



## Mariner's Resource Protection Guide

VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK WAS ESTABLISHED BY Congress in 1956 to preserve the outstanding natural and cultural resources on St. John. In 1962, park boundaries were expanded to include 5,650 acres of submerged lands adjacent to the island. The park has also been designated a Biosphere Reserve, part of an international network of natural areas established to demonstrate the value of conservation. A presidential proclamation created Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument in 2001, adding 12,708 acres of adjoining federal submerged lands to the National Park System.

The park is a popular cruising ground for thousands of pleasure boaters. In the 1980s, dramatic increases in the number of boats resulted in escalating damage to some of the very features that visitors travel here

to enjoy. The coral reefs, seagrass beds, and algal plains of the park have been heavily damaged by the anchors and anchor chains of boats. Although the weight of the anchor crushes marine life, the greatest impact is caused by the anchor chain sweeping and scouring the area clean of plants and animals as the boat swings with changes in wind direction. This damage has been well documented by the park's research staff. With the input and support of the local community, the park has installed moorings and established protective zones around several of the more sensitive reef and seagrass areas. This guide will help boaters to understand what they can do to help preserve the park's marine resources so that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy them as well.



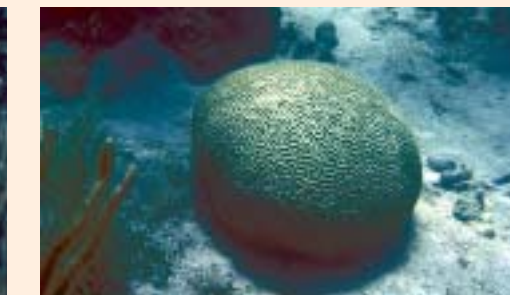
Caroline Rogers



NPS photo



Queen Angelfish



Caroline Rogers



NPS photo

Healthy brain coral (above), and one damaged by a boat (below).

### The Marine Community

Mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs are interrelated ecological systems. Many fish and shellfish depend on more than one of these for food and shelter. Coral reefs are among the most diverse, productive, and complex ecosystems in the world, comparable to tropical rain forests. Corals are fragile living organisms. Most grow only a fraction of an inch per year. Striped sergeant majors, rainbow colored parrotfish, and spiny lobsters are some species which live on the reef. Some fish, such as snappers and grunts, migrate daily from the shelter of reefs to feed in adjacent seagrass beds at night. Federally threatened green sea turtles and locally protected queen conch also

depend on seagrass for food. The juveniles of many species rely on both mangrove and seagrass habitats, moving to deeper water and offshore reefs as they mature. Seagrasses are flowering marine plants that spread primarily through root growth. Those roots also help to retain bottom sediments and reduce shoreline erosion, resulting in improved water quality. When anchors rip up seagrasses, they not only leave a scarred bottom which may take years to recover, but also destroy an important food source for marine animals and cause our crystal clear water to become cloudy with sediment.

### More Information

Cruz Bay Visitor Center  
Open Daily 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
(340) 776-6201, ext. 238  
www.nps.gov/viis

**Please help keep the moorings safe by reporting any defects immediately to the Bay Host or phone (340) 639-8950, ext. 241.**

Virgin Islands National Park supports the principles of Leave No Trace. Please protect our natural environment, cultural resources, and the experience of other visitors.



## Using the National Park Mooring System

Over two hundred mooring buoys have been installed in the bays around St. John. Moorings are safe, easy to use, and eliminate the need to anchor. The moorings are fixed to the bottom with either a steel auger twisted into the sand, or a stainless steel eyebolt that is cemented directly into coral pavement. The floating mooring line (painter) is picked up and tied to a short bowline on the vessel. Moorings have been load tested to 11,000 pounds of upward pull. However, vessels must find a proper anchoring site if sustained winds exceed 40 mph.

Although day use of the park moorings is free, a self-registration fee of \$15 per night is

required for overnight use between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 a.m. (Golden Age/ Access Passport holders pay half price). The revenue will help offset the cost of maintaining the moorings. For your convenience, payment stations have been placed at the following locations: Caneel Watersports Shop, Hawksnest Bay, Cinnamon Bay, Maho Bay Camps, Leinster Bay, Saltpond Bay, and Great Lameshur Bay (check the tag on your mooring for exact directions to the payment station). Overnight stays in park waters are limited to 30 nights in a calendar year, and no more than 7 consecutive nights in one bay. Mariners must use moorings in park waters if they are available and the vessel is

appropriately sized. If all moorings in a bay are occupied, anchoring is permitted following NPS guidelines.

