

Environmental Protection for the British Virgin Islands

Environmental Legislation in the BVI

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration (MNRLI) is responsible for the environment. The BVI Constitution 2007 provides that

29. Every person has the right to an environment that is generally not harmful to his or her health or well-being and to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through such laws as may be enacted by the Legislature including laws to-

- a) Prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
- b) Promote conservation; and
- c) Secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

A number of laws currently support the protection of the BVI environment, habitat and species. They include:

- Criminal Code 1997
- National Parks Act 2006
- National Parks Regulations 2008
- Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Act 2019
- Physical Planning Act, 2004
- Disaster Management Act, 2003
- Wild Birds Protection Ordinance (CAP96) 1982
- Beach Protection Act, 1982 (CAP 233)

Protection of the marine environment, in particular, is also facilitated by the following laws:

- Fisheries Act 1997
- Fisheries Regulations 2003
- Merchant Shipping Act, 2001
- Oil Pollution Response Convention Regulations (UK) 1998
- Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) (UK) Regulations 2008
- BVI Ports Authority Act, 1990
- BVI Port Authority Regulations, 1995

These laws also help us to control problems such as:

- Oil Pollution
- Sand Mining
- Illegal Fishing
- Anchor Damage to the marine environment
- Siltation due to reclamation and other development activities
- Loss of important terrestrial and marine habitats, such as mangrove, coral reef and seagrass beds.

The MNRLI Environment & Climate Adaptation Unit works closely with several other government departments and agencies to address these issues and protect the environment. These include:

- Town and Country Planning Department
- Agriculture and Fisheries Department
- The National Parks Trust
- The Marine Police
- Department of Disaster Management
- Fire and Rescue Services Department
- BVI Ports Authority
- Virgin Islands Shipping Registry
- Government Information Services

- The Attorney General Chambers
- Department of Public Prosecutions

PHOTO OF OILSPILL IN GHUT

How you can Help

In order for the Environment of the BVI to be properly managed, we also need your support and assistance. You can assist us in our surveillance and enforcement efforts by:

- Becoming more knowledgeable about local environmental legislation and policies.
- Reporting any illegal environmental practices to the MNRLI Environment Unit at 284-468-2171; or via email at nrl@gov.vg
- Adopting environmentally friendly practices.

PHOTO OF RECLAMATION OR LOCAL SANDMINNING ACTIVITY