



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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Office of the Commissioner

October 13, 2026

The Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
Chair, Committee on Budget, Appropriations
and Finance
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

**RE: BILL NO. 36-0335 – AN ACT APPROPRIATING \$600,000 TO DPNR FOR THE
FREDERICKSTED FISH MARKET REHABILITATION PROJECT**

Good day Honorable Senator Francis, Chair of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance other committee members and non-committee members present, legislative staff and members of the public viewing and listening over the various forms of media, my name is Jean-Pierre Oriol, Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR). I am present today at the invitation of the Chair dated October 9, 2026 to provide testimony on Bill No. 36-0335 – An Act appropriating \$600,000 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund to the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources to provide the remaining funding necessary for the Frederiksted Fish Market Rehabilitation project.

DPNR stands in full support of Bill No. 36-0335. Pursuant to 12 VIC § 325a, DPNR is responsible for the management of all public fish markets in the US Virgin Islands. In April 2024, DPNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife attained approval of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service to reprogram CARES Act funding to go towards the rehabilitation of the Frederiksted Fish Market. All CARES Act funding had to be disbursed by August 31, 2024. Unfortunately, due to the late approval of the reprogramming request, we were only able to complete the scope of work and the project manual for the project, but we were unable to execute the rehabilitation portion due to the short timeframe for which we had to complete the work. I am attaching as part of this testimony the drawings and project manual completed.

In 2024, Congresswoman Stacy E. Plaskett's office put out a call for projects as part of congressional earmarks that Congress was seeking to include in the spending bill for FY 2025. Earlier this year, DPNR-DFW was notified that the Nature Association of the Virgin Islands (NAVI), who had participated in the design charrettes for the Frederiksted Fish Market, had been awarded \$1.3M for the rehabilitation of the market. The conceptual designs are, for the most part, those completed by DPNR, which show the estimated cost to complete the project between \$1.3M and \$2.0M. Thus, the \$600,000 to be allocated as part of Bill No. 36-0335, give the project enough funding to be completed.

DPNR will have to work out some agreements with NAVI in order for the funding allocated to them to be used towards the project; however, we are confident that this can be done rather

smoothly. Recently, DPNR partnered with the Water Island Civic Association for the renovation of Fort Segarra, where although the structure belongs to the Government of the Virgin Islands, we were able to complete the project through a non-profit organization. We aim to do the same the Frederiksted Fish Market. At this time, the only specific edit that I would request be made to the Bill would be to include that DPNR may sub-grant the funding. This would ensure that we will be able to pair this funding with the congressional earmark secured by NAVI.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Bill sponsor for assisting with bringing this project to fruition and allowing the Department to make more improvements to our public spaces.

This concludes my testimony on Bill No. 36-0335. I am here to answer any questions to the best of my ability.