



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS NEWS RELEASE

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September 11, 2023



*Image 1: Ashley Bryan, Interim Chief Operating Officer and Chavante Marsh, Project Management Director at the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority during Thursday's 9.7.23 DRIP hearing at the Earle B. Ottley Chambers, St. Thomas USVI.*

## **WAPA Takes Lead on Solutions for St. Croix's Brown Water and Commits to Territory-wide Grid Resilience**

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (“WAPA” or “Authority”) presented its comprehensive overview of its Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure, and Planning initiatives to the esteemed members of the Virgin Islands 35th Legislature last week on September 7, 2023.

Among key items covered, the Authority’s CEO/Executive Director Andrew Smith addressed the ongoing brown water issue on St. Croix and provided Senators with a thorough overview of why the discoloration is occurring and laid out active steps the Authority is taking with the assistance of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) and Government House

to mitigate the impact to customers in the near and long-term. “I just want to be clear, brown water is unacceptable. We are taking this situation seriously and working aggressively with EPA to improve water quality for our customers on St. Croix,” commented CEO/Executive Director Smith. “EPA has worked with several public utilities throughout the United States with an aged water infrastructure. We are relying on their experience to enhance the Authority’s existing processes and incorporate near-term solutions for our customers.”

The Authority further highlighted that while short-term solutions to St. Croix’s water discoloration are the primary focus of current conversations, it is also taking a comprehensive approach to improving water quality. Through Prudent Replacement Public Assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), WAPA will replace the entire water infrastructure on St. Croix and modernize it to industry standards, replacing an estimated 681 miles of ductile iron pipes. Additionally, neighborhood-specific projects like the recently completed Clifton Hill and ongoing Campo Rico project seek to improve water reliability and quality for customers in these areas.

On the electrical side of operations, the Authority noted the federally funded four new efficient Wartsila generators are currently undergoing start-up and performance checks and all four of the generators have been tested to 100% of their rated load and synchronized to WAPA’s electrical grid. The generators are in the final steps of commissioning and are expected to be in full service later this month. The new generators will lower WAPA’s fuel cost because they operate on propane and diesel, and the generators are approximately 30% more efficient than WAPA’s older generation. The project also includes a battery energy storage system, which will improve reliability of power generation to the community in times of high demand.

As it relates to the VITOL settlement, the Authority reiterated that on August 17, 2023, the application was formally submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to secure funding for this acquisition.

To view the Authority’s DRIP presentation, visit:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:625c1a75-00c2-45a9-8007-fbd542b128bc> For more information about the Authority’s disaster recovery and infrastructure initiatives, please visit: <https://www.viwapa.vi/news-information/projects/> or visit <https://www.viwapa.vi/news-information/press-releases> for the latest news releases.

*The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority Communication’s department is committed to reaching, informing, and connecting with the youngest members of the community to the eldest, through meaningful, transparent and effective communication.*

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**About WAPA:** The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority is an autonomous agency of the Virgin Islands Government which produces and distributes electricity and drinking water to residential and commercial customers in the territory. WAPA was created by the Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands in 1964 through Act No. 1248. Today, WAPA generates electrical power at production plants on St. Thomas and St. Croix and distributes electrical service through smart grids to customers on St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John, Hassel Island, and Water Island. Potable water is distributed to almost 13,000 customers through water lines and standpipes. WAPA also has the responsibility of installing and maintaining streetlights.

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