

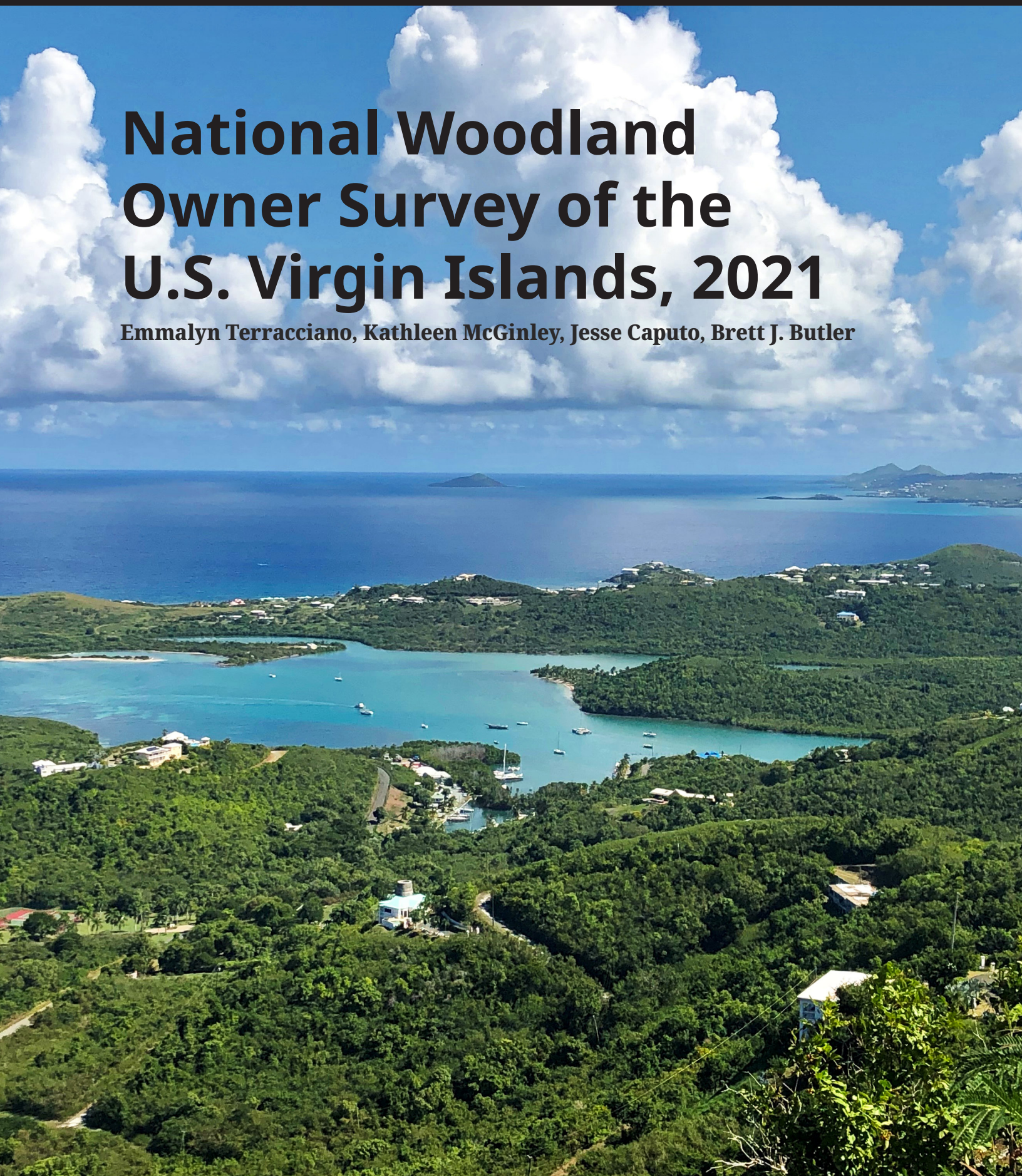


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National Woodland Owner Survey of the U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021

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Cover photo: Forested coast along the U.S. Virgin Islands. (U.S. Forest Service photo by Kathleen McGinley)

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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the results of the National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) for the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). The charge of the NWOS includes gathering and reporting information on private forest ownerships from across all U.S. States, protectorates, and territories. The survey was conducted in the USVI for the first time in 2021. This report focuses on families, individuals, trusts, estates, and family partnerships, collectively referred to as family forest ownerships, that own at least 1 acre of forest land in the USVI. The summary results include information about their forest land, their reasons for owning it, what they have done with it in the past and plan to do with it in the future, their concerns, and information about the landowners themselves. Key results include: 1) most owners in the USVI take a hands-off or passive approach to managing their forest land, 2) most people own their forest land for aesthetic, privacy, or family legacy purposes, 3) while most ownerships indicate that they are unlikely to sell or transfer their land in the next 5 years, ownerships holding almost half of family forest acres in the USVI would sell their forest land if offered a reasonable price, and 4) family forest ownerships in the USVI share some characteristics with those in the United States mainland, including some reasons for owning and concerns about their forests, but differ in many regards, most prominently in terms of size of forest holdings and harvesting activities.

KEYWORDS: Family forest owners, National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS), U.S. Virgin Islands, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA), forestry, private forest owners.

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program is a congressionally mandated program designed to assess forest health, resources, ownership, and ecological trends over time (USDA Forest Service 2025a). The FIA program contains three base components: the Nationwide Forest Inventory (NFI) that focuses on the biophysical aspects of forests, the National Resource Use Monitoring (NRUM) that focuses on economic aspects (such as timber products), and the National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) that focuses on social aspects. The NWOS is a survey-based program conducted through the Family Forest Research Center at the University of Massachusetts Amherst that collects information about private forest owners' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. FIA is charged with collecting information across all U.S. States, protectorates, and territories, but the NWOS has, to this point, focused on the 50 States.

This report summarizes the results of the National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) for the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) and is the first jurisdiction outside the 50 States in which the NWOS has been implemented. The NWOS has three subpopulations of interest: large corporate, small corporate, and families. The focus of this report is on family forest owners, which includes families, individuals, trusts, estates, and family partnerships that own at least 1 acre of forest land in the USVI. Land is considered forest if it has "at least 10 percent canopy cover of trees of any size, or has had at least 10 percent canopy cover of trees in the past, based on the presence of stumps, snags, or other evidence, and that will be naturally or artificially regenerated" (USDA Forest Service 2023). This is slightly different than the definition of forest land used for NFI plots in the USVI, which also includes "understory agricultural systems

that maintain the minimum tree canopy cover, such as agroforestry and shade coffee cultivation" (Brandeis and Marciano-Vega 2022).

