Government of the Virgin Islands
Of the United States of America
Department of Sports, Parks, & Recreation

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Calvert White
Commissioner
Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation

Testimony
Before the 34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Chairman Samuel Carrión
Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks, and Recreation

Updated Status of the Sports, Parks and Recreation in the Territory

February 24, 2021

“We Commit to Keep You Fit”
Good Day Honorable Chairman Samuel Carriòn, Chairman of the Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks, and Recreation of the 34th Legislature of the USVI, Honorable Senators, Central Staff, and the listening and viewing audience. I am Calvert White, the Commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation (DSPR); before you to provide testimony on the status of operations of my Department to include the status of all projects, sports, programs, and recreation facilities. I would like first to introduce my staff: Ms. Renee Hansen, Assistant Commissioner – St. Croix, Mr. Vincent Roberts, Assistant Commissioner – St. Thomas/St. John, Ms. Carol Peters, Director of Business and Financial Management, Ms. Rellina Pelle, Human Resources Manager, Ms. Jamilah Henry, District Administrator of Sports and Recreation – St. Croix, Mr. Kirk Thomas, District Administrator of Sports and Recreation – St. Thomas and Mr. Elroy Hill, Deputy Director – St. John.

The Recovery Team at DSPR has been working extremely hard to get our FEMA Disaster Recovery Projects obligated and available for contractors to bid. Currently, we have a total of 51 projects territory-wide with a combined estimated project cost of just over 30 million dollars. Of those 51 projects, 49 are obligated; a significant accomplishment for this Department. Currently, ten projects are complete, three projects are either starting or nearing completion, we are soliciting bids for 16 projects, and 14 projects are in the architectural and engineering (A & E) stage; with the majority of them having at least 50% of the A & E design completed. The top priority projects on St. Croix, the Vincent Mason Pool, and Crammers Park have 90% of the design completed. St. Thomas's top priority projects, Lionel Roberts Stadium and Emile Griffith Park are also 90% design completed. Once the Department of Public Works (DPW) approves these designs, we will request the Department of Property and Procurement's assistance in soliciting bids from contractors.
Calvert White, Commissioner
Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation
Status Update
February 24, 2021

Completed:

25
Smith Bay Tiny Tots Playground park
26 Fairchild Park
27 Romeo Malone Center
28 Omar Brown Park
29 Emancipation Garden Park
30 Franklin Roosevelt Veterans Park
31 Main Office, Sub-base
32 Main Office, William D Industrial Park
33 David Hamilton Jackson Park
34 Vincent Mason Coral Resort/Mon-Bijou Park-Debris Removal

Contracted/Contractor on-site:

38 Clock Tower Plaza
39 Emile Henderson Court
40 Isaac Boynes Ballpark

Bids solicited:

43 Buddhoe Park
44 Campo Rico Basketball Court
45 Coki Beach
46 Composite Parks PW
47 Cramer's Park Pavilion
48 Doris Hodge Tennis Center
49 Dorothea Tot Lot Park
50 Educator's Park
51 Milton Newton Park
52 Pedro Cruz Ballpark
53 Rudy Krieger Complex
54 Valdemar Hill Lookout Point
55 Winston Raymo Center

Bids Solicited for A & E Services Only

59 Ezra Fredericks Ballpark
60 Lionel "Smut" Richards Ballpark
61 St. John Community Center

Architectural and Engineering Phase:

64 Alvin McBean Complex park
65 Cruz Bay Tennis Court and Orville Brown Basketball Court
While we continue to move forward with our facilities' restoration, DSPR has additional projects to enhance our facilities. We are pleased to add a newly constructed batting cage at the Alvin McBean Sports Complex funded with Public Finance Authority capital improvement funding. A private business is currently considering donating a batting cage at the DC Canegata. Additionally, DPP will be accepting bid proposals from contractors to resurface, repave and restripe basketball, tennis, and paddleball courts in the St. Thomas/St. John district until March 8 and March 12 in the St. Croix district. This project, funded by a Capital Improvement Grant

Unobligated:

Buddhoe Park
Massac Boxing Center Buildings

On Hold:

Clinton Phipps Racetrack
Horace Clarke Baseball Park
Randal "Doc" James Racetrack
Winston Wells Ball Park

