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For Immediate Release

**COMMUNITY INVITED TO THE RELEASE OF REHABILITATED,
RARE LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE**

The Sea Turtle Assistance and Rescue (STAR) Network is excited to invite the St. Croix community to a special release of a rehabilitated loggerhead sea turtle at **Fort Frederik Beach on November 18 at 2:30 pm.**

This female loggerhead sea turtle was first observed by STAR members on February 26th at Rainbow Beach (St. Croix). Injuries were noted on her flippers and her shell, but her behavior seemed normal at that time. Until her rescue on March 24th, this female loggerhead was observed almost daily at the Frederiksted Pier. During the latter part of March, a change in her behavior was observed when she remained under a large rock, surfacing only for air. Thanks to the reports to STAR from concerned divers, STAR was able to monitor her health and ultimately make the

decision to rescue her so she could receive veterinary attention. The loggerhead had sustained injuries to her two front flippers and her shell as a result of a shark attack.

The initial health evaluation was performed by Dr. Bailey and other veterinary staff at the St. Croix Animal Welfare Center and the decision was made to send this turtle for a more comprehensive assessment and treatment at the Coral World Ocean and Reef Initiative (CWORI) facility on St. Thomas. Thanks to the treatment plans and hard work of CWORI staff under the direction of Dr. Natalie Noll, Consulting Director of Veterinary Services, and Rehabilitation Manager, Erica Palmer, the loggerhead, affectionately named Mahogany, has been approved for release back into the water on St. Croix.

The release of Mahogany will be open to the St. Croix community and take place on November 18 at Fort Frederik Beach at 2:30 pm. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the St. Croix Sea Turtle Project (sponsored by The Ocean Foundation) will provide a satellite tag for Mahogany that will allow our community to track her movements after her release. What makes Mahogany so special is that loggerhead sea turtles are an infrequent visitor in the Caribbean and are very rarely seen in the USVI. Movement data gathered from her satellite tag will be extremely valuable to learn where this unusual turtle will travel next.

STAR is a collaborative group of governmental agencies, NGOs, local non-profits, veterinarians, and community members. STAR responds to sea turtles and hatchlings that are injured, trapped, entangled, disoriented, or dead. When reporting **a sea turtle to STAR please call 340-690-0474** and have the following information ready; exact location, the closest access point, if the sea turtle is alive or dead, and a description of the sea turtle and any apparent injuries. The release of Mahogany is a fantastic example of what can happen when there is a collaborative effort of a concerned public, STAR responders, and veterinary facilities.

CWORI founded in 2020, works to conserve marine habitats and wildlife with practical conservation science through rescue, rehabilitation, restoration, and research and to empower others through public education. Serving as a partner to STAR (Sea Turtle Assistance and Rescue), VI-CDAC (Virgin Islands Coral Disease Advisory Committee) and VINE (Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators), CWORI envisions a world in which humans

interact with the marine environment in ways that preserve its natural resources and ensure the availability of these resources for future generations.

For donations to support the veterinary efforts at CWORI, please visit cworl.org.

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