NFI plots were first established in the USVI in 2004 (Brandeis and Marciano-Vega 2022). According to the most recent inventory in 2024, there were an estimated 50,538 acres of forest land on the USVI that cover 61.4 percent of the total land area. Forests in the USVI are primarily privately owned, with 72 percent of the forest area across the islands under private ownership. Twenty two percent of total forest area in the USVI is classified as publicly owned, with 18 percent held by the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and 10 percent administered by the local government (USDA Forest Service 2025b). Figures 1 and 2 provide a visual of land cover across the USVI. St. John is the smallest and most extensively forested of the three islands with 95 percent forest cover (11,417 acres), while St. Croix is the largest of the three and has the most forest land by acreage (31,464 acres; 60 percent forest cover). St. Thomas is second among the three main islands in terms of total area, the most densely populated, and has the lowest area and percent forest cover (7,658 acres; 44 percent forest cover) (USDA Forest Service 2025b).

While forest cover in USVI remained relatively stable over the last four inventories, housing development projections suggest that roughly 12 percent of the forest land across the USVI will experience increased housing density before 2030 (Stein et al. 2014). However, development in some areas may be accompanied by natural forest regeneration in other areas. Stability in total forest area does not necessarily represent no change in land use. Along with the fourth and future USVI forest inventories, results from the NWOS of the USVI can provide insight into the future of private forests and private forest owners with important implications for the islands' land cover in the coming years.

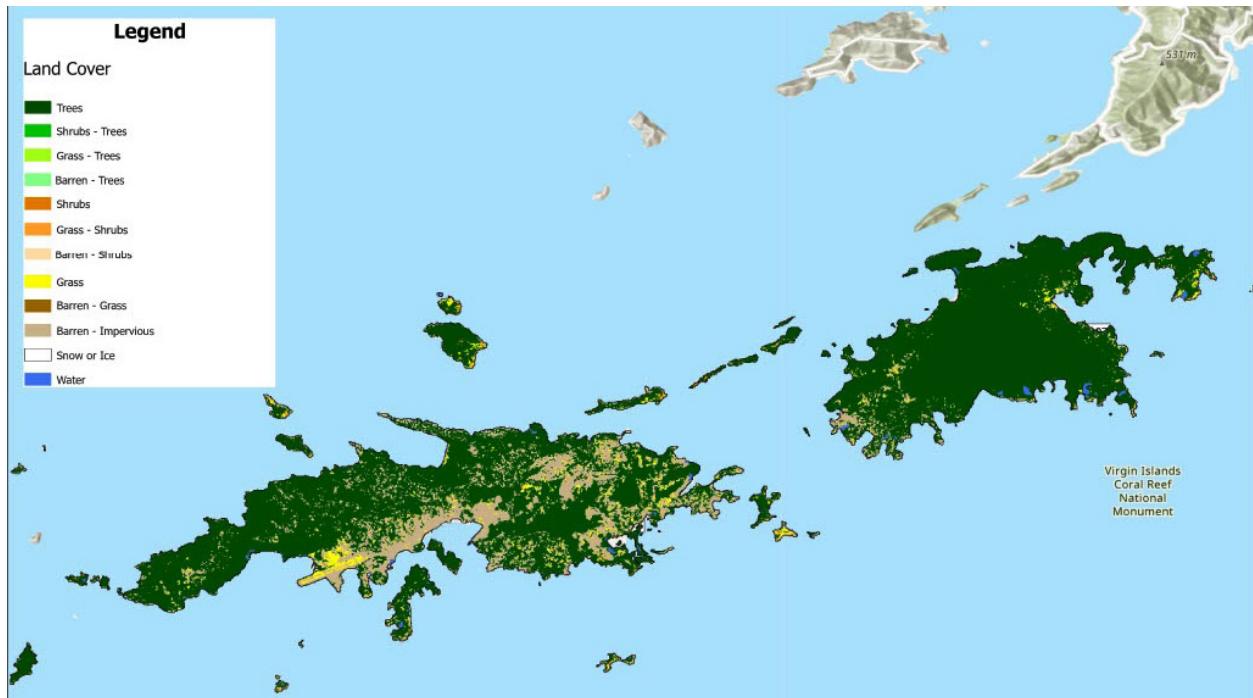


Figure 1—Land cover across St. Thomas and St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands (USDA Forest Service 2024).

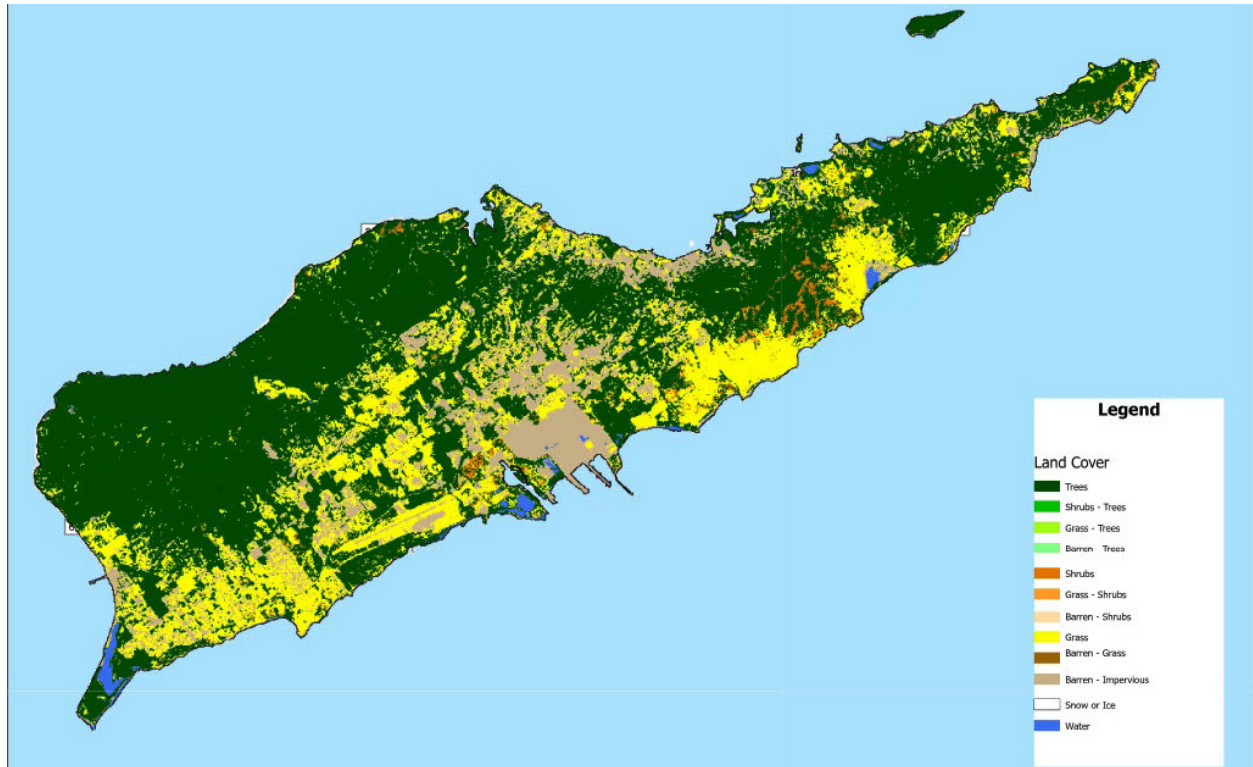


Figure 2—Land cover across St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands (USDA Forest Service 2024).

