

St. John School Land Exchange

Briefing Paper for the Senior Plenary Session of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas
March 1, 2011

BACKGROUND:

- The National Park Service owns about two-thirds of the sum 20 square miles that make up St. John, the smallest of the three major islands constituting the Virgin Islands. Various VI governors, delegates, and the community at large have been petitioning Congress and DOI to support some form of land transfer from the St. John NPS property to the GVI to build a vitally needed school on St. John.
- The elementary schools in St. John are in great disrepair and one is in the middle of dangerous commercial area where one student has already been killed while attempting to cross the street. All high school age children must also travel daily to St. Thomas to attend school because there are no secondary schools on St. John.
- GVI does not have the appropriate land holdings to relocate or build a new school, and the cost of purchasing land at market rate on St. John would make the project cost prohibitive.
- After many years of advocacy, the VI won the support of several members of Congress to swap St. John NPS land for Estate Grange in St. Croix (land associated with Alexander Hamilton) to build a school in St. John. Secretary Salazar has directed OIA and NPS to work with GVI to facilitate the transfer.
- OIA provided GVI with a grant of \$200,000 in the last quarter of 2008 to fund the required studies necessary to pass NPS standards to establish that the proposed site for a school on St. John did not possess any significant historic or cultural assets.

Current Status:

- NPS waiting on GVI to call a meeting to finalize terms so that a special use permit can be issued to allow GVI contractor to begin studies of establishing appropriateness for proposed land in Estate Catherineberg.

Proposed Timeline for USVI Land Swap:

| Timeframe | Who | Task | Estate Grange | Catherineberg NPS to GVI | New School | Completed |
|------------------|------------|--|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| December 2010 | NPS | NPS Grants GVI Special Use Permit to conduct various studies to determine suitability of identified 10 acres of Estate Catherineberg for development of school | | | | |
| | OIA | Authorizes GVI to proceed with RFP award | | | | |
| January 2011 | GVI | GVI selects and awards contractor to conduct Catherineberg study | | | | |

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|------------------|------------|--|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | GVI | Contractor begins study of Catherineberg | | | | |
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| September 2011 | NPS | Completion of Estate Grange Resource Study | | | | |
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| October 2011 | GVI | Completion of Catherineberg study to determine suitability for development of school | | | | |
| | GVI | GVI identifies and obligates funding of full purchase price for the Estate Grange Property. | | | | |
| November 2011 | GVI | GVI submits bill to VI Legislature that approves acquisition of the Estate Grange property from the Trust for Public Lands and approves the exchange of the property to the National Park Service in exchange for the Estate Catherineberg property on St. John. | | | | |
| December 2011 | GVI | Approval by the VI Legislature for the acquisition of the Estate Grange property from the Trust for Public Lands by the VI Government. | | | | |
| January 2012 | GVI | GVI acquires Estate Grange property from TPL by: | | | | |
| February 2012 | Congress | Congressional supporters submit bill to US Congress that would authorize the exchange of Estate Grange to the National Park for Catherineberg to the VI Government (preferably without reference to an equal value swap). | | | | |
| | NPS | National Park Service requests appraisals from the Appraisal Service Directorate (ASD) to determine that the parcels are of approximately equal value. | | | | |

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|------------------|------------|---|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | NPS | The National Park Service analyzes and reviews the exchange under various environmental laws including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); the Endangered Species Act (ESA); and the National Historical Preservation Act (NHPA). | | | | |
| ?? 2012 | Congress | US Congress authorizes the National Park Service to exchange the Catherineberg Estate Property for the Estate Grange property. | | | | |
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| ?? 2012 | DOI GVI | Exchange Estate Grange for Catherineberg through swap of deeds. | | | | |
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| ?? 2012 | GVI | St. John School Ribbon Cutting | | | | |

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