

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is this land exchange taking place?**

- Please see the presentation content

### **Why is this a land exchange and not a donation/why can't NPS just donate the land?**

NPS has no legal authority to donate the land. Federal law ([54 U.S.C. §102901](#)) prohibits conveyance of property from National Parks. That same law authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to exchange lands within National Parks. Whistling Cay, although owned by the GVI, is within the boundary of the National Park, and has a similar property value, so the NPS could make this proposed exchange. In general, only Congress can change the boundary of a National Park. GVI has the authority to exchange interests in land under Territorial law ([Title 31 V.I. Code § 231a](#)).

### **Why doesn't the GVI fix the existing school in Cruz Bay or use the area where there was a former school in Coral Bay?**

Use of lands outside the National Park are outside the scope of the future Environmental Assessment and outside the authority of the NPS. Those questions should be directed to the GVI. This civic engagement public comment period is to determine whether the proposed land swap is to identify what topics and what effects on park resources should be examined in the future environmental assessment.

### **What is the scope of this EA?**

The purpose of this NPS project is for the NPS to respond to the request from the GVI to exchange a parcel of NPS-owned land, known as the Catherineberg Estate (Tract No. 01-137A), with the GVI as a possible location to support the island's local educational needs. In exchange, the GVI has offered the island of Whistling Cay (Tract No. 02-101) for consideration.

DOI and USVI entered into an agreement in 2020 with the intent to transfer these lands. The NPS is now in the process of civic engagement to inform the upcoming environmental assessment that will examine the environmental impacts of this exchange. Please note that the environmental assessment is focused on the environmental impacts of the land exchange itself, and that the construction of any facilities will go through a separate environmental planning process managed by the GVI if the exchange goes through and the GVI becomes the owner of the Catherineberg parcel. At this point in civic engagement, the NPS is requesting your assistance to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities.

### **How was this parcel selected?**

Nearly a decade ago, NPS worked with the GVI to evaluate Park lands that could become a suitable location for a school and that could be exchanged for other naturally or culturally significant GVI lands. The NPS identified an 11-acre parcel within the Estate Catherineberg portion of the Park. Some criteria requested by the GVI and used by the NPS were: central location on the island to minimize impact of a long commute from any part of St. John, relatively flat land, and access via an existing road. By the end of 2014, with support from OIA, the GVI and NPS completed an

archaeological and cultural survey of the Catherineberg parcel, held public meetings and displayed a conceptual model of a new school programmed for the 11-acre site.

**What grades will be taught at the future school? What will the curriculum and class sizes be?**

Concerns about the educational content and format of a new school are outside the scope of this Environmental Assessment and outside the authority of the NPS. Those questions should be directed to the GVI.

**Can the parcel boundary be changed?**

Any change to the boundary would cause a long delay, as it would begin the process of property appraisal over again. For nearly three decades, the Territorial government of the US Virgin Islands on St. John and the US government have discussed approaches to expanding education on St. John.

**How are you using public feedback on this exchange?**

The NPS uses the input received during civic engagement to refine alternatives and perform impact determinations in the future environmental assessment.

**References**

36 CFR 60: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2012-title36-vol1/pdf/CFR-2012-title36-vol1-part60.pdf>

NPS Management Policies 2006: <https://www.nps.gov/policy/mp/policies.html>

NPS authority for land transfers: [54 U.S.C. §102901](#)

GVI authority for land transfers: [Title 31 V.I. Code § 231a](#)