METHODS

The base NWOS survey instrument was modified to include locally relevant questions, wording, and response options for private forest ownership in the Caribbean (app. 2). The instrument was pretested through cognitive interviews (Willis 2005) with four forest owners in the USVI to verify that the survey questions were comprehensible. Survey implementation procedures were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB; approval no. 0596-0078) and the University of Massachusetts Amherst Internal Review Board (IRB; approval no. 684). Implementation followed the established NWOS methods (Butler et al. 2021), which are outlined below.

For determining which landowners received the NWOS in the USVI, we used an area-based sampling approach derived from methods used to generate FIA NFI plots (Bechtold and Patterson 2005). A GIS layer of non-overlapping hexagons was created with the size of the hexagons commensurate with the target sample size (i.e., a minimum of 100 responses). A sample point was randomly chosen within each hexagon. Forest status for each sample point was determined using satellite photographs. The USVI Department of Agriculture (VIDA) was a key partner in identifying sample point owners. Through VIDA, we received a static copy of the “Parcels of the U.S. Virgins Islands” GIS layer from the GIS division of the office of the Lt. Governor. The private forest ownerships identified received a four-wave mailing following a modified version of the Tailored Design Method (Dillman et al. 2014), which included an introductory postcard; a survey packet with a cover letter, the survey instrument, and a note that the survey could be filled out online or requested in Spanish; a follow up postcard; and a second survey packet for those who did not fill out the first survey. Materials were mailed between March and April 2021.

We contacted 938 individuals, of which 377 had incorrect contact information. We received 70 complete responses for a cooperation rate of 12.5 percent (table A1.1 USVI-1). Surveys returned with <75 percent of the questions completed were excluded, as well as responses from those who did not own at least 1 acre of forest land or who skipped the question about acres of forest land owned. We tested nonresponse bias by comparing early to late respondents. Thirteen variables were compared using Mann-Whitney U tests for continuous variables and Fisher’s Exact Test for categorical variables. We adjusted p-values using the Holm’s method and none of the variables significantly differed. Logic checks were handled using the same methods in base and corporate NWOS (Butler et al. 2021, Caputo et al. 2023). Missing responses were imputed using multiple imputation by chained equations (van Buuren and Groothuis-Oudshoorn 2011).

The area-based nature of the sampling design allows for population estimates to be calculated by determining weights based on forest land owned. Bootstrapping was used to estimate variances for the population-level estimates (Butler and Caputo 2021).

All calculations were done using the R statistical environment (R Core Team 2021). For further details on sample selection, implementation, and estimation procedures, see Butler et al. (2021).

RESULTS

This section presents selected results from the 2021 NWOS of the USVI. The results are for family forest ownerships that own 1+ acres of forest land in the USVI. For some of the questions on the NWOS, respondents were able to choose more than one answer. In these cases where categories are not mutually exclusive, percentages may add up to greater

than 100 percent and n may add up to greater than 70. Comprehensive summary tables from all questions asked in the survey are provided in appendix 1 and the survey instrument is available in appendix 2.

Ownership Characteristics and History

There are an estimated 4,575 family forest ownerships holding an estimated 21,320 acres in the USVI. This represents 42 percent of the total forest land (50,838 acres) estimated in the USVI in 2024 (USDA Forest Service 2025b). Ninety six percent of family forest ownerships have holdings of less than 10 acres of forest land (table A1.2 USVI-3-OWN) but only 51 percent of family forest acres consist of less than 10 acres (table A1.3 USVI-3-ACRE). Family forest ownerships primarily consist of an individual owner (39 percent) or the owner and their spouse (32 percent; fig. 3), and it is

most common for an ownership to consist of two owners (44 percent; table A1.4 USVI-5a-OWN). This takes into consideration those who own their forest land jointly with someone other than a spouse, family LLCs or LLPs, trusts, and estates. An estimated 55 percent of family forest ownerships have their primary residence at least 1 mile away from their forest land (table A1.5 USVI-6-OWN).

Most owners acquired their land by purchasing (65 percent) or inheriting (38 percent; table A1.6 USVI-10a-OWN) and received it either from their parents (39 percent) or another individual outside of their family (44 percent; table A1.7 USVI-10b-OWN). Ownerships have typically held their forest land between 10 to 24 years (table A1.8 USVI-10c-OWN).

Family forest owners typically have strong emotional attachments to their forest land (75