DC Canegata Complex
Emile Griffin Ballpark
Estate Profit Community Center
Ezra Fredericks Ballpark
Fort Frederik Beach
Joseph Aubain Ballpark Facility - French Town Tiny Tots park
Kirwin Terrace Ballpark
Lionel "Smut" Richards Ballpark
Loinel Roberts Baseball Stadium park
Reinholdt Jackson Complex
St. John Community Center
Vincent F. Mason Coral Resort Park and Pool

428 (funding will be used for an alternate project):

Honeymoon Beach Pavilion / Town Center Facility
from the Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs, will see 20 basketball, 14 tennis, and
eight paddleball courts refurbished across a total of 21 facilities in the territory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACILITY</th>
<th>TENNIS COURT</th>
<th>PADDLEBALL COURT</th>
<th>BASKETBALL COURT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. Croix</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Renholdt Jackson Recreation Complex</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Rudy Krigger Recreation Complex</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 DC Canegata Recreation Complex</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Isaac Boynes Ballpark</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Emile &quot;Gravy&quot; Henderson Sports Courts</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Glynn Recreation Park</td>
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<td>7 La Grand Princess Park</td>
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<td>8 Mon Bijou Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Campo Rico Playground Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Castle Burke Basketball Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Williams Delight Basketball Court</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12 La Valle Recreation Park</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Pedro Cruz</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>St. Thomas</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Alvin McBean Recreation Complex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Ezra Fredericks Ballpark</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 Lionel &quot;Smutt&quot; Richards Ballpark and Basketball Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 Winston Raymo Center &amp; Basketball Court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Doris Hodge Tennis Center (Subbase)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>19 Milt Newton Park</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>St. John</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Orville Brown Basketball Court (Pine Peace)</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Cruz Bay Tennis Court</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
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The Department recently completed two initiatives that will impact our senior community. On January 19, DSPR, alongside the Governor's ADA Coordinator's office, held the
first of several ribbon-cutting ceremonies rolling out access mats and buoyant beach wheelchairs on Magen's Bay. The access mats allow individuals with a challenge navigating the sand access to the water. On St. Croix, the completion of the AARP Fit Park brings excitement to all who enjoy exercising outdoors. While the park was funded 100 percent by AARP, its use is open to the entire community. DSPR will also be receiving a grant from AARP to hire a fitness instructor to teach free fitness classes. I want to thank AARP for their willingness to collaborate with DSPR to improve the quality of life for all Virgin Islanders. I have already started productive conversations with a private business concerning the potential installation of additional fit parks in our communities — one in the town of Frederiksted and one on the island of St. Thomas.

The GVI recently completed successful negotiation with the Renaissance Group regarding the donation of land at Renaissance Park, St. Croix, for use by the DSPR and Caribbean Drag Racing Association (CDRA). I have been working very closely with the president of the CDRA, Mr. Arthur Hector, to rebuild and open the racetrack. The initial appropriation by the 33rd Legislature of $500,000 (Act 8288) was used to resurface the track. With the recent legislation (Bill 33-0014) sent by Governor Bryan to appropriate $675,000 to complete the drag racing strip, I am hopeful that we will see car racing very soon.

As with all agencies, the Department has several challenges; however, we are creative in resolving them. You can see one such instance in how we were able to add rear loaders to our fleet. We requested and received funding from the 33rd Legislature to purchase a new garbage truck for the St. Thomas/St. John district. We bought a second garbage truck for the St. Croix
district with grant funding from the Department of Interior’s Maintenance Assistance Program.

Although this grant was a 50/50 match, we used the savings from the purchase of vehicles and the first garbage truck (both in FY20) to make our 50% match. The first truck is now on-island, and the second is estimated to be on-island next week. The addition of these trucks will allow our sanitation workers to be more efficient while using less workforce and trash bags.

