GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES
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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR WARNS OF ILLEGAL SAND MINING

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources has recently received reports of individuals taking large quantities of sand from the beaches across the Territory. The Division of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) reminds the public that this activity is prohibited without a permit and violators may be subjected to a hefty fine.

In accordance with Virgin Islands Code Title 12, § 906(b)(7) "Environmental policies in the first tier shall be as follows: . . . to accommodate offshore sand and gravel mining needs in areas and in ways that will not adversely affect marine resources and navigation. To this end, sand, rock, minerals, marine growth, and coral (including black coral), natural materials, or other natural products of the sea . . . **shall not be taken from the shorelines without first obtaining a coastal zone permit, and no permit shall be granted except for reasons including that the removal of such materials or products will not significantly alter the physical characteristics of the area or adjacent areas on an immediate or long-term basis**."

Any persons conducting such mining without a permit will be subject to enforcement actions in accordance with 12 V.I.C. § 913, which includes a cease-and-desist order to stop any unpermitted work and fees of up to ten thousand dollars ($10,000) per day. Persons may also be subject to a fee for the amount of sand or aggregate taken, in accordance with Virgin Islands Rules and Regulations Title 12, § 910-5(e)(6).

The department is uncertain of the purpose of the illegal sand mining but warns against using beach sand for any construction activity. In sea water, chloride is present, causing corrosion of steel and iron, which ultimately leads to reducing carrying capacity, so that the structure built using this may not be sustainable. Also, beach sand does not have high compressive strength or high tensile strength, therefore, it cannot be used in construction activities.

If you see anyone taking sand from the beaches, download the DPNR Hotline App and submit an anonymous report or visit https://dpnr.vi.gov/home/dpnr-hotline/.