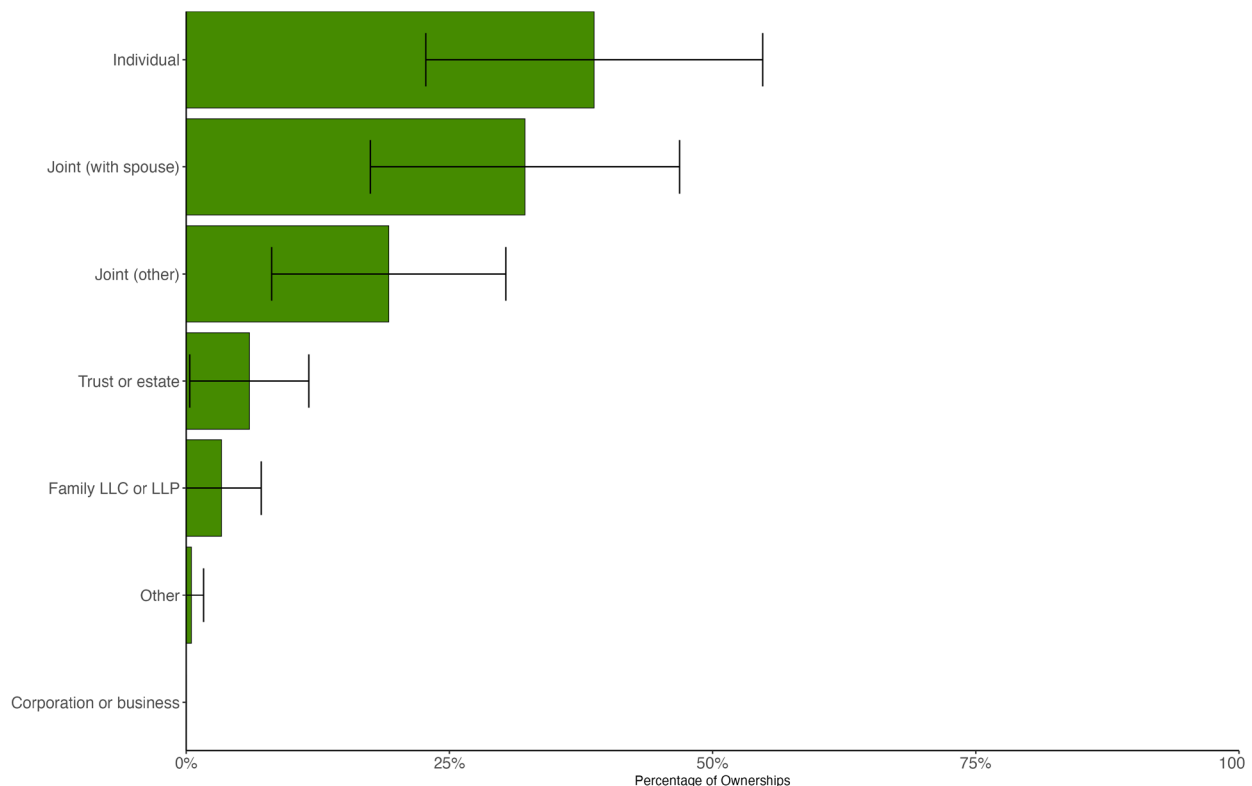


Figure 3—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by ownership type, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021. Error bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals (i.e., $1.96 \times$ standard error).

percent) and know their forest land well (72 percent; fig. 4). Forty three percent of family forest owners agree or strongly agree with the statement “I want my wooded land to stay wooded”. However, 57 percent of owners, who own over half of the family forest land, disagree, strongly disagree, or neither agree nor disagree with this statement (fig. 4; table A1.9 USVI-13b-ACRE).

Future Plans

When asked about retaining their forest land, most family forest owners indicate they are extremely unlikely (42 percent) or unlikely (22 percent) to sell or give away their forest land in the next 5 years, while 20 percent are either extremely likely or likely to do so (table A1.10 USVI-11-OWN). If they were to give away or sell their forest land, most owners would give or sell it to their children (61 percent; table

A1.11 USVI-12-OWN). Additionally, most family forest owners disagreed with the statement: “I would sell my land if I was offered a reasonable price” (“Strongly disagree”: 37 percent; “Disagree”: 22 percent; fig. 4). However, the owners who agreed or strongly agreed with selling their land if offered a reasonable price (32 percent), together represent 49 percent of total family forest acres in the USVI (table A1.9 USVI-13b-ACRE).

Reasons for Owning

The most prevalent reasons for family forest owners to own forest land are to enjoy beauty or scenery, for privacy, to pass land on to children or other heirs, and land investment (fig. 5).

Forest products (including firewood, timber products, and nontimber products), hunting,

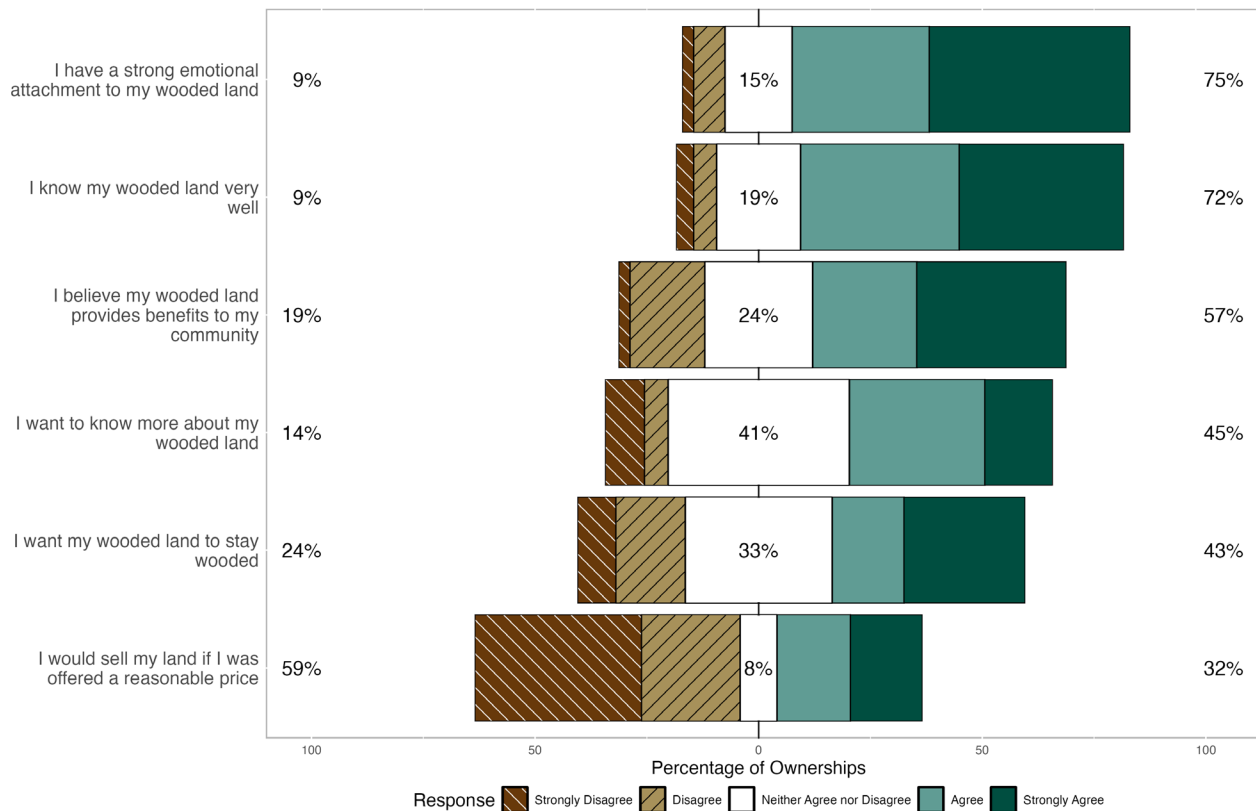


Figure 4—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by level of agreement with statements about their forest land, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021.

