

St. Thomas East End Reserves 2011-2013 Accomplishments and 2014 Projected Activities

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The management of STEER over the last several years has been a coordinated, informal co-management effort on the part of the community, Friends of Christmas Cove, Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Given the absence of a designated manager and staff, the successes below are attributable to the staff, management, funding and expertise of these organizations, combined with both fiscal support and expertise from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). While the niches filled by the partners (DPNR – funding, planning and management, UVI - planning and research, TNC – planning, coordination, research and outreach) have resulted in a limited but successful model thus far, continued management of STEER is dependent on available staff and funding. Below is a list of impactful STEER activities and accomplishments from 2011 through 2013, as well as projected 2014 activities.

Many management activities and research activities detailed in both the STEER Management Plan and the STEER Watershed Management Plan are ripe implementation, but lack funding or capacity for execution. Continued financial support from NOAA as well as the establishment of local finance mechanisms are needed for long-term, sustained management of STEER. The Nature Conservancy has received funding through 2015 from NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) to continue in its capacity to coordinate management activities in STEER while building community support and interagency collaboration to achieve self-sustaining, community-based co-management of STEER.



Clockwise from top left:
Kayakers in Mangrove Lagoon (B. Sylvia),
Stakeholders at the STEER Management Plan Open
House (A.M. Hoffman),
Boat Refuge in Benner Bay (A.M. Hoffman)

2011 STEER Accomplishments

- STEER Management Plan finalized, celebrated with 40 attendees at an Open House in May 2011
- Inaugural STEER Newsletter produced in August 2011
- Compass Point cleanup conducted in September 2011 in conjunction with EAST and Ivanna Eudora Kean JROTC, resulting in 2/3 dumpster of trash being removed from watershed
- STEER Office opened in December 2011, resulting in increased visibility of STEER
- Regular STEER Core Team and Stakeholder meetings held every month of 2011, resulting in consistent management
- Increased communication between the STEER Community, various Departments of DPNR (CZM, DFW, DEP, DEE), UVI and TNC, resulting in increased coordination amongst agencies
- Increased reporting of illegal activity from the community, sign of increasing community support
- NOAA's projects (Contaminants and Bioeffects, Watershed Planning and Assessment Study and Coastal Activities Mapping) informed by STEER Core Team and stakeholders, resulting in increased local input, guidance and support
- Bovoni Cay Hurricane Mooring System installed
- Willingness to Pay surveys of STEER businesses completed

2012 STEER Accomplishments

- STEER Research Update produced in October, served as 2012 STEER Newsletter
- STEER booth and mural manned at Reef Fest on St. Thomas, informing the local community of VI protected areas
- Second annual East End Reserves Coastal Cleanup coordinated in November in conjunction with many partners (Eudora Kean JROTC, EAST, Red Hook Alliance, DPNR, Ocean Conservancy, UVI, VIMAS) resulting in trash being removed from watershed
- Planned regular STEER Core Team and Stakeholder meetings, resulting in consistent communication, continued coordination and management between the STEER Community, various Departments of DPNR (CZM, DFW, DEP, DEE), UVI and TNC
- Human use coastal mapping planned and completed, resulting in accurate assessment of uses of STEER, conflicts and addition of stakeholders knowledgeable and supportive of the mission of STEER
- Contaminants and bioeffects monitoring and results completed, shedding light on TBT, copper and sediment infaunal impacts in Benner Bay and Mangrove Lagoon
- Biological monitoring (fish and benthos) completed (results pending)
- Watershed reconnaissance field work and public outreach completed
- LIDAR mapping and field confirmation completed
- *Acropora cervicornis* outplanting sites established in Nazareth and Great St. James, bolstering coral reefs in STEER
- Willingness to Pay study of STEER businesses completed
- Marine debris field survey and analyses identified sources of debris in STEER

2013 STEER Accomplishments

- STEER Core Team and stakeholder meetings conducted on a project-by-project basis, resulted in coordinated planning and sharing of the results with the public
- Sediment core sampling in Benner Bay to further delineate TBT and copper contamination (results pending)
- Mangrove prop root community research, identifying impacts to organisms aligned with water quality within Mangrove Lagoon
- Third annual East End Reserves Coastal Cleanup coordinated in conjunction with many partners (Eudora Kean JROTC, EAST, Red Hook Alliance, DPNR, Ocean Conservancy, UVI, VIMAS), resulting in trash being removed from watershed
- Willingness to Pay Assessment of Visitors to STEER completed, identifying a willingness to pay on the part of locals and visitors as well as additional outreach needs
- STEER website and social media sites established <http://steer.reefconnect.org/>, providing a needed document repository and outreach tool

Anticipated 2014 STEER Activities

- Groundwater wells installed in the mangrove interface between Bovoni Dump and Mangrove Lagoon, results will indicated water flow as well as heavy metal and nutrient transport in groundwater (results pending)
- Watershed implementation project to limit flooding and contaminant transport at Independent Boat Yard (planning and design are underway)
- Marker buoys to delineate STEER boundaries
- Maintenance and expansion of social marketing using <http://steer.reefconnect.org/> and associated Facebook and twitter accounts
- Creation of additional outreach (signs and brochures) materials to inform users of STEER
- Boater and marina best management practices and pollution prevention training
- STEER Core Team and stakeholder meetings conducted on a project-by-project basis



Outplanting of *A. cervicornis* in STEER (K. Lewis), Stakeholders Conducting STEER Human Use Mapping (A.M. Hoffman)