

Fostering Environmental Literacy through the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators (VINE)

Introduction

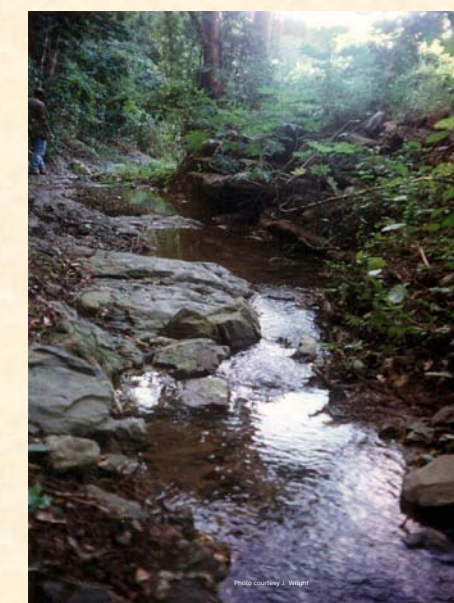
The U.S. Virgin Islands have some of the most spectacular terrestrial and marine resources in the United States and a long history of environmental and cultural education and outreach programs. No formal mechanism linking the numerous professionals working in environmental and cultural outreach and education existed. VINE was created in August 2004, as a tool to address this lack of organized coordination.



Map of U.S. Virgin Islands which include varied coastal and marine habitats



View of coastline-East End of St. Croix



Fresh water gut system, St. Croix

Need

- Multiple agencies charged with fostering stewardship to preserve natural and cultural resources or promote conservation
- Gap in communication between agencies
- Territory with three islands, each with different environmental challenges

Mission

- To support sustainable use of natural and cultural resources in the U.S. Virgin Islands through environmental education.
- Provide support and resources for comprehensive and coordinated environmental education programs
- Complement existing environmental programs
- Promote the development of a more comprehensive environmental education curriculum
- Meet monthly to foster collaboration and communication

Objectives

- Leverage available resources and decrease fragmentation of effort and duplication across programs by building capacity for environmental education within the territory
- Create an environmental network linking natural and cultural resource organizations, K-20 educators/administrators and stakeholders to promote environmental education within the territory
- Create a database to disseminate member, program and outreach information



Public school teachers participating in VINE presentation, St. Croix

Organizational Structure

Membership: Open to all environmental educators, teachers, organizations and persons who foster the purpose, mission and objectives of the network. VINE's framework consists of groups promoting effective stewardship of the Virgin Islands community through environmental education. These groups may include:

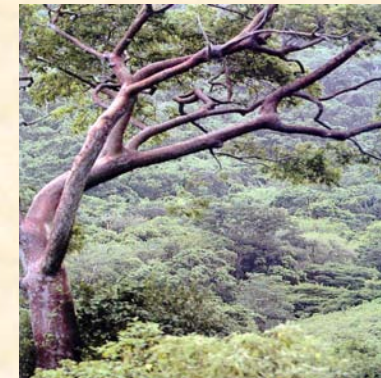
Natural & Cultural Resource Organizations: Local and federal governmental agencies and NGOs

K-20 Educators Home school, elementary, secondary and university educators and administrators from the Virgin Islands public and private schools

Stakeholders: Organizations, individuals and the private sector who have an interest in environmental stewardship of the Virgin Islands.



Elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmata*), St. Croix



Turpentine tree, St. Croix



Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

VINE Member Agencies

VINE has members from 24 agencies that represent nearly all who are actively involved with the territory's environmental and cultural resources. Membership includes representatives from local and federal governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private industry, academia and interested stakeholders.



VINE members planning during a monthly meeting

Accomplishments

- Development of an organizational structure
- 2 active VINE chapters; St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John
- Database of environmental programs, educators and resources in USVI
- Presented VINE model in Puerto Rico and Florida at outreach workshops, Hawaii at NMEA conference, and to British Virgin Islands educators
- Presented VINE services at USVI Agricultural Summit
- Quarterly newsletter distributed to territorial schools
- Annual VINE presentations at QUEST teacher professional development workshops
- Conducting member leadership workshops through a National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association (NOAA) grant
- Developing and administering public awareness campaign for Caribbean Fisheries Management Council (CFMC)
- VINE collaboration led to the development of the Virgin Islands Coral Conservation Consortium (VICCC) "Coral Conservation" campaign
- British Virgin Islands VINE model in development



VINE "Leave Paradise in its place" public awareness campaign developed for CFMC



VINE quarterly newsletter



Duratrans at Miami International Airport VICCC "Coral Conservation" campaign funded by NOAA

For More Information:

Elizabeth Ban UVI- VIMAS (340) 693-1392 eban@uvi.edu

Susan Curtis DPNR- CZM (340) 773-1082 susan.curtis@viczmp.com

Dee Osinski VIWMA (340) 778-7657 dosinski@viwma.org

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