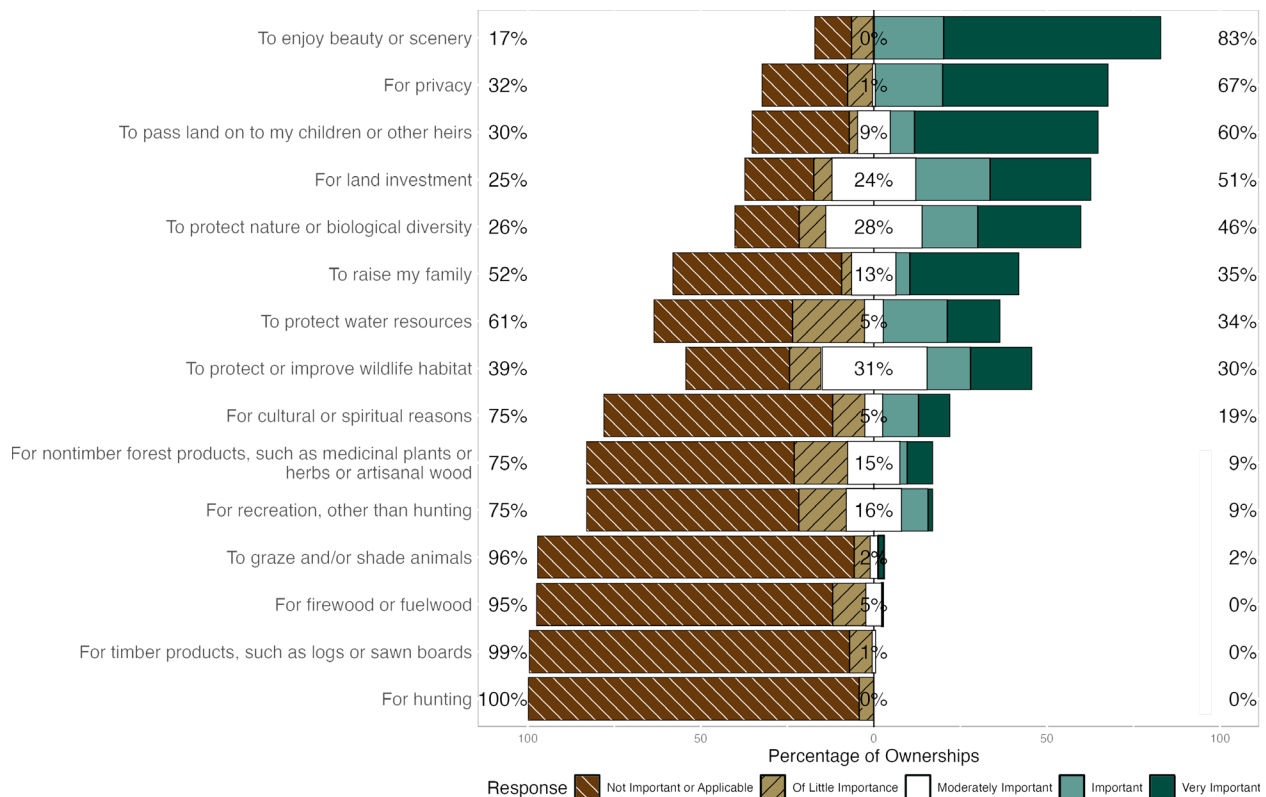


Figure 5—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by level of importance for reasons for owning their wooded land, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021.

recreation, grazing or shading animals, and cultural or spiritual purposes are of little to no importance in terms of the reasons for owning their forest land for most forest owners in the USVI (fig. 5).

Concerns

Of the natural disturbances listed on the survey, damage to family forest land in the USVI in the past 5 years was primarily from hurricanes and tropical storms. Fifty-seven percent of ownerships reported their forest land was at least somewhat damaged from hurricanes and tropical storms (fig. 6). Nine percent of landowners owning 19 percent of family forest land experienced extreme damage from hurricanes and tropical storms (table A1.12 USVI-14a-OWN; table A1.13 USVI-14a-ACRE). The most common activities that ownerships reported undertaking to reduce risk from natural disturbances in the past

5 years were brush or debris removal (40 percent) and tree trimming/pruning (32 percent; table A1.14 USVI-15-OWN).

When asked to indicate their level of concern about a range of topics, most owners expressed concern or great concern with multiple issues. Topics that at least 50 percent of owners expressed concern or great concern about, in descending order, were high property taxes, damage from hurricanes or tropical storms, neighbors' property use or decisions, keeping land intact for future generations, drought or lack of water, misuse of wooded land such as vandalism or dumping, and climate change (fig. 7). Damage from animals and damage or noise from off-road vehicles are of little to no concern or not applicable for 65 percent and 72 percent of family forest ownerships in the USVI, respectively (fig. 7).

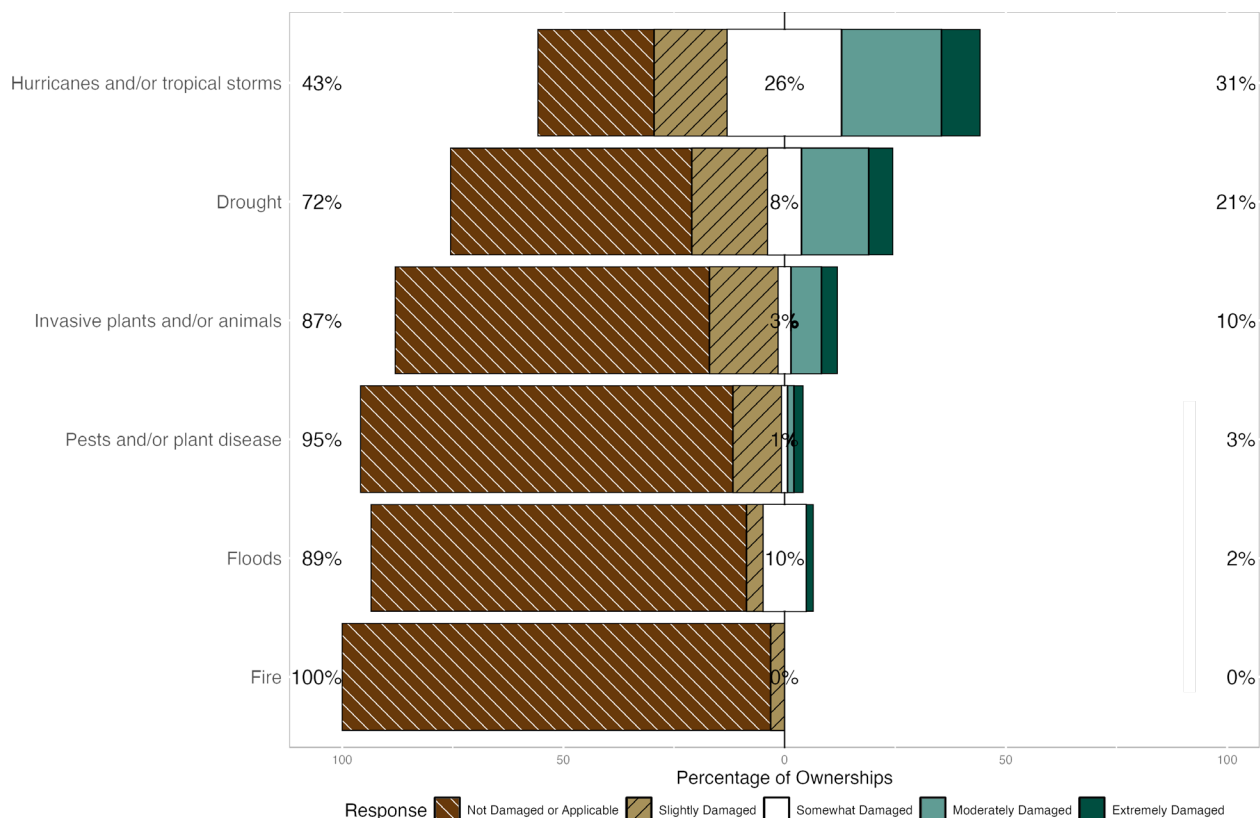


Figure 6—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by extent of damage to wooded land from natural disturbances, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021.

