



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

THIRTY-SIX LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

MAGENS BAY AUTHORITY

August 18, 2026

Good day, to Chairperson of the Committee on Finance - Novelle E. Francis Jr. Senate President – Milton E. Potter, Senate Vice President – Kenneth Gittens, all other distinguished committee members, all members of the 36th Legislature and to all persons listening and view these proceedings.

My name is Monique Simon, General Manager of the Magens Bay Authority, and I am accompanied by Ms. Barbara Petersen, Chair of the Board of Directors. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request. This testimony highlights the Authority's mission, financial position, accomplishments, operational challenges, strategic priorities, and our continued commitment to preserving one of the Virgin Islands' most treasured natural resources.

History and Mission

Since its establishment in 1946 following the generous donation of Arthur S. Fairchild, the Magens Bay Authority has been entrusted with preserving and managing some of the Virgin Islands' most treasured public spaces for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Today, the Authority manages Magens Bay Beach, Smith Bay Park (Lindquist Beach), and Drake's Seat properties that contribute to the Territory's natural beauty, cultural identity, recreational life, and tourism economy.

Our mission is to operate and maintain these properties in a manner that conserves natural resources, enhances quality of life, promotes environmental stewardship, and provides safe, inclusive, and enjoyable recreational experiences for all visitors.

More than eighty years later, the Authority remains committed to that mission by protecting our natural resources, maintaining and improving public infrastructure, ensuring patron safety, and making responsible investments that improve accessibility and the overall visitor experience while preserving these public spaces for future generations.

Statistics and Economic Operational Impact

The U.S. Virgin Islands welcomed **303,388 visitors during the first quarter of 2026**, reflecting continued strength in the territory's tourism sector. Of this total, **246,772 visitors arrived in St. Thomas**, making it the primary driver of recreational demand across public beaches and park facilities. This sustained level of tourism directly affects the operational responsibilities of the **Magens Bay Authority**, which manages both **Magens Bay Beach** and **Smith Bay Park (Lindquist Beach)**, two of the most heavily visited natural assets on the island.

Magens Bay continues to serve a diverse visitor population whose usage patterns shape daily operational requirements. More than half of all visitors to Magens Bay **53.76 percent**, were **non-resident visitors**, underscoring the beach's role as a premier attraction for cruise passengers, day-trippers, and short-stay tourists. **Resident visitors** accounted for **23.57 percent**, demonstrating consistent local use. **Excursion passengers**, who typically arrive in concentrated waves tied to cruise ship schedules, representing **19.51 percent**. **Non-resident children** accounted for **2.44 percent**, while **resident children** represented **0.71 percent** of total visitation. These statistics demonstrate that **Magens Bay Authority's two parks, collectively serve both the tourism economy and the local community**, requiring continuous operational readiness across sanitation, safety, environmental management, and infrastructure. Increased visitation—particularly during peak cruise periods requires greater investments in **maintenance, security, lifeguard services, environmental management, sanitation, parking operations, and capital improvements** to maintain the high standards expected of two of the St. Thomas's premier beaches.

Smith Bay Park experiences similar pressures, though with a different visitor profile. While Magens Bay absorbs the majority of cruise-driven traffic, Smith Bay Park receives a higher proportion of weekend-**local residents**, **week-long hotel guests**, **Airbnb visitors**, and tour excursions resulting in longer dwell times and sustained use of restroom facilities, waste systems, and beach infrastructure. The combined operational load across both parks requires coordinated staffing, increased waste-handling capacity, and ongoing infrastructure maintenance to ensure safe, clean, and accessible recreational environments.

These statistics demonstrate that the Magens Bay Authority's two parks Magens Bay and Smith Bay Park collectively serve both the tourism economy and the local community, requiring continuous operational readiness across sanitation, safety, environmental management, and infrastructure. Increased visitation, particularly during peak cruise periods, necessitates greater investment in overall upkeep. Together, Magens Bay and Smith Bay Park form a critical component of St. Thomas's tourism infrastructure and community recreation system. The sustained visitor volume documented in early 2026 reinforces the need for continued operational investment, strategic resource allocation, and long-term capital planning to support the Authority's mission and preserve the reputation of these beaches as world-class destinations.

Financial Overview

For Fiscal Year 2027, the Authority projects operating expenditure totaling **\$4,321,592.41**, with approximately **56 percent** dedicated to payroll and employee-related costs. The Authority employs **62 dedicated employees**, consisting of **25 full-time and 37 part-time staff**, and has four vacant positions: **lifeguard, custodian, groundskeeper, and comptroller**.

Our employees are the backbone of the organization, supporting visitor safety, customer service, environmental stewardship, revenue collection, facility maintenance, and daily park operations. Continued investment in our workforce is essential to maintaining efficient operations, delivering quality public services, and ensuring a safe and welcoming experience for residents and visitors.

Revenue Generation

The Authority generates revenue through admissions, parking, facility rentals, weddings, concessions, recreational activities, and special events. Concession

operations include **WOW Watersports USVI, LLC, Four Virgins, LLC, (Taxi Service) DM Hospitality, LLC, (Beach Chair Rental and Boutique/Retail Sales) and Elevated Hospitality, LLC. (Food and Beverage Sales)**. These partnerships improve visitor services while generating sustainable revenue that supports operations and capital improvements. Diversifying revenue sources allows the Authority to remain financially responsible while continuing to invest in infrastructure and visitor amenities.

