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Governor Bryan, ADA Coordinator Julien Henley Unveil New Accessibility Aids for Disabled Persons at Magens Bay Beach

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Americans With Disabilities Act Coordinator Julien Henley were joined by Cabinet members of the Bryan-Roach Administration at Magens Bay Beach on Tuesday morning for a ribbon-cutting ceremony to unveil new accessibility aids for disabled persons that are part of the Virgin Islands Accessible Beaches Initiative.

Also on hand for the demonstration of the AccessMats and WaterWheels, were Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White; Department of Human Services Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez; DPNR Commissioner J.P. Oriol; V.I. Tourism Representative Luana Wheatley; Magens Bay Authority Chairwoman Katina Coulianos; and Sen. Steven Payne Sr.

The funding for the initial equipment came through the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

Governor Bryan spoke of when he injured his foot and was in a full cast and tried to go to the beach, only to find some of the difficulties and lack of access faced constantly by disabled persons.

“They say, ‘Who feels it, knows it,’” Governor Bryan said. “We need to make more of a commitment to making our public spaces more accessible to our residents and our visitors who are physically challenged.”

AccessMats are brightly colored vinyl mats that make portable walkways and allow easier access across the sand and to the water. WaterWheels are brightly colored vehicles capable of traversing AccessMats and packed sand that are designed to allow floating in the water.

“A disability is a possibility for everyone. It is important to give everyone an opportunity to have a complete life,” said Coordinator Henley. “It is an extremely proud moment to see that now persons who are challenged with mobility challenges will have an opportunity to go to a place where they can get into the water and not have to worry about the barriers that have plagued us for all these years.”

Commissioner White said that two beaches per island will be designated to receive the accessibility equipment: Magens and Coki Point Beach on St. Thomas; Cramer Park and possibly Fort Frederik Beach; and two as-yet undetermined beaches on St. John.

The Bryan/Roach Administration continues to be committed to transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in government and ensuring the disaster recovery is completed as quickly as possible.



Governor Bryan speaks while ADA Coordinator Julien Henley, left, and Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White look on.



Natalie Rhymer, a client of the V.I. Association for Independent Living walks down an AccessMat before getting into a WaterWheel and going into Magens Bay for a soak.



Governor Bryan and Coordinator Henley cut the ribbon at Magens Bay Beach.



Territorial ADA Coordinator Julien Henley



Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White

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