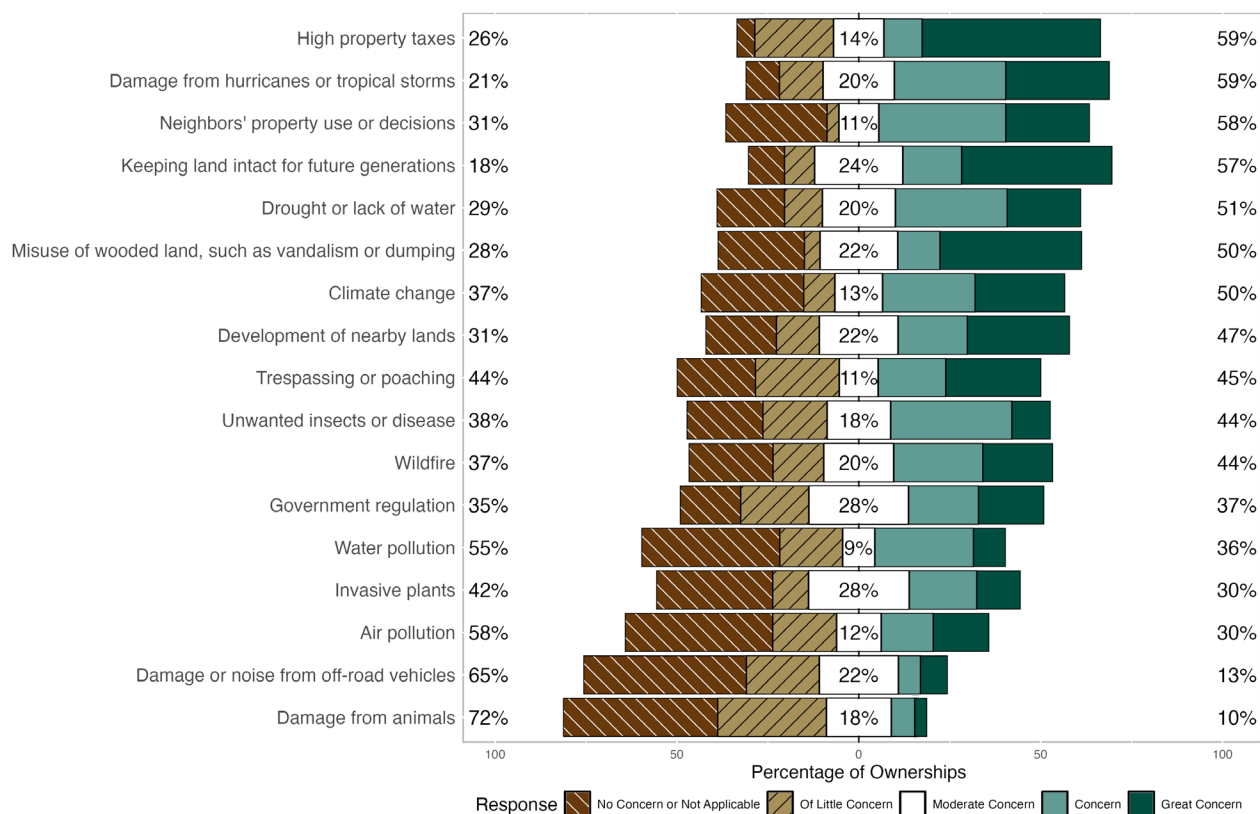


Figure 7—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by level of concern regarding each topic, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021.

Recreation

Most recreation on family forest land is done by the owner, their spouse, their children, and other family (table A1.15 USVI-17a-OWN). Recreational activities are primarily hiking or walking (43 percent) and nature viewing (39 percent; fig. 8). Notably, 44 percent of ownerships reported that nobody has recreated on their forest land in the previous 5 years. This relates to respondents' reasons for owning forest land: 75 percent of family forest owners indicated that recreation was of little importance, not important, or not applicable.

The majority of ownerships (82 percent) have not posted to restrict activities by the public on their forest land (table A1.16 USVI-18a-OWN) but fencing to restrict access or use is common; 62 percent of ownerships restricted access

or use by the general public through fencing on their land (table A1.17 USVI-19-OWN) and similarly, 65 percent of family forest acres are owned by people who have fenced to restrict access or use (table A1.18 USVI-19-ACRE).

Activities and Management Practices

The NWOS of the USVI asked family forest owners about the different types of activities and management practices that occur on their forest land: activities (which included practices related to livelihood, such as planting trees for food and livestock grazing) and management practices (which included activities related to managing forest land, such as road construction and prescribed fire). Most family forest owners indicated that none of the listed activities or management

