



## WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL

**Project ID:** 2002VI1B

**Title:** Environmental Education and Hands-on Training on Mangrove Restoration Techniques

**Project Type:** Education

**Focus Categories:** Education, Non Point Pollution, Wetlands

**Keywords:** Education, Wetlands, Mangroves, Salt ponds, Sedimentation, Tropics, Water quality, Reforestation

**Start Date:** 03/01/2002

**End Date:** 02/28/2003

**Federal Funds:** \$27,120

**Non-Federal Matching Funds:** \$0

**Congressional District:**

**Principal Investigators:**

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**Abstract**

Mangrove wetlands provide an important buffer between land and coastal marine communities. They provide tremendous benefits to the ecology of near-by ecosystems such as coral reefs and sea grass beds by slowing the flow of stormwater, filtering suspended sediments from runoff, and helping remove destructive pollutants before they enter fragile coastal environments. They also buffer the shoreline from erosion and protect boats and coastal developments from hurricane winds and waves. Yet the amount of mangrove areas in the Virgin Islands has significantly declined in the last 50 years because mangrove ecosystems were routinely bulldozed to make space for marinas and other coastal developments.

Although mitigation has decreased the rate of mangrove habitat loss, limited awareness and a poor understanding of the role of mangroves continues to hinder these efforts. There is a need to increase local awareness of the importance of mangroves in the Virgin Islands and to demonstrate the benefits of restoring lost or damaged wetlands. In order to increase advocacy for mangrove habitat protection and restoration we are proposing to target local high school students and provide them with environmental education training and practical experience in mangrove restoration techniques. This will be an invaluable first step in changing the local perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards this valuable natural resource.