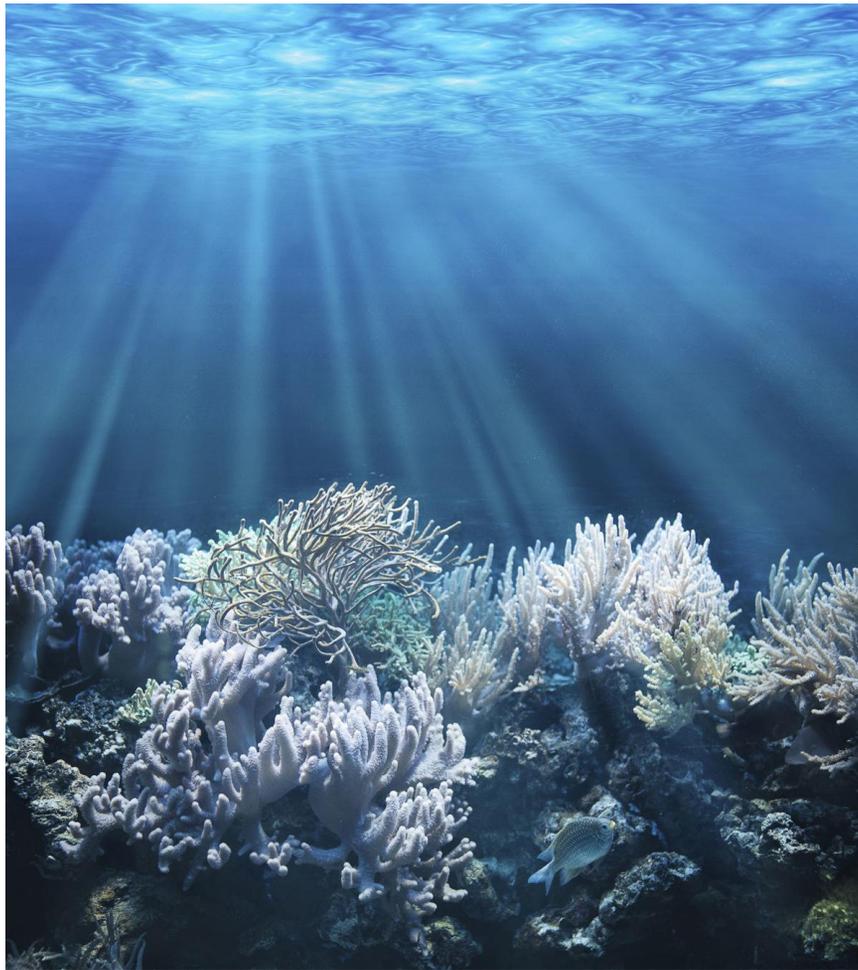


[http://www.virginislandsdailynews.com/opinion/usvi-s-landmark-toxic-os-sunscreen-ban-puts-territory-in/article\\_58c8f002-6d24-5979-96bc-1fa75785a3b3.html](http://www.virginislandsdailynews.com/opinion/usvi-s-landmark-toxic-os-sunscreen-ban-puts-territory-in/article_58c8f002-6d24-5979-96bc-1fa75785a3b3.html)

# USVI's landmark 'Toxic 3 Os' sunscreen ban puts territory in leadership position

Mar 30, 2020





In these challenging times, it is hard to look past COVID-19 and the uncertainty related to this global pandemic, especially as it affects us on our beloved islands.

Indeed it has touched me personally with efforts to get a dear family friend who is fighting for his life on a trial medication at a Brooklyn hospital. At the same time, I couldn't let March 30, 2020, pass without saluting our governor, senators and YOU — the community — for your dedication to our islands.

This is the day that the U.S. Virgin Islands' historic "Toxic 3 Os" Sunscreen Ban goes into effect, making the territory the trailblazer for protections in the United States.

Science shows that these toxic sunscreen chemicals damage coral reefs, marine life and human health. The USVI ban adds octinoxate to the chemicals barred in Hawaii and Key West (oxybenzone and octocrylene), making safer mineral sunscreens that feature zinc oxide and titanium dioxide the default choice. And our ban goes into effect a full nine months earlier than others in the United States.

We call on the public to take heed of these protections. Laws are one thing, but our actions must change. Be sure to wear rash guards and non-nano mineral sunscreens. If you see a local retailer selling toxic products, please speak up — especially since there are a plethora of safe sunscreen options available.

Coral reefs are vital to protecting coastlines and supporting life in our oceans — they have the highest biodiversity of any of the planet's eco-systems and are on par with rainforests in the levels of oxygen they produce and the carbon dioxide they remove.

We ALL share the world's oceans and it is imperative that we work together and encourage others to do so as well.

This law not only protects our coral reefs and our own health, but it also safeguards one of our key tourism attractions.

The tourism-based economy is the territory's lifeblood. Let's give a shout out to marketing wizard and Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, who will create a model platform for other island nations to emulate — one that builds awareness of these protections while underscoring how it enhances the experience here. And we WILL be ready to welcome visitors again soon. Likewise the fishing industry depends on the health of our coral reefs.

Thanks to all in the community for their passion and commitment to the cause. Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. and our senators are to be commended for this Act. It underscores our love for the environment and provides a unique selling point to those drawn to our islands for their beauty both above and below the ground.

Let's not allow the toxic sunscreen ban fall to the fate of plastic bags — with many retailers not complying.

The toxic sunscreen ban presents a golden opportunity for our territory. We the public must demand that those in charge implement, embrace, build awareness and enforce these safeguards to the full advantage of our islands.

The world is watching — let's be a true leader of this campaign.

— *Harith Wickrema, St. John, is President of the Island Green Living Association.*