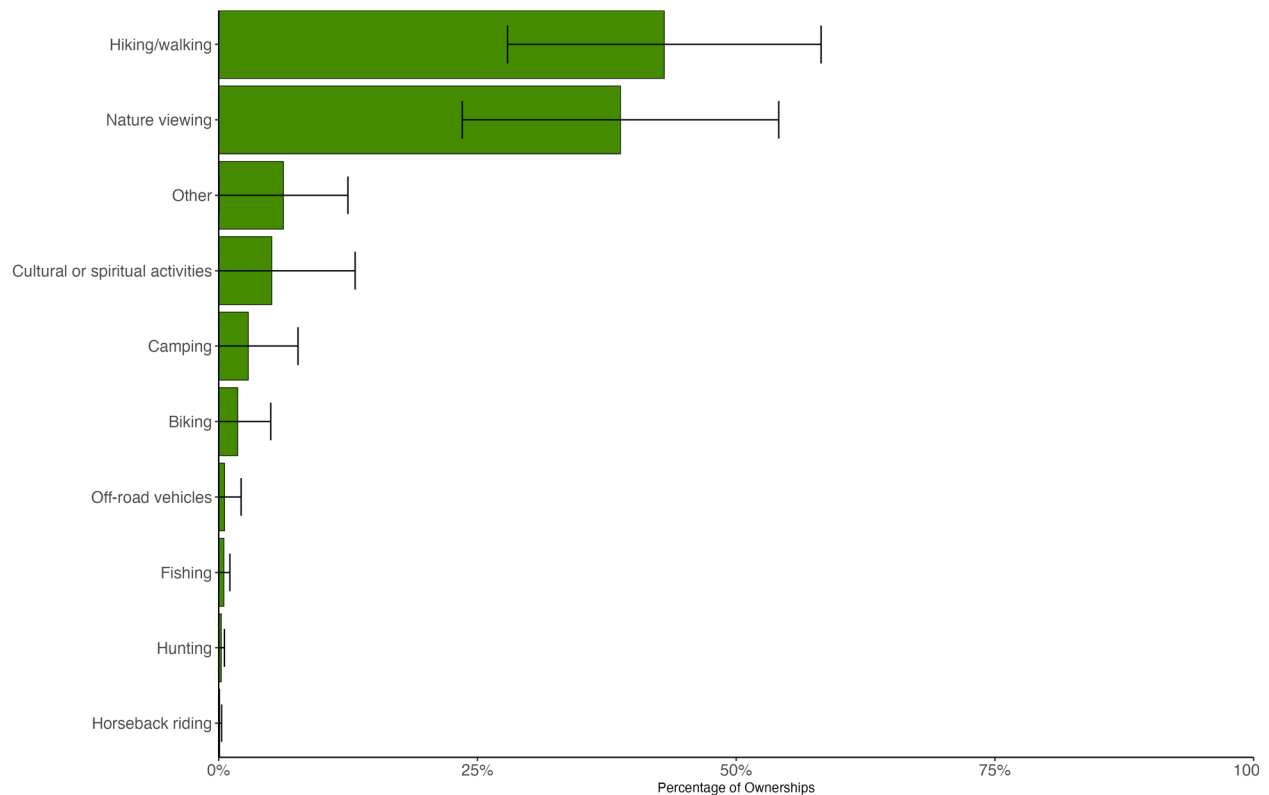


Figure 8—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by types of recreation activities conducted on landowners' forest land in previous 5 years, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021. Categories are not mutually exclusive. Error bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals (i.e., $1.96 \times$ standard error).

practices have occurred on their forest land in the past 5 years (66 percent and 74 percent of ownerships, respectively; figs. 9, 10). Among the activities related to livelihood that owners indicated have occurred in the past 5 years were collecting edible forest products (21 percent of ownerships) and planting trees for food (18 percent; fig. 9). The most common management practices that occurred in the past 5 years were road construction or maintenance (10 percent of ownerships) and reducing fire hazard (7 percent of ownerships), although these were reported by a low proportion of respondents (fig. 10). Notably, trail construction or maintenance was the most common management practice by family forest acreage (19 percent; table A.19 USVI-29-ACRE).

Plans for future activities were similar to previous activities, with 20 percent of ownerships planning to plant trees for food, 15 percent planning to collect edible forest products, and 55 percent reporting that none of the listed activities are likely to occur on their forest land (fig. 11). The results for future management practices differed from past management practices with a substantially higher percentage indicating an interest in conducting one or more practices. Sixteen percent of ownerships plan to construct or maintain fences, 16 percent plan to participate in invasive species removal, and 15 percent plan to reduce insects or disease (fig. 12).

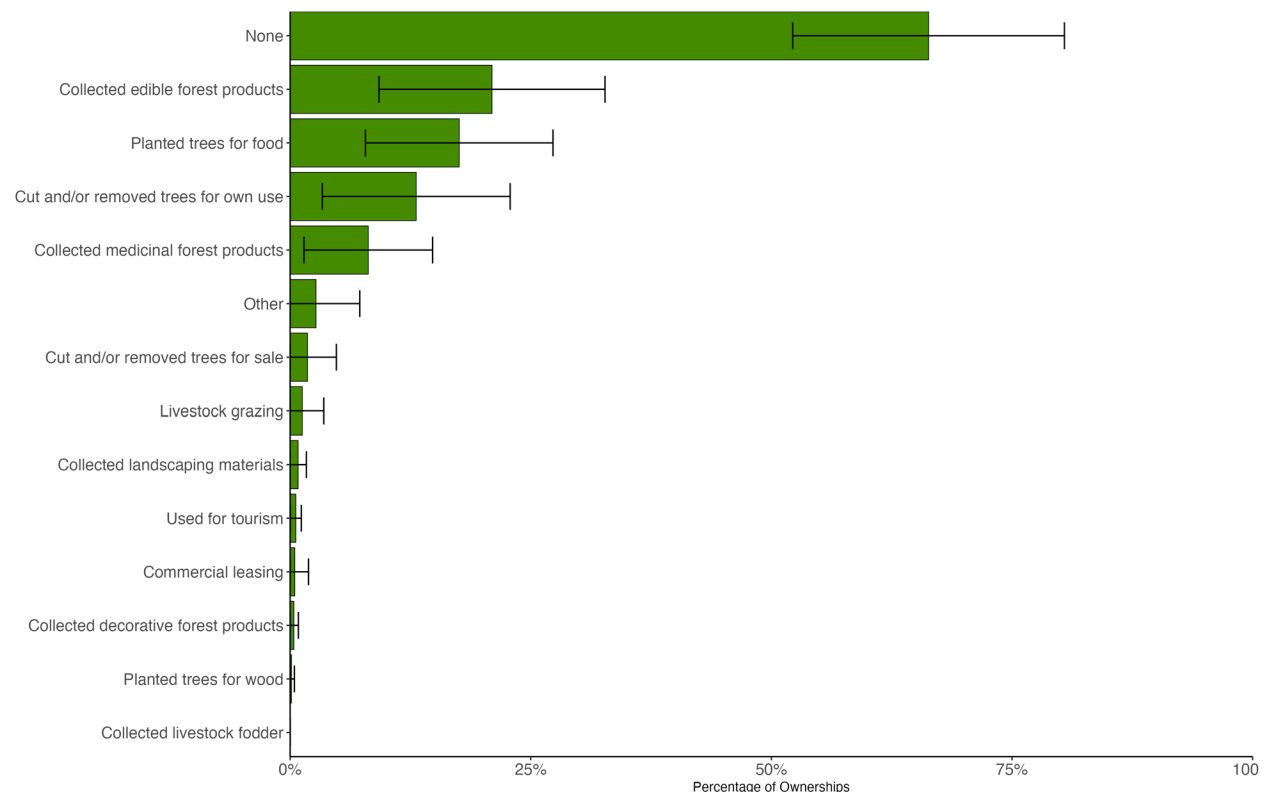


Figure 9—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by past (previous 5 years) activities, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021. Categories are not mutually exclusive. Error bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals (i.e., $1.96 \times$ standard error).