During the peak visitation months of November through July, a Bay Host will be available five days a week to answer questions and provide assistance. The Bay Host boat can be identified by a green flag with the National Park Service Arrowhead logo. If a Bay Host is not available, questions may be directed to the NPS Visitor Center in Cruz Bay, which is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days a week.

Moorings photos by Jack Hopkins

### How to Moor Your Boat

Fee for overnight use.

- 1) Approach the mooring painter line (pickup line with small surface float) by heading into the wind or current at a very slow speed. Shift engine into neutral before reaching the mooring.
- 2) Pick up the eye of the mooring painter with your boat hook.
- 3) Thread your bowline through the eye-splice of the painter line twice, or thimble once, to prevent chafing. Do not tie off eye at the boat stern.
- 4) Bring your line back to the boat and cleat it off on the same side. DO NOT put the painter line eye over your bow cleat.
- 5) When leaving a mooring, back away with the wind after casting off the painter line.

When using a mooring, do not use an anchor or additional ground tackle. Rafting with other boats is not permitted while occupying NPS moorings.



Jack Hopkins

Proper approach and pickup of mooring.

### Types of Mooring Buoys

NPS mooring buoys are round with a blue reflective band around the center

#### White

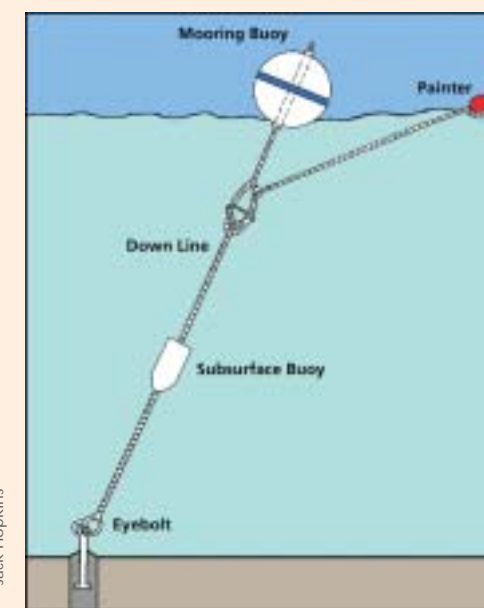
- 1) For day and overnight use (shown above)
- 2) For day use only - "day use only" sticker on buoy (see map)

#### Blue

Commercial vessel use only

#### Orange

SCUBA diving use only - no overnight use



### How to Anchor Your Boat

There is no fee for anchoring. If moorings are not available or their use is inappropriate, please use the following guidelines to anchor:

