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Virgin Islands Code/TITLE 12 CONSERVATION /Chapter 21. Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management / § 903. Findings and goals

**§ 903. Findings and goals**

(a) The Legislature hereby finds and declares that:

(1) the coastal zone, and the lands and waters thereof, constitute a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital importance to the people and economy of the United States Virgin Islands;

(2) the protection of the natural and scenic resources of the coastal zone is of vital concern to present and future residents of the United States Virgin Islands;

(3) title to certain submerged and filled lands surrounding the United States Virgin Islands has been conveyed in trust to and is held in trust by the Government of the United States Virgin Islands for the benefit of the people of the United States Virgin Islands;

(4) the shorelines provide a constant source of food and recreation to, and enhance all aspects of the lives of, the people of the United States Virgin Islands, and the public has made frequent, uninterrupted and unobstructed use of the shorelines throughout Danish and American sovereignty;

(5) to promote the public safety, health and welfare, and to protect public and private property, wildlife, ocean resources and the natural environment, it is necessary to preserve the ecological balance of the coastal zone, and to prevent its deterioration and destruction;

(6) there has been uncontrolled and uncoordinated development of the shorelines and attempts to curtail the use of the shorelines by the public;

(7) improper development of the coastal zone and its resources has resulted in land use conflicts, erosion, sediment deposition, increased flooding, gut and drainage fillings, decline in productivity of the marine environment, pollution and other adverse environmental effects in and to the lands and waters of the coastal zone, and has adversely affected the beneficial uses of the coastal zone by the people of the United States Virgin Islands;

(8) the present system of regulatory controls in the United States Virgin Islands affecting the coastal zone consists of fragmented or overlapping laws and regulations which are not properly coordinated and which when taken together do not constitute a comprehensive or adequate response to the needs of the people of the United States Virgin Islands to protect, and to effect the best use of, the resources of the coastal zone; and

(9) there exists no comprehensive program for the overall management, conservation and development of the resources of the coastal zone, for the prevention of encroachment on natural areas in the coastal zone by urbanized developments and for the avoidance of irreversible commitments of coastal zone resources which provide short-term benefits at the cost of adverse effects on the long-term productivity and amenity of the coastal zone environment.

(b) The Legislature hereby determines that the basic goals of the United States Virgin Islands for its coastal zone are to:

- (1) protect, maintain, preserve and, where feasible, enhance and restore, the overall quality of the environment in the coastal zone, the natural and man-made resources therein, and the scenic and historic resources of the coastal zone for the benefit of residents of and visitors of the United States Virgin Islands;
- (2) promote economic development and growth in the coastal zone and consider the need for development of greater than territorial concern by managing: (1) the impacts of human activity and (2) the use and development of renewable and nonrenewable resources so as to maintain and enhance the long-term productivity of the coastal environment;
- (3) assure priority for coastal-dependent development over other development in the coastal zone by reserving areas suitable for commercial uses including hotels and related facilities, industrial uses including port and marine facilities, and recreation uses;
- (4) assure the orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of the resources of the coastal zone, taking into account the social and economic needs of the residents of the United States Virgin Islands;
- (5) preserve, protect and maintain the trust lands and other submerged and filled lands of the United States Virgin Islands so as to promote the general welfare of the people of the United States Virgin Islands;
- (6) preserve what has been a tradition and protect what has become a right of the public by insuring that the public, individually and collectively, has and shall continue to have the right to use and enjoy the shorelines and to maximize public access to and along the shorelines consistent with constitutionally-protected rights of private property owners;
- (7) promote and provide affordable and diverse public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone for all residents of the United States Virgin Islands through acquisition, development and restoration of areas consistent with sound resource conservation principles;
- (8) conserve ecologically significant resource areas for their contribution to marine productivity and value as wildlife habitats, and preserve the function and integrity of reefs, marine meadows, salt ponds, mangroves and other significant natural areas;
- (9) maintain or increase coastal water quality through control of erosion, sedimentation, runoff, siltation and sewage discharge;
- (10) consolidate the existing regulatory controls applicable to uses of land and water in the coastal zone into a single unified process consistent with the provisions of this chapter, and coordinate therewith the various regulatory requirements of the United States Government;
- (11) promote public participation in decisions affecting coastal planning conservation and development.

(Added Oct. 31, 1978, No. 4248, § 1, Sess. L. 1978, p. 286.)