In 2020 Governor Albert Bryan Jr. sent Bill 33-0453 to reprogram several projects under PFA. This proposed reprogramming is essential in carrying forward the vision of the Department. Having adequate storage at our most used facilities will enable our maintenance workers to be more efficient in their duties. We are requesting a total of $118,693.10 to be reprogrammed to create storage units at select parks. Many of you toured the Oppenheimer facility on St. John this past Thursday. I am sure you would agree that this facility’s potential is the crown jewel of DSPR and a little-known secret. Unfortunately, FEMA deemed this project ineligible for grant funding due to its proximity to the ocean. The reprogrammed $200,000 requested and $24,805.20 currently available in PFA capital project funding will be used to renovate the facility, replace the roof and address the porch’s challenges. The newly renovated Oppenheimer facility will be a substantial revenue-generating property due to the popularity of beach weddings and events on St. John. Another equally beautiful and revenue-generating facility is the Vincent Mason Pool. As evidenced during our walkthrough last Friday, the guard booth at the Vincent Mason Pool was vandalized shortly after the storms. Once again, FEMA rejected grant funding for this portion of the property, as the vandalism was not hurricane-related. DSPR will use the $78,307 in reprogrammed financing to repair the guard booth and
gate at the Vincent Mason Pool. I want to thank the members of this committee and members of the Committee on Finance in the 34th Legislature in advance for your support and consideration of Bill No 33-0453.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Balance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honeymoon Beach Facility, Water Island</td>
<td>2009 MF Bonds</td>
<td>$17,446.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honeymoon Beach Pavilion and Related Facilities, Water Island</td>
<td>Community Facility Trust</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Aubain Ballpark Backstop, Batting Cage Fence, New Net and Storage Unit</td>
<td>Community Facility Trust</td>
<td>$225.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emile Griffith Ballpark Installation of a High-Efficiency Electrical System</td>
<td>Community Facility Trust</td>
<td>$940.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation Facilities</td>
<td>2003 GRT Bonds</td>
<td>$81.04</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Balance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storage Unit at Parks and Facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>$118,693.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Facility in Estate Calquohoun</td>
<td>2012 GRT Bonds</td>
<td>$200,000.00</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Funding Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Frederiksted Parks</td>
<td>VIPFA Project Fund</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>F’sted. Waterfront - Verne Richards Park Clock Tower, Vincent Mason Pool, etc.</td>
<td>2003 GRT Bonds</td>
<td>$18,307.00</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Balance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repairs to the Guard Booth and Gate at Vincent Mason Pool</td>
<td></td>
<td>$78,307.00</td>
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</table>

As our FEMA disaster recovery projects are obligated, and we move towards completion, DSPR can now shift our focus to other federally-funded grants and programs. Of priority is our Territorial Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan (TCORP). The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 was enacted to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring accessibility to all citizens of the United States of America quality and quantity of outdoor recreation resources. The LWCF State Assistance Program authorizes the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, delegated through the Director of the National Park Service (NPS), to provide financial assistance to states for outdoor recreation purposes; this
apportionment is dictated yearly by Congress. To be eligible for assistance through the LWCF Program, states must prepare and maintain a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) or TCORP for territories. The TCORP is a five-year plan that evaluates the demand and supply of public outdoor recreation resources throughout the territory, identifies capital investment priorities for acquiring, developing, and protecting our outdoor recreation resources.

The most recent TCORP expired in 2019. Upon learning of this, DSPR has been in constant communication with the Department of Interior and the NPS, requesting assistance and guidance in developing the next TCORP installment. We intend to apply for a Technical Assistance Program grant through the Department of Interior, which will enable us to execute a contract with a firm that can produce an excellent application for an NPS Planning Grant. This step is critical because the NPS will be watching closely to see how committed the VI is to meeting the grant's requirements, as reflected in our first application. Once the Planning Grant is submitted and approved, we will then use that funding to cover the cost of developing the final TCORP for submission and approval.

In the immediate months after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, all DSPR programs were halted, and facilities closed. With sports, leisure, and recreation activities held in limbo for the last ten months, we are now seeing a glimpse of hope. The 21st Supplemental Executive Order and Proclamation by the Governor provided a list of sports that were deemed low risk and allowed for training and conditioning purposes only. Those sports are track and field/cross country, swimming, tennis, sailing, canoeing, kayaking, baseball, softball, and cricket. I hope
that DOH will allow a few moderate and higher risk sports to resume practices, namely volleyball, basketball, football, and soccer. The resumption of medium risk and higher risk sports can only happen if the community does our part to keep our COVID-19 confirmed case numbers down by following the Department of Health (DOH) guidelines and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). I will continue to advocate for the resumption of all sports. To ensure that we provide a safe environment for all individuals using our facilities, DSPR has implemented new policies for Anyone who utilizes our facilities.

