Abstract

People in the U.S. Virgin Islands depend on rain water and desalination for fresh water. It is one of the few places in the world that requires housing starts to incorporate cisterns for fresh water collection and storage. As tourist-based economy, the surrounding sea waters also are important to the economic and psychological health of the community. Virgin Islanders cannot afford to take water for granted and neither can tourists. However, a lack of communication among and between government agencies and non-government organizations and private enterprise leaves gaps in public education about the value of water resources.

The first day of the two-day program will use an academic conference format to bring together representatives of institutions and organizations, individuals and university students to share knowledge and ideas about water resources and to discuss ways to create collaborative public-education programs. The second day will be a festival celebrating United Nations World Water Day with high-level government officials, environmentalists, religious and spiritual leaders, students and the public at large. There will be live music and video clips from international water experts and celebrities. The keynote speaker will be William E. Marks, an internationally recognized water expert, producer and author of Water Voices from Around the World and The Holy Order of Water. Conference participants will learn of the challenges of providing and maintaining a safe and sufficient water supply and the approaches taken in the Virgin Islands to resolving these challenges.

The proceedings and festival will be recorded and DVDs will be produced for distribution to community television stations. The goal of project is to create public awareness and collaborative efforts to educate the local population and tourists about the value of water resources in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Caribbean region and the world.
The principal investigator, Lydia Harris, is a professor at the University of the Virgin Islands. Her expertise includes publicity, marketing, public relations, media relations, journalism and administration.