

Dear Editor,

It was forty years ago this week on April 22, 1970 that the modern environmental movement was born. Please take a moment this week and celebrate the many events around the territory including our visit to Bovoni to see what happens to our waste and the many ways to reduce the waste stream into the landfill and be a part of the solution. The first Earth Day in 1970 led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency in December of that year, which led later to the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species acts. Prior to the establishment of the EPA, the national government was not structured to make a coordinated attack on the pollutants which harm human health and our environment. It had the task of repairing the damage already done to the natural environment and to establish new criteria to guide Americans in making a cleaner environment a reality. For those under 40 years old, just imagine a world with a factory that could produce and spew toxic gas into your air or dump tons of toxic waste onto your beach, harbor or stream and it was all perfectly legal. At the time they could not be taken to court to stop this environmental disaster from occurring. Thank God for Earth day all that it represents! It was because of a brave U.S. Senator from Wisconsin who proposed the first nationwide environmental protest "to shake up the political establishment and force this issue onto the national agenda." Senator Gaylord Nelson recalled that "It was a gamble, but it worked." He was later awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his role as Earth Day founder.

In 1970 with the organizing skills of Denis Hayes, the national coordinator of earth day, more than 20 million Americans demonstrated in different U.S. cities demanding that we say yes to cleaner and healthier environment. Later in 1990 Earth Day went global mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries that led greater awareness of recycling and to the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Earth Day 2000 used the internet to reach across the globe to bring awareness that the world needs quick and decisive action on clean energy.

In the VI we utilize the Department of Planning and Natural Resources as our local regulatory agency. Its mission statement is "to protect, maintain and manage the natural and cultural resources of the Virgin Islands through proper coordination of economic and structural development in collaboration with other local, federal and non-government organizations, for the benefit of present and future generations so they will live safer, fuller lives in harmony with their environment and cultural heritage. EPA's mission is to "protect

human health and to safeguard the natural environment — air, water, and land — upon which life depends.” Both local and federal agencies are very important to the environment and health of the virgin islands. For more information about our Earth day hike, swim and tour of Bovoni please visit www.eastvi.org or send us an email at eastactivities@gmail.com