The DSPR Guidance for All Sports Permitted to Operate during the Covid-19 Disaster Emergency was created to ensure our employees, athletes, and the public's safety and health. All organizations utilizing DSPR facilities are required to adhere to this guidance. Upon entry of a DSPR facility, your name, temperature, and arrival time will be recorded by one of our recreation staff. When arriving, attending, and departing our facilities, you are expected to maintain social distancing of at least six feet and wear a face covering. Athletes are not required to wear face coverings while actively engaged in workouts and practices that prevent the wearing of face coverings but must wear face coverings when on the sidelines, in the dugout, etc., and anytime six feet of social distancing is not possible. Hand sanitizer will be made readily available for all to use. Restroom facilities will be open for adequate hand washing. Equipment and other personal items should be separated and not shared. If equipment must be shared, we ask coaches to disinfect all gear appropriately between users following the CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting. Anyone not adhering to the
Department's procedures will be asked to leave the facility. We thank the public in advance for their understanding and cooperation.

With COVID-19 confirmed cases in the VI on a decline and the restrictions to protect the residents of the Virgin Islands' health and safety lessened, you can expect to start to see more activity at our facilities and more programs produced by DSPR. At the last Committee of Youth, Sports, Parks, and Recreation hearing of the 33rd Legislature on November 30, 2020, the team and I explained in detail the Combine in a Bubble created for our elite athletes. Initially, we hoped to include sophomores, but after careful consideration and a suggestion to reduce the number of participants, we decided to go with just seniors and juniors since they were the closest to graduation. Representatives from the Interscholastic Athletic Association (IAA), the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE), coaches, and various local sporting federations all had input on who those elite athletes were. We would have liked to create this experience for all athletes and all sports; however, because of the limited amount of dorm rooms available to us and a strict timeline, we made the difficult decision to offer only baseball, softball, men's and women's basketball, and coed volleyball. This program's goal was to give our athletes a chance to highlight their talent in hopes of securing a colligate scholarship. I am pleased to announce that as of today, four athletes were able to secure athletic scholarships because of the reels the coaches were able to see of our athletes' time in the Athletic Combine. The DSPR Combine in a Bubble's success further proved that there needs to be a system that collects all our athletes' data from an early age to market themselves during their senior year. Following the Combine, the University of the Virgin Islands athletic director introduced me to an
individual who wants to assist the Virgin Islands in joining a network that would capture school
athletes' data, no matter the sport and beginning from the 6th grade to their senior year of high
school. Since the conversation was about our student-athletes, I felt this service's platform
would be better administered through VIDE's Athletic Department. After the first meeting with
Mr. KC Chhipwadia of Athlete Foundry, it was clear to both Mr. Kirby Calendar (Director of
Athletics, VIDE) and me that this is what our Virgin Island student-athletes needed to increase
their collegiate scholarship chances. VIDE is negotiating the specifics, and I look forward to
them announcing a partnership with the company and sharing more details about the app and
its community.

While a lot of what we promote is sports-related, we understand that recreation
activities are not all about sports. With COVID-19 social distancing protocols and other
restrictions, producing new and creative ideas is challenging but possible. DSPR partnered with
Eccentric Moko Encounters to create "DSPR’s Drive-in Movie Night: An Evening of Love and
Family." This event would bring two nights of movies to St. Croix and St. Thomas. The first
show offered was a child-friendly film, and then the second movie, a more grown-up film. With
the completion of the National Park Ballfield in St. John, the team and I at DSPR plan to hold a
similar event. I want to thank my district administrators for taking the lead and organizing this
event and all the employees at DSPR that worked tirelessly to make this event a success. Thank
you to Eccentric Moko Encounters for partnering with DSPR and to the Department of Health
(DOH) for the guidance. Equally as important, I want to thank the members of the Virgin
Islands Police Department who made sure that all who attended were in a fun and safe
environment. We hope to offer more outdoor movie events to give the community safe leisure
and social outlets.

Working its way through the pipeline is DSPR’s Biggest Loser Challenge. The brainchild
of Assistant Commissioner Hansen, the programs’ objective is to encourage healthy weight loss,
a healthy lifestyle, and of course, teamwork. Groups of five people are enrolled, and their total
weight is recorded. To win is simple, lose the most weight as a group within the specified time!
DSPR presented our proposal of the Biggest Loser Challenge to the Government Employee
Service Commission (GESC) Health Insurance Board and was successfully approved. At this time,
the Biggest Loser Challenge will be available to employees covered under the GVI’s Cigna health
insurance plan; however, we intend to make the challenge open to the public after the first
challenge. Registration for this program has been extended for one more week, ending on
March 5, 2021; I encourage all interested groups to register as soon as possible.

