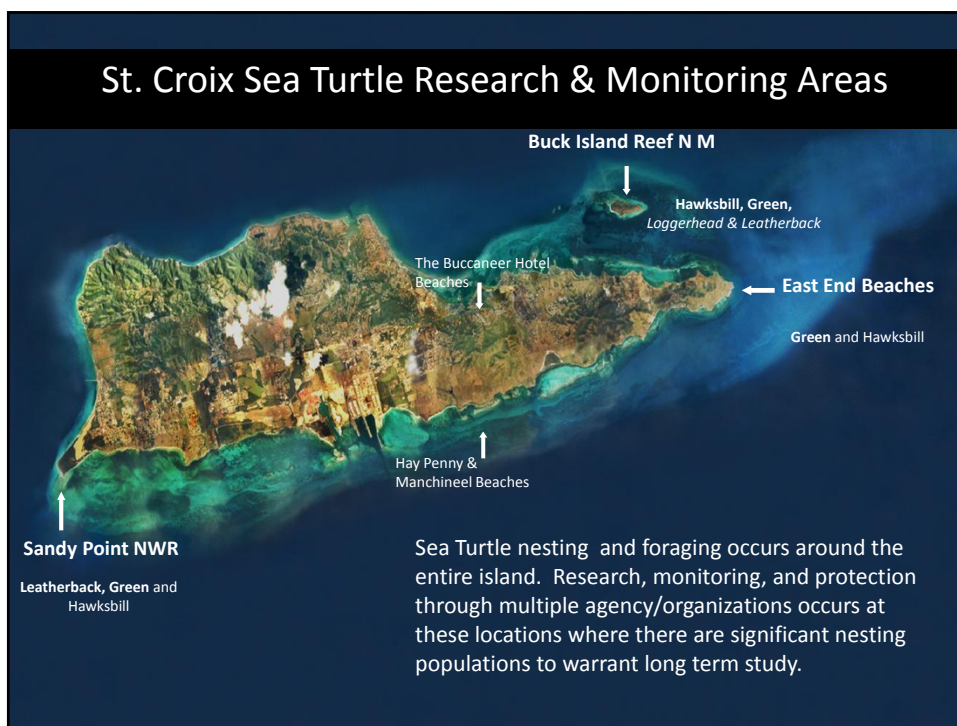



U.S. Virgin Islands Report to WIDECAST 2013

- National Park Service – Buck Island Sea Turtle Research Program
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Sandy Point NWR Leatherback Recovery
- The Nature Conservancy – East End Beaches
- DPNR- Division of Fish & Wildlife - St. Croix, St. Thomas, & St. John








Nesting - Monitoring & Research at Buck Island Reef NM, St. Croix


25 years of Research, Conservation Management & Monitoring for the Threatened & Endangered Sea Turtle Nesting & Foraging Populations



- Islandwide control of non-native invasive predatory mammals– mongoose & rats
- Tracking - Intra-nesting & Inter-nesting acoustic and satellite tagging – Hart USGS (on-going)
- Genetic composition and nester relatedness – Shamblin (ISTS 33rd presentation)
- Population recovery – 1987/12 Ei increased to 2011/64 Ei; 1987/4 Cm to 2012/24 Cm



Nesting - Monitoring & Research at Buck Island Reef NM, St. Croix

Sea Turtle Population Recovery on a small island has its problems...



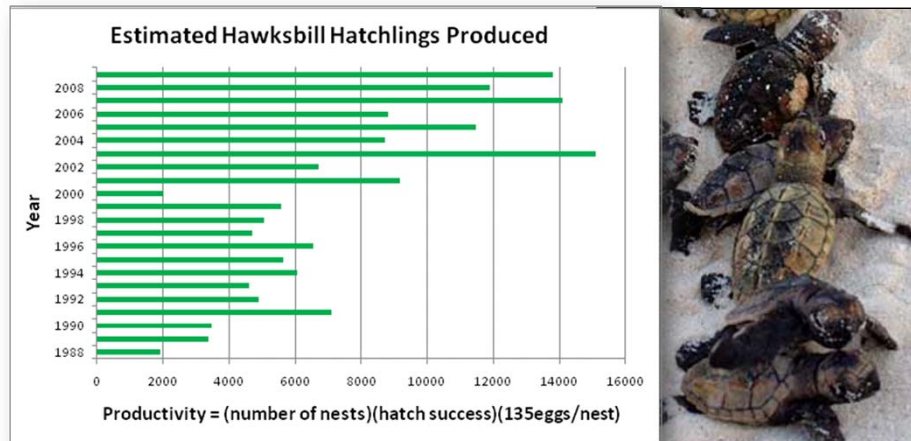



176 acres island; 1.5 km nesting beach – increasing number of nesting Cm impacting Ei nests



