**Report from the field - STX Hike - Sunday, January 16, 2022**

# It was a lovely morning for a walk in the woods and the St. Croix Hiking Association had scheduled a hike for 7:00 am in the Windsor/Concordia/Morningstar area of St. Croix. This is where the VI Trail Alliance (VITAL) is completing a significant project with grants from AARP of the Virgin Islands, and the National Park Trust.

# The Association info said "We will discuss the historical, cultural, natural, and marine aspects of the inland flood plain. Salt River Bay and Morningstar was where St. Croix became one island 20 million years ago. Park Ranger Benito Vegas and Ecologist Olasee Davis are our tour guides." It sounded fascinating, and as a member of VITAL I wanted to find out more about this important part of St. Croix.

# The turnout for the hike was amazing! I estimate about 35 local residents and winter visitors joined the group. Having walked the trail a week prior I knew it would take about 1.5 hours. However on Sunday, we first went outside the Windsor Farm area to walk through the Historic Ruins of Estate Concordia and then onto VITAL's trails on Windsor. Both Benito and Olasee had so much information to impart that the expedition lasted 4 hours - and could have been longer - there is so much to learn.

# We started on the Salt River Road by East Scenic, went up to the ruins, entered the Farm from Windsor Road, to the old Dairy Barn (or Shed), then up Robbie's Trail to the Upper Spur Trail, then down to East Scenic, and back to the Salt River Road.

# The hike ended with more historical and ecological information from Olasee and Benito at the National Park Service Salt River Well Tower site that will soon become more welcoming for visitors with seating and signage provided by VITAL. Before going to the tower, Professor Davis reminded us that we were entering sacred ground that has supported human life for hundreds if not thousands of years.

# This hike was not only a way to meet and be with friends old and new, it was an enlightening experience as well. Both Olasee and Benito are to be commended for their ongoing work to protect our natural environment and preserve our history.

# Barbara Walsh

# 1/17/22