At DSPR, we understand that we must keep up with the boom of technological trends.
Ironically pre-Covid-19 pandemic, we created our programs to get individuals out of their house
and into our facilities—Post Covid-19, we had had to produce programs that individuals can do
at home. You may have heard the Governor refer to himself as the “techy Governor” often. I
was not surprised when he suggested purchasing game consoles to offer a gaming tournament
for those who enjoy playing video games. We have purchased four gaming consoles for the St.
Croix district, four for St. Thomas, and one game console for St. John. And have already started
to receive applicants for our “Bring Your ‘A’ Game” tournament. Individuals will compete
against other gamers in their district both in NBA 2K 2020 and MLB 2020. Games between the
final two contestants on each island will be streamed on our website and Facebook pages. Each island’s winners will then compete for the Ultimate King or Queen Gamer of the Territory title.

I am proud of the Recreation Team at DSPR; they continually think about new ways to engage and entertain our community, both young and seasoned. We have several new programs that we will be rolling out. On St. Croix, one of our latest programs, “Take Me Fishing,” will take place at the Altona Lagoon and Vincent Mason Beach with a partnership with DPNR Fish and Wildlife. A group of 15 students, ages 8 – 12, will learn the correct way to hook bait, cast a line, and secure their catch. Also taking place on St. Croix will be a three-day girls softball clinic for ages 13 – 18, instructed by a scout with College Scouting Bureau, LLC. On St. Thomas, we are finalizing the details of moko jumbie classes for ages 5 – 16 and have begun conversation to offer a Batik print class as well. Please remember to “like” our page on Facebook and visit www.dspr.vi.gov for more information.

The Covid-19 pandemic has stolen a year of play and conditioning for our athletes in the territory. You can look forward to seeing the Department play a more active role in partnering with other sports programs to assist them in resuming practices and, soon, competition games. The Department has started fostering a partnership with Next Level Athletics to produce a football showcase for high school football players seeking athletic scholarships. We are also working with the Volleyball Federation to assist a travel team in attending a stateside tournament this June. The Department has plans to help two Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball teams, one from the St. Croix district and one from the St. Thomas/St. John district to travel to a tournament on the mainland. A meeting was held with the Elrod Hendricks Little
League West’s president to determine how DSPR can assist our little league programs’ restart. I look forward to having the same conversation with the Alvin McBean Little League’s president and both Elmo Plaskett Little League East and West presidents on St. Croix. I have already secured a private donor who has offered to assist with team uniforms. Please be mindful that all of the mentioned activities are contingent on approval from the Department of Health.

DSPR has 104 individuals employed with the Department. 54 in the St. Thomas/St. John district and 50 in the St Croix district. At present, we have six vacancies and are in the process of getting those positions filled. Of the six we are currently interviewing for one of those vacancies. After several unsuccessful years of searching for qualified lifeguard applicants, I am proud to say, we have hired two lifeguards in the St. Thomas district. No easy fete! Interviews are currently being scheduled to fill two more spots for a total of four in the St. Thomas/St. John district. Our employee morale continues to increase. Needless to say, our employees are just as excited as the public to get individuals back at our facilities.

I am an ex-officio member of both the VI Horse Racing and VI Sports Commissions. I am also an active participant in the ongoing litigation Southland Gaming vs. GVI. I am often asked questions about the mediation details; “How is it looking?” “When is horseracing coming back to the VI?” I can not discuss legal matters, but I can assure you that Governor Bryan is working extremely hard to get both parties to settle. I am sure all parties involved are looking forward to an amicable resolution in short order. I must commend Mr. Leon Hunt for his work as the chair of the VI Sports Commission thus far. As a subcommittee member for the Sports Hall of Fame and Sports Tourism in the territory, I know firsthand that we have our jobs cut out for us. With
41 mandates for setting policy, it will take some time; however, I have full confidence in all the commission members to produce a quality sports policy for the territory.

The team and I are just as anxious as the community to get back to normal. We have created the guidelines and have acquired the resources to ensure that all who frequent our facilities are safe. I must thank all the employees of DSPR who are prepared and ready for our full reopen. Our grounds crew are maintaining our fields. Our sanitation team continues to collect the waste at our facilities. The recreation leaders are brainstorming new and exciting programs to administer to the public. Thank you all for a job well done.

Thank you for listening to my testimony; my senior leadership team and I stand ready and available to answer any questions you may have.