



Letter from Mike Walsh, TVIL Board President



After Hurricane Irma, which caused massive destruction in the northern windward and Virgin Islands we on St. Croix became more resigned each passing day to the reality of being in path of the next 'Cat 5' storm, Maria. As preparations were being hurriedly made, Barbara and I provided a place to shelter for a farming family whose small house on the South Shore was not much more than a temporary structure. They stayed with us for several days afterwards and we had wonderful, healthy organic vegetables at our group meals. On the third evening they announced that planting was their project starting the next day. This statement struck me as profoundly inspiring and quite normal at the same time. Of course you plant at this time of year and of course you plant because food is what we all will need. In the midst of the chaos of coming to grips with an isolated world that was utterly changed for the worse, continuing with the regular activities stood out as extraordinary.

In the weeks following the storm, as shock turned into an array of emotions that often turned negative, the natural world never missed a beat. The way the plants recovered and the animals picked up where they had left off showed that the storm was not an abnormal event. It was just a part of the process. And it was stunningly beautiful, when you took the time to notice.

The Trust for Virgin Islands Land went through a similar, if less speedy process of coming to grips with the question of what to do in the new upended world as board members all dealt with their individual immediate needs and challenges. Some of us were displaced and no one could communicate beyond the rare personal encounter. We were not thinking about what TVIL ought to be doing at that time, except surviving, if it could and if it mattered.

Now, even though full recovery is still an evolving idea, TVIL is again back on the active list and preparing for the coming year. Interestingly, among those that have been in contact with the others, the initial dire outlook on the Trust's potential for relevance that we privately held was replaced with a new commitment that had germinated on its own and had grown to a renewed interest. We too, without our consciously initiating it, had nurtured the buds of our relationship with the islands great lands and habitats to life again. There was an organic life force at work here that automatically took over and taking up the work of TVIL again took hardly a thought at all. Like so many other Virgin Islands civil institutions with sound intentions and goodness of cause, our place in the workings of healthy society is not only needed, but is planted in good soil.

So TVIL, looks at 2018 with optimism and eagerness to carry on with the mission of land protection that will enhance the future of the islands' society. We look forward to and are counting on your continued support in this healing process.