

April 3, 2012

29th Legislature
Government of the US Virgin Islands

Dear Honorable Senators:

Reduce, Recycle, Reuse. These are the building blocks of the management of waste called the 3 R's. One of the major components of waste that is generated is organic waste in the form of fallen or cut trees, roadside grass and bush clippings, fruit and vegetable cuttings and other consumer products that can be incorporated to generate a rich soil from composted materials.

Local farmers grow an abundance of fruits and vegetables that are sold at farmers markets. The size, taste and nutrition of our local produce comes from rich soil, and rich soil relies on well composted soil beds. Gardeners buy compost to feed and enrich soil for flower and vegetable gardens. It is an essential product to build depleted soil from the degradation of erosion. After speaking with many farmers in the territory it became apparent that organic waste is an essential component of farming along with the availability of water and the proper equipment and labor to produce an abundant harvest.

This led me to research the VI Code assuming that some law may already exist currently that could be utilized without having to go through a lengthy legislative process to establish recycling, at least for organic waste.

What I found was a law proposed and passed by the Senators of the 26th Legislature in 2006. Their foresight in passing this law was to put to good use, organic waste that we now see bagged in black plastic bags by roadside clearing to be deposited in the landfill or pitched in by truckloads into our dumpsters, or brought by Government trucks to the dump. How many tons of matter has been cleared since this 2006 law that could have gone back into our agricultural land to enrich both the soil and the abundance of crops that nourish local families.

7 V.I.C. § 7

VIRGIN ISLANDS CODE ANNOTATED
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*** Statutes current through Act 7278 of the 2011 Regular Session ***
*** Excludes Acts 7264 ***

TITLE SEVEN Agriculture
Chapter 1. Development of Sustainable Agriculture
Subchapter I. Sustainable Agriculture

7 V.I.C. § 7 (2011)

§ 7. Land management: organic materials recycling program

(a) The Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the UVI Cooperative Extension Service, in conjunction with the University of the Virgin Islands, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources and the Waste Management Authority, must provide training on how to establish a recycling program, initiate, manage and maintain a recycling program of organic matter utilizing vegetation, clippings, mulch, and seaweed, along with other natural waste products that can be introduced into the soil safely and naturally, without affecting the quality of food production and related agribusiness.

(b) Once a recycling program is established, the Department of Agriculture shall consult with Department of Planning and Natural Resources, in collaboration with the UVI Cooperative Extension Service and the Waste Management Authority, regarding its recycling program. The Department of Planning and Natural Resources shall thereafter submit copies of all land clearing permits to the Commissioner's Office of the Department of Agriculture, for the purposes of allowing the Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with the Waste Management Authority, the opportunity to collect fallen trees, shrubs or weed to use for the creation of mulch, for the distribution to farmers.

(c) The Attorney General's office, in conjunction with the Bureau of Corrections, shall provide prison labor to clear government-owned property pursuant to title 5 Virgin Islands Code, § 4509.

HISTORY: --Added May 17, 2006, No. 6836, § 1, Sess. L. 2006, pp. 61, 62.

Recently the residents of the US Virgin Islands testified against the Waste to Energy model that was being offered to the VI in the form of the Alpine Deal. They spoke about their individual and collective commitment to reducing waste, to recycle and reuse products that could be re purposed. VI citizens have responded well to initiatives by various agencies whenever a recycling program was implemented. . We can no longer look to the landfill as shutdowns are imminent and we need to act fast.

This is a request to take a leap of faith for our community and our environment and propose and pass legislation that will establish a mainstream composting and recycling program territory wide, which was the vision and intent of the 26th Legislature.

As always I thank your consideration and for those who consistently vote in the publics interest I applaud your efforts.

Sincerely,

Rita De Ferrary