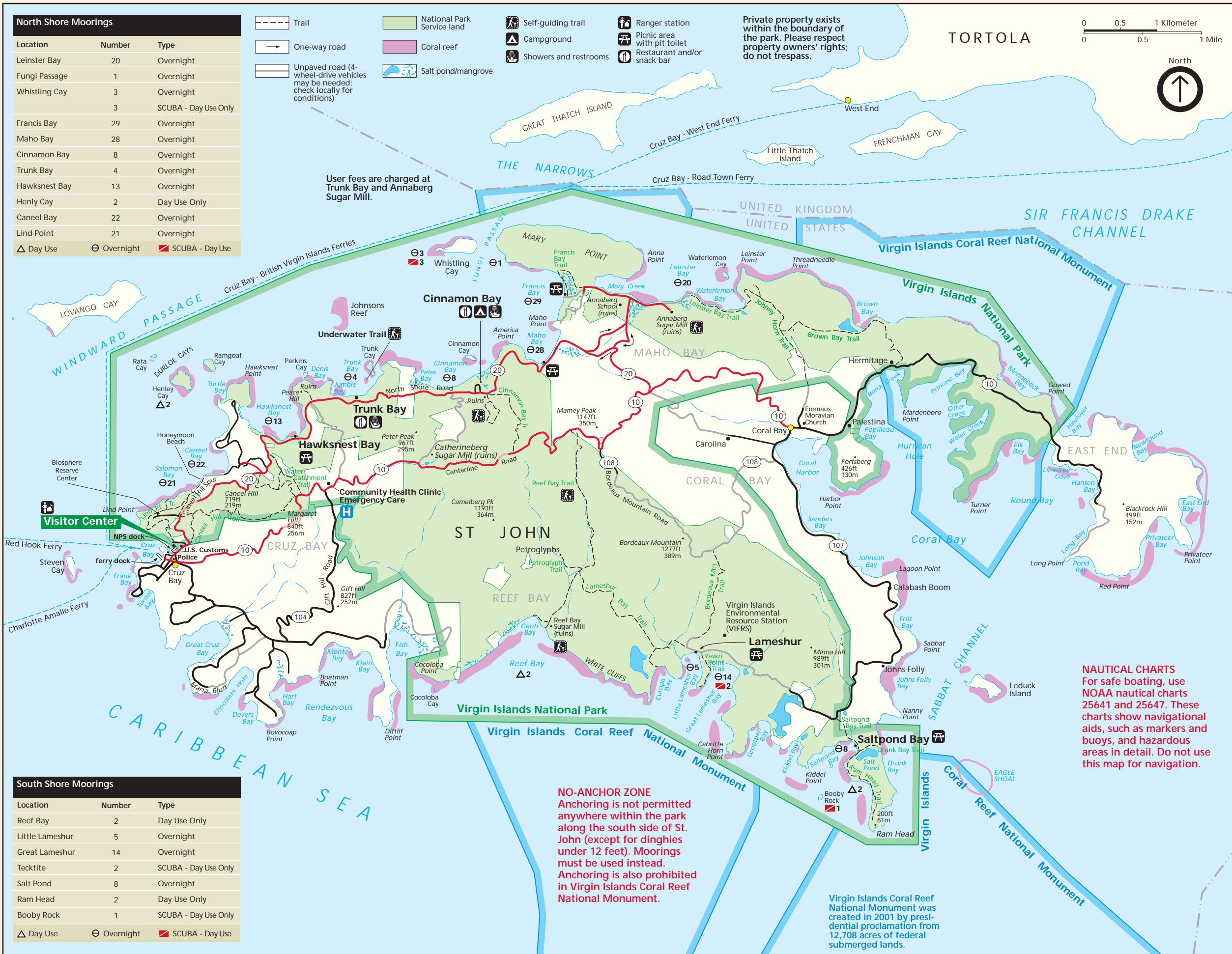
- 1) Shift engine into neutral and slowly head into the wind or current and be sure crew, anchor and anchor line are ready.
- 2) When selecting an anchorage, observe the bottom. Make sure your anchor line is 5 times the water depth. Do not drop your anchor on coral reefs or seagrass beds. If unsure of the bottom type, use an experienced snorkeler to find a sandy spot or move to another location.
- 3) Once an anchorage is determined, lower the anchor over the side; never throw the anchor.
- 4) Slowly play out anchor line to avoid the line from dropping into a pile on the bottom.
- 5) Allow time for the anchor to catch hold. Let the current or wind drift the boat back. Once the anchor is set, fasten the anchor line to the bow cleat.
- 6) Reverse the boat slowly, creating a steady strain on the anchor line to ensure the anchor is holding. If the anchor is moving, pull it up and try again.
- 7) Check for dragging by noticing slight vibrations on the anchor line, or by visible jerks on the line. Locate stationary landmarks and periodically check for changes in alignment. If possible, dive to visually inspect the anchor.

Do not anchor within 200 feet of any mooring, 100 feet from any regulatory buoy, or closer than 100 feet to park beaches. There is a three hour maximum stay for anchoring vessels under 60 feet in the NPS portion of Cruz Bay Harbor.

### Private Vessel Size Limits

Length on Deck	North Shore	South Shore
12 Feet or Less	May anchor only in sand and not within 200 feet of a mooring field	May anchor only in sand and not within 200 feet of a mooring field
13 to 60 Feet	Must use mooring if available	Must use mooring if available
61 to 125 Feet	Prohibited from using moorings - must anchor in sand 200 ft. seaward of mooring field	Prohibited from mooring or anchoring
126 to 210 Feet	Prohibited from using moorings - must anchor in sand at Francis Bay 200 ft. seaward of mooring field (at depths greater than 50 ft.) and shoreward of a line drawn from Mary Point to America Point	Prohibited from mooring or anchoring
Greater than 210 Feet	Prohibited from mooring or anchoring	Prohibited from mooring or anchoring





The endangered hawksbill sea turtle eats sponges growing on reefs and finds shelter under coral ledges.

## Safety Tips

**Don't Go It Alone!**  
Always swim, snorkel, and SCUBA dive with a "buddy." Not only can you help each other should the need arise, but you'll also have someone to share the experience with!

**Storm Swells!**  
Be aware that conditions may change rapidly, especially during winter months. If "ground seas" develop, you may need to alter your anchorage.

