



St. Croix Hiking Association

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To The Editor;

The St. Croix Hiking Association would like to take this opportunity to make its views known concerning the issue of Gill Netting.

We are unanimously opposed to it on many grounds.

Gill Netting catches a conglomeration of fish and other marine life (such as turtles) in its traps. They are stuck until they die. Many of the fish are then discarded as being too small or inedible. Only a small portion ever makes it to market. The amount of unnecessary waste is incredible and the reduction of sea life in our area is very noticeable.

Furthermore, the Association often takes the initiative in cleaning the beaches around St. Croix. Much of the debris we find is parts of netting that have become dislodged, float to shore, sometimes dragging sea life with them.

The most important problem, though, is the effect that this netting has on the coral reefs growing around St. Croix and much of the Caribbean. The coral is covered with mossy sea life that is food for Parrot Fish and other scavengers. Without these fish to "clean" the reefs, they would actually smother and die. As we are sure you are aware, our coral is facing many dangers including global warming, climate changes, injury from boating and other sea activities, as well as death from a lack of fish.

We understand that using these nets is a less costly method of fishing than the traditional fish pots because they are less likely to be damaged from the high seas or hurricanes and we urge the DPNR to try and accumulate pots for replacement to the local fishermen at little or no cost through Federal grants or other sources of funds. This could be an incentive to local fishermen to obey the law and discard the gill net method.

In conclusion, we believe this to be an extremely important issue and the banning laws should be rigorously enforced by the appropriate officials.

Sincerely,

St. Croix Hiking Association

www.StCroixHiking.org