

TERRESTRIAL PROGRAMS

Season Report 2024/25

The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park's Terrestrial Programs aim to maintain the trails and historic sites in the park, cultivate and protect native plants, and educate and nurture the conservationists of the future.

Trails Program

The Trails Program, managed and funded by Friends of Virgin Islands National Park, runs annually from November through August and is essential for keeping the park accessible and safe.

The program protects natural and cultural resources by:

- Maintaining all 27 miles of hiking trails and more than 30 historic sites.
- Restoring native plant habitats.
- Removing trash and debris from the park.

This program relies heavily on volunteers who generously contribute their time and hard work. This year, 453 volunteers contributed 5,280 hours of service to improve Virgin Islands National Park. This included 207 service group volunteers and 246 walk-up volunteers.

The walkup program provides an opportunity for community and visitors to volunteer on the trails every Tuesday and Thursday morning from November to June. Work locations are posted every Monday. Service groups stay for longer periods of time and included the American Hiking Society, Conservation Volunteers International Program, Soul Trak Outdoors, Sierra Club, Appalachian State University, and others.



Native Plant Restoration Program

The Native Plant Restoration Program continues to grow since its launch in 2019. Impacts this season included:

- Removing temporary wire cages from coastal plants.
- Removing invasive species from the native plant landscape at the NPS Lind Point Resource Management building.
- Watering 40 newly planted trees at Francis Bay.
- Gathering scientific data at the Solanum conocarpum reserve population.
- Assisting at the Friends Cinnamon Bay Plant Nursery.

Eleanor Gibney continues to serve as lead advisor on all planting projects, providing invaluable expertise to Friends FY25 program interns — Lori Graham, Alison Parker, and Zia Zucker — deserve special recognition for their efforts.

Summer Trail Crew

The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park's Summer Trail Crew is an 8 week program that provides a professional job opportunity to Virgin Islands high school students (ages 15 to 18) interested in conservation. This year the 11 crew members worked hard clearing trails and historic sites, planted at the senior center, gained CPR skills, learned about turtles and marine ecosystems as well as the traditional uses of plants. They also had fun in and on the water.

Summer Trail Crew is an opportunity for students to gain professional experience, develop leadership skills, work outdoors as part of a team, and learn about Virgin Islands National Park. The crew works in the park on St. John under the supervision of the Friends Trails Coordinator. One of the goals of the Summer Trail Crew program is to help the participants gain an appreciation and passion for the natural world, conservation, and environmental stewardship. It is common for crew members to return for consecutive years



Looking Ahead

Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is preparing to expand its habitat restoration efforts across the park. Planned actions include:

- Five-Year Habitat Restoration Plan — Currently under review by Virgin Islands National Park (VIIS), this plan focuses on restoring and expanding mangrove habitats, mitigating coastal erosion in priority areas, and protecting rare and endemic plant species through propagation and reintroduction.
- NPS Lind Point Facility Plantings — Friends will replace deceased plants with nursery-raised individuals, provide general tree maintenance, and add identification tags to help visitors learn about native species.
- Coastal Planting Efforts — Continued planting at Trunk Bay and Lameshur Bay to protect shorelines and enhance coastal habitat.