunteers with field researchers who need their help.

Earthwatch expeditions are not for everyone. If your idea of environmental commitment is limited to choosing paper or plastic, then Earthwatch is not for you. But if you are the kind of person who likes to roll up your sleeves and dig into the world, if you believe that every problem has a solution, if you're brimming with curiosity and commitment, then consider Earthwatch.

You don't have to have any special skills or knowledge to participate. You'll be thoroughly briefed before you go, and you will be taught everything you need to know during the first few days of each expedition team. The scientist leading your expedition will provide informal lectures and lead campfire discussions in the evenings and answer questions and give you explanations as you work through the day. You don't have to know anything when you arrive, but you will feel like a Rhodes Scholar when you go home.

Participants on Earthwatch projects share among themselves the costs of their food, housing and transportation. In addition, your contribution directly helps to pay for field equipment, truck rentals, and much more. The costs for each expedition range from $650 to $3,695, depending on expedition costs involved and the length of the team.

For the last seventeen years, the Division of Fish and Wildlife and Earthwatch volunteers have been patrolling the beach at the Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge, St. Croix. Researchers and volunteers have been piecing together the reproductive cycle of the endangered leatherback turtle for longer than anyone else. Earthwatch teams patrolling on this erosion-prone and once heavily poached beach since 1982, have tripled the number of leatherback hatchlings that make it to the sea. The project has served as a role model for sea-turtle conservation worldwide and has earned Earthwatch the U.S. Department of Interior's coveted Conservation Award in 1987.

There have been 1000 volunteers at the Sandy Point National Refuge since 1982. They have spent 102,000+ hours on the beach gathering important data. They have walked approximately 80,000 miles of beach!

A typical day for Earthwatch volunteers on the Sandy Point Leatherback Project actually begins at 8pm where you will patrol 2.6 kilometers of beach every hour until 5 am. The evening is broken into adult nesting and nest recovery activities both of which are very rewarding. At the end of the shift you head back to your room at Cottages by the Sea where you will sleep until 2 pm, have a field trip or free time, prepare dinner and then head back to the beach at 8 pm for another evening on patrol.

This year we are seeing record numbers of turtle and nests. We believe this is a result of work done by the first and every Earthwatch team. A world of thanks goes out to each of you.

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