**Leave Only Bubbles!**  
As a snorkeler or diver, you'll be exposed to a wide variety of fascinating plants and animals. Some, like coral and sponges, are extremely fragile and easily damaged when touched or kicked. Others, such as bristle worms, fire coral, and sea urchins, can inflict painful wounds. Near a coral reef, the aquatic human is like a bull in a china shop. To avoid injuring either these organisms or yourself - look, listen, and enjoy, but please don't touch.

**Look Out For Snorkelers!**  
As a boat operator, watch out for snorkelers and swimmers, especially when near a boat exclusion area or in an access channel. Run dinghies at a no-wake speed when heading to and from a beach.

**To Screen Or Not To Screen?**  
Today's glossy tan or painful burn can lead to tomorrow's skin cancers. Use a strong waterproof sunscreen to protect yourself from the sun's rays. Wear a t-shirt when snorkeling for extra protection.

## Dangerous Reefs

Boaters should be especially careful to avoid Windswept and Johnsons Reefs. Windswept Reef fringes the coastline between Trunk and Cinnamon Bays. Johnsons Reef, north of Trunk Bay, is marked by yellow buoys.

## National Park Regulations

### Marine Resource Protection

- Do not damage or take any live or dead marine organisms such as sea fans, coral, sponges, or shells.
- Anchors, anchor chains, and anchor lines must not be dropped on fragile marine habitats such as coral or seagrass beds. Anchor in sand only.
- The tying of boats or dinghies to any natural features, including rocks and vegetation (alive or dead), is prohibited.
- No vessels may enter or anchor in areas marked as Boat Exclusion Areas, designated by white oblong buoys marked with "NO BOATS" and/or the international "boats keep out" symbol - an orange diamond with an orange cross in it.

- Do not dump human waste or refuse in park waters. Waste must be treated and discharged at least 3 miles from the nearest land. Trash may be placed in receptacles located at Cruz Bay, Francis Bay, Leinster Bay, or Little Lameshur. It may not exceed two 10-gallon bags, and must fit and be placed inside NPS trash containers.
- Feeding or removal of any wildlife in the park (other than fishing - see fishing regulations), either on land or in the water, is prohibited.
- All sea turtles are endangered or threatened species. Do not touch, harass, or harm them.
- Refrain from using bright deck lights; they can cause hatching sea turtle mortality.
- Metal detectors, magnetometers, side scan sonar, and subbottom profilers are prohibited.

- Do not disturb or remove artifacts from shipwrecks or other shoreline historical sites.
- Water skiing, towing of any recreational device, and use of personal watercraft (jet skis, wave runners, etc.) are prohibited in park waters.
- SCUBA and snorkeling is permitted in areas adjacent to beaches and inside boat exclusion areas. SCUBA and snorkeling is prohibited in designated boat channels, shipping lanes, and dock areas. SCUBA diving is prohibited in Trunk Bay.
- National Park Law Enforcement Rangers may board any vessel in park waters at any time in order to conduct official business.

### Dinghy Channels

- Boats 26 ft. or less may access beaches using channels marked by red and green buoys.
- Boats may not anchor in the channels.
- Channels are only for pick-up, drop-off, and the payment of mooring fees.

### Fishing

- With the exception of boat exclusion zones, fishing is permitted with hand-held rod and line.
- Possession or use of any type of spearfishing equipment within park boundaries is prohibited.
- Caribbean spiny lobster season is open year round. Caribbean spiny lobsters may be

- taken by hand or hand-held snare. DO NOT take females with eggs (eggs are black and located underneath the tail). Limit: two per person per day. Size limit: 3.5" carapace. DO NOT take spotted lobster or the lobster species called Slipper, Buccaneer, Locust, or Spanish Lobster.
- Conch season is open from October 1 to June 30. Limit: two per person per day. Size limit: conch must be 9" long or have a lip thickness of 3/8". All conchs must be landed in the shell. Empty shells are not to be disposed of in the water.
- Whelk season is open from October 1 to March 31. Limit: one gallon per person per day (in the shell). Size limit: whelk must be larger than 2.5" in diameter and landed in the shell.

### Shoreline Use

- Dogs, cats and other pets are not permitted in campgrounds or on beaches in the park. Pets must be under physical restraint at all times elsewhere in the park.
- Glass bottles or containers are prohibited on all NPS beaches.
- Fires may only be built in NPS provided grills or in portable grills designed to contain combustible material. Ground fires are prohibited. Only dead wood on the ground may be collected for use as fuel.

### Quiet Hours

- 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.