Fiscal Year 2026 Accomplishments

Magens Bay Authority Bath House #1 Reconstruction Project

The reconstruction of Bath House #1 at Magens Bay Beach represents one of the most significant infrastructure investments undertaken by the Magens Bay Authority in recent years. This project was made possible through funding provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which covered approximately **98% of the total project cost**, demonstrating the federal government's commitment to restoring and strengthening critical public infrastructure within the U.S. Virgin Islands. The project totaled 1.8 million dollars.

Construction commenced in **September 2025**, and the project is now in its final phase, with all remaining finishing work anticipated to be completed by the **end of September 2026**. Once complete, the new facility will provide visitors with a modern, durable, and fully accessible amenity designed to serve the hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors who enjoy Magens Bay each year.

The new Bath House #1 has been designed to provide enhanced comfort, accessibility, and operational efficiency. The building features spacious **male and female restroom facilities**, each complemented by **ADA-compliant accessible restrooms** to ensure equal access for all patrons. The facility also includes **four private changing rooms, three convenient foot-washing stations**, and generous **ADA-accessible parking** immediately adjacent to the building.

In addition to serving the public, the structure provides substantial operational improvements for the Magens Bay Authority. The building contains **ample storage space** for maintenance equipment, beach supplies, and operational materials, allowing staff to better support daily park operations while maintaining a clean and organized environment.

The facility has been engineered with resilient infrastructure to ensure long-term reliability. It is served by its **own dedicated septic system** and is equipped with a **20-kilowatt emergency generator**, providing backup electrical power during utility interruptions and enhancing the Authority's emergency preparedness and disaster resilience.

The successful execution of this project reflects the dedication and collaboration of numerous individuals and organizations. The Magens Bay Authority extends its sincere appreciation to **Rumina Construction, LLC**, whose commitment to quality workmanship has been instrumental in bringing this project to completion. Appreciation is also extended to **Grant Engineering & Construction Group**, whose project management and engineering oversight ensured the project remained on course and met the Authority's high standards for quality and performance.

Special recognition is given to **Yvonne Webster**, Disaster Program Account Specialist with the **Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA)**, and **Kervin Dover**, Senior Program Project Specialist with the **Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) Office of Disaster Recovery**, for their invaluable guidance, technical expertise, and continued support throughout every phase of the FEMA funding and project administration process. The Magens Bay Authority also acknowledges the unwavering leadership of **Robert G. Morón**, Chairman of the Infrastructure and Planning Committee, whose dedication, technical knowledge, and oversight helped ensure the successful planning and execution of this important capital improvement project. Finally, sincere appreciation is extended to the employees of the Magens Bay Authority, whose daily commitment, coordination, and support contributed significantly to the successful completion of this landmark project.

The completion of the new Bath House #1 stands as a lasting investment in the future of Magens Bay Beach, providing a safe, attractive, resilient, and accessible facility that will serve residents and visitors alike for many years to come while preserving the high-quality recreational experience that has made Magens Bay one of the Caribbean's premier public beaches.

Additional accomplishments included rehabilitation of Shed #1, expanded visitor seating, improvements to park grounds, continued collaboration with the Office of Disaster Recovery, FEMA, engineering consultants, and contractors, successful hosting of the Fifteenth Annual King of the Wings event with more than 4,800 attendees, expanded partnerships with schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based

organizations, and government agencies, and continued professional development for lifeguards through American Red Cross and responder safety training.

Challenges

The Authority continues to address environmental challenges including invasive vegetation, flooding, severe weather events, and increasing sargassum accumulation. Visitors conduct issues such as excessive noise, prohibited glass containers, abandoned animals, and unauthorized commercial activities require continued education and enforcement. Operational challenges include increased visitation, aging infrastructure, traffic management during peak periods, and coordinating ongoing capital improvements while maintaining uninterrupted public access.

Fiscal Year 2027 Goals and Priorities

Our priorities for Fiscal Year 2027 include repaving the roadway between Shed #2 and Bath House #1, completing bridge landing repairs and stabilization, expanding preventative maintenance for Authority facilities, and implementing youth swimming and boating programs focused on water safety and environmental stewardship. These initiatives will improve infrastructure, strengthen public safety, preserve Authority assets, expand community engagement, and reinforce our commitment to operational excellence.

Conclusion

The Magens Bay Authority remains committed to responsible stewardship, fiscal accountability, environmental preservation, and exceptional public service. We appreciate the continued support of the Legislature, our Board of Directors, employees, and community partners. Together we will continue protecting Magens Bay, Smith Bay Park, and Drake's Seat while enhancing the visitor experience and strengthening the Virgin Islands tourism economy.

Thank you once again for this opportunity and we are prepared to address any questions you may have.

Monique Simon, General Manager, Mogens Bay Authority, Barbara Petersen, Chairman, Mogens Bay Authority.