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Buck Island National Monument News Release

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Resource Management Activities in March 2018

CHRISTIANSTED – The National Park Service (NPS) will be conducting a variety of resource management activities in the month of March. Below is a brief synopsis of the field projects that are currently underway and/or scheduled.

March 5 – 16th – The NPS Resource Management Division will be working with our partners from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct in-water snorkel surveys for juvenile sea turtles at Buck Island Reef NM. Please be advised that researchers may be snorkeling in areas with routine boat traffic such as the areas near the Underwater Trail lagoon entrance and off West Beach anchoring area. Field surveys will be focused in areas to the south of the island near the lagoon channel markers but may include other areas within the Monument such as the patch reefs to the north of the island, and may extend outward to the East End Marine Park. The snorkeling researchers will carry dive flags to identify themselves to vessels in the areas. NPS boat will be in close proximity of the snorkelers maintaining continuous watch over their location and safety. Researchers and NPS staff may utilize either of the NPS vessels, CaraCara (Aluminum 26 ft Catamaran) or Kestrel (25 ft Boston Whaler), to conduct the study. Activities will be conducted during the day from sunrise until sunset.

March 12 – 16th – The NPS Resource Management Division will be working with our partners from the Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History to conduct abundance and occupancy monitoring surveys of the St. Croix Ground Lizard (*Ameiva polops*). Please be advised that researchers may be conducting surveys across the entire the island in a variety of habitats. Activities will be conducted during the day, sunrise to sunset, with much of the monitoring being conducted during periods of peak ground lizard activity (10am – 2pm). These surveys continue our long term monitoring of the St. Croix Ground Lizard population since their translocation to the island in 2008.



March 12 – 23rd – The NPS Resource Management Division will be working with our partners from the South Florida and Caribbean Network (SFCN) Inventory and Monitoring group to conduct surveys at long term coral monitoring sites in Salt River Historical Bay and Ecological Preserve. In addition, the team will also be conducting post hurricane assessments at select sites within Buck Island Reef National Monument to quantify changes in benthic habitat and fish community composition, as well as identifying potential locations for coral restoration activities.

March 19 – 30th – The NPS Resource Management Division will be working with our partners from NOAA to collect data that will be used to generate 2D seafloor mosaics and 3D depth surfaces in shallow-water (<5m) environments using small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) or more commonly referred to as drones. These activities will be conducted during daylight hours, within 500 meters distance of the pilot-in-charge (PIC), and within line-of-sight of the PIC. The UAS will be launched and recovered on the beach areas near the study sites off of West Beach. The study will be conducted during the early morning hours prior to the arrival of most concessionaire vessels and/or in the late afternoon when most visitors have left the island. This mission complies with Department of Interior Aviation policy and the UAS operator understands that operations will be conducted in accordance with the approved Project Aviation Safety Plan (PASP).

If you would like additional information about these studies, please contact: Clayton Pollock, NPS Biologist Ph 340-773-1460 x 238; clayton_pollock@nps.gov

The National Park Service thanks all of our community members and friends for 52 years of support for Buck Island Reef NM and we look forward to an exciting year of events celebrating our unique resource.

www.nps.gov/BUIS

Learn about the NPS Mission at Buck Island Reef NM watch [Caribbean Gem](#) on YouTube.

About the National Park Service: More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 407 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities.