Nesting - Monitoring & Research at Buck Island Reef NM, St. Croix

However hatch success greatly improved over 1980s



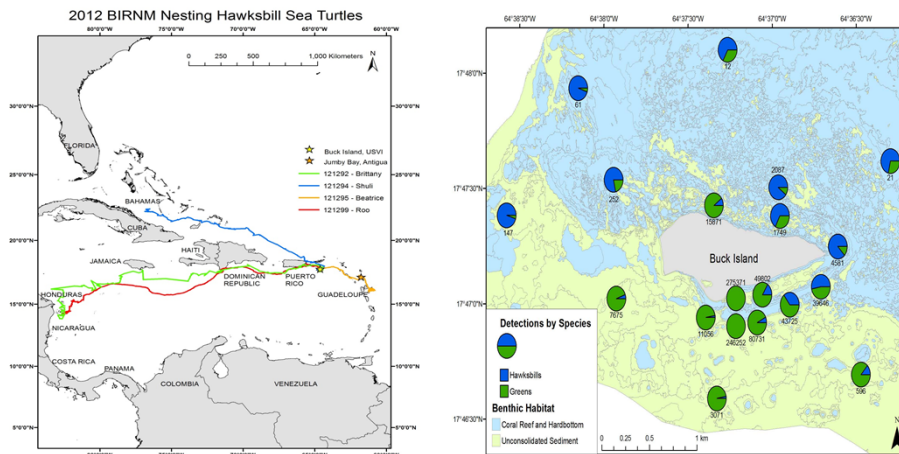
In-Water Monitoring & Research at Buck Island Reef NM, St. Croix

- Relative Abundance and Distribution surveys
- Site specific monitoring using CPUE
- Mark/Recapture study
- Acoustic and satellite tagging, health assessments, genetic analyses, stable isotopes, gastric lavage studies.



In-water Research at Buck Island Reef NM, St. Croix

USGS Tracking Resident & Inter-nesting Sea Turtles



DPNR-Division of Fish & Wildlife

- **New lead for sea turtles-** DFW has 2 sea turtle biologists on staff.
- **STAR** (Sea Turtle Assistance & Rescue) continues
- **Standings update** – Downturn in local economy (loss of refinery) has put a strain on our marine resources, sea turtles are beginning to suffer. Additionally increase number of dog attacks on nesting turtles; sand inhalation causing death of rescued turtles. ***Shark Predation***
- **Education and Outreach-** NGO's, State and Federal Agencies addressing sea turtle issues. The DFW is using an ecosystem approach to sea turtle conservation instead of "just educating about sea turtles".

DPNR-Division of Fish & Wildlife

- STX – Multi-agency and Organizational sea turtle monitoring and research
- STT – Limited monitoring but hawksbill nesting documented on north, east, south shores; severe erosion on many nesting beaches (Platenberg)
- STT/UVI in-water graduate study: juvenile development habitat surveys and mix-stock analysis (Jobsis)/NMFS permit pending
- STJ – nesting reported for Hawksnest Beaches (Boulon); no systematic beach monitoring; fishery acoustic array to move to STX for sea turtles (2014)

Sea Turtle Monitoring at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge, St. Croix



Geographic Consulting
Natural Resource Management

Sandy Point NWR - Latest News from 2012

LEATHERBACKS

- 375 nests
- 94 individuals
 - 66 remigrants
 - 28 neophytes
- (After several years of low %s of *neophytes* (15% in 2011) we are back up to **30%** this season !
- 46 individuals (**49%**) with “significant” wounds



GREENS AND HAWKSBILL

- **1036 green nests total** (confirmed & probable)
- 220 hawksbill nests total (confirmed & probable)
- Mongoose predation rates (2011 season)
 - 52% of hawksbill confirmed nests
 - 35% of green confirmed nests
 - Initiated establishment of permanent trap line in 2012



Geographic Consulting created a user friendly **database** to house our 30+ years of data!!

Sea Turtle Monitoring at Jack, Isaac, & East End Bays, St. Croix



The Nature Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

Jack and Isaac Bay Preserve

The Jack and Isaac Bay Preserve on the east end of St. Croix was acquired by The Nature Conservancy in 1999 and have since been managed to preserve the land in its natural state and to protect the nesting population of green and hawksbill sea turtles that nest on the adjacent beaches

TNC-maintained trails provide access to the bays

Interpretive signs provide information on the bays, rules, and some of the commonly observed plants and wildlife species



Although, some degree of beach nourishment occurs yearly, the occurrence of active nighttime monitoring has been based on funding availability



Identifying and Reducing Threats

- **Poaching** - Reduced by presence on the beaches during nesting season
- **Mongoose** - Reduced by trapping project (TNC, DPNR-DFW, USFWS, and USDA partnership)
- **Artificial Lights** - Jacks Bay working with the Grapetree Home Owners Association; more compliance needed
- **Fishery and Boating Interactions** - Jack, Isaac, and East End Bays are also a part of the St. Croix East End Marine Park; the marine habitats are now designated as a Turtle Wildlife Preserve



