1. BACKGROUND

On July 12, 2005 the Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands enacted Bill Number 26-0033 and Governor Charles W. Turnbull approved this Bill as Act Number 6751 on August 11, 2005. This Act requires the Office of the Governor to transfer to the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) thirty percent (30%) of two hundred acres (200) of real property on Water Island granted to the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands by the Government of the United States Department of the Interior.

The Eastern Caribbean Center of the University of the Virgin Islands has been charged by the Office of the Governor with the task of completing a land use study of Water Island to be used in determining the opportunities for development on 200 acres of VI Government owned land recently transferred from the Federal Government, which includes the 30% mentioned above to be transferred to the VIHFA. The objective of this land use study is to assess the present land use on Water Island, determine the level of services and infrastructure needed to adequately support present and future residents and provide recommendations on the parcels on Water Island to be transferred to VIHFA.

The environmental information contained herein concentrate on physical and biological factors and issues of interest. This is an initial assessment of alternatives and not an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required for actual construction permits. Once the property or properties of interest have been identified, a complete Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Major Land and Water Development Permit Application including a comprehensive Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) will need to be completed as part of the application process.
The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) calls for the study to identify optimal land use and land use options. Constraints of data, budget and time precluded a comprehensive analysis and weighting of use options. The Project Team also acknowledges the early directions proposed by the U.S. Department of the Interior and Water Island advocates for tourism and recreational development (U.S. Congress, 1985 & 1987). The Cost of Community Service (COCS) scenarios contained in this document is based on the contemporary “revealed preference” for residential uses, the stakeholders’ expressed preferences, and common sense. It is possible that more in depth analysis and input from a much wider group of stakeholders would identify other options or change the options presented in this report; however, this lies outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, some recommendations are identified to address relevant issues.

The identification of parcels to be transferred to the VIHFA is based on a spatial model which utilized Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to score the development suitability of each parcel. Rasch analysis was applied to develop measures and rank the development suitability scores of the parcels.