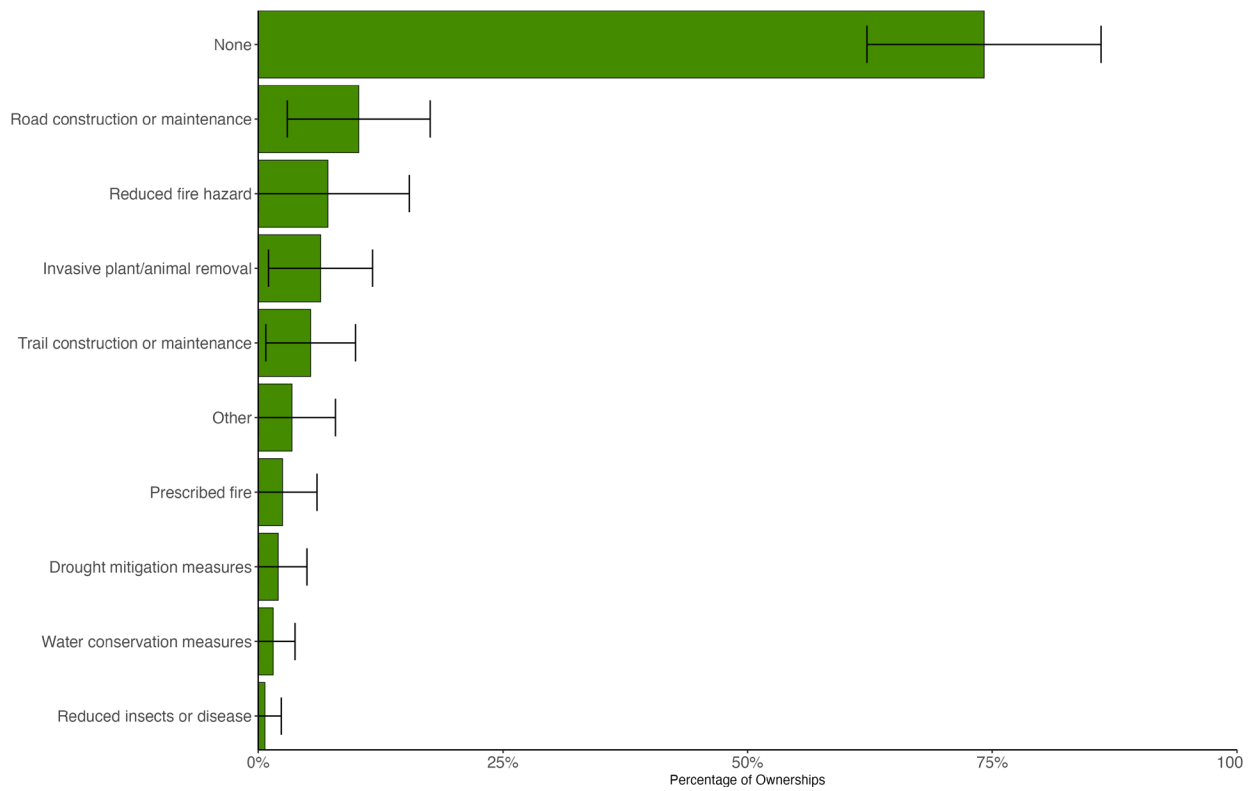


Figure 10—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by past (previous 5 years) management practices, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021. Categories are not mutually exclusive. Error bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals (i.e., $1.96 \times$ standard error).

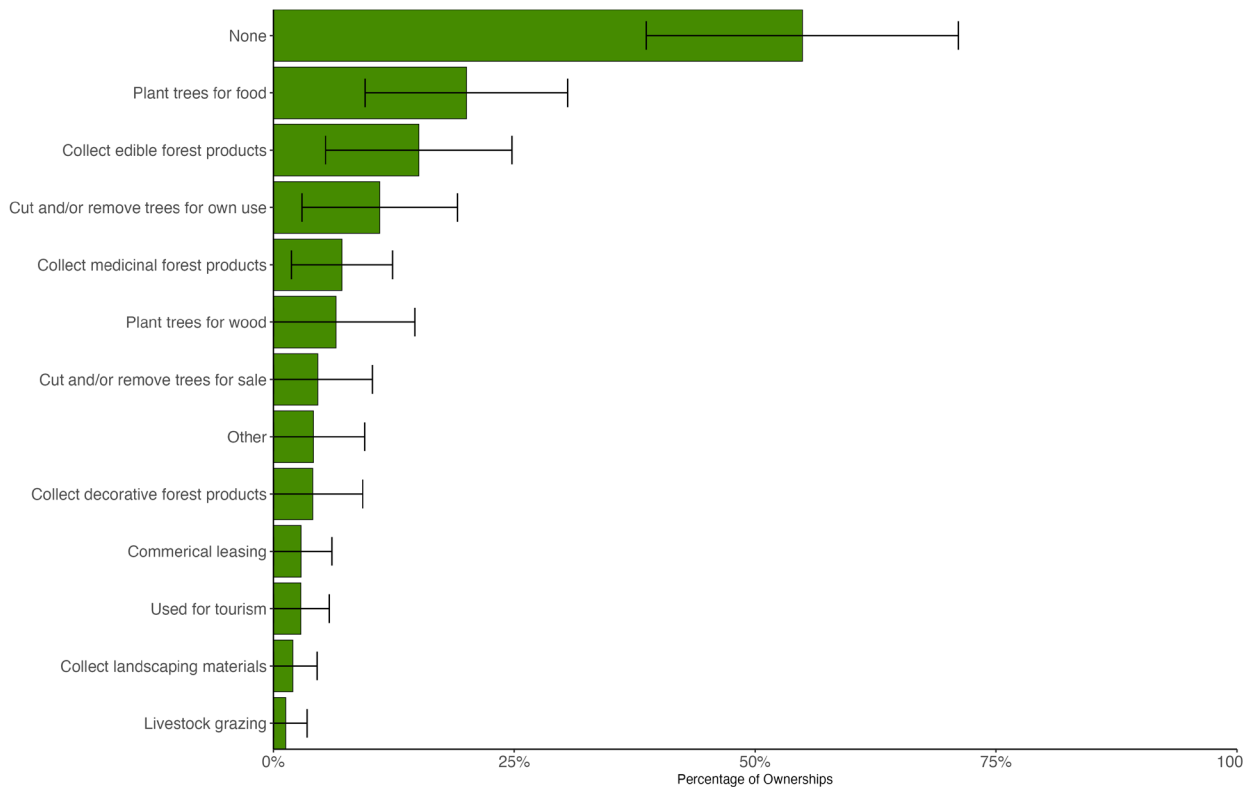


Figure 11—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by future (next 5 years) activities, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021. Categories are not mutually exclusive. Error bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals (i.e., $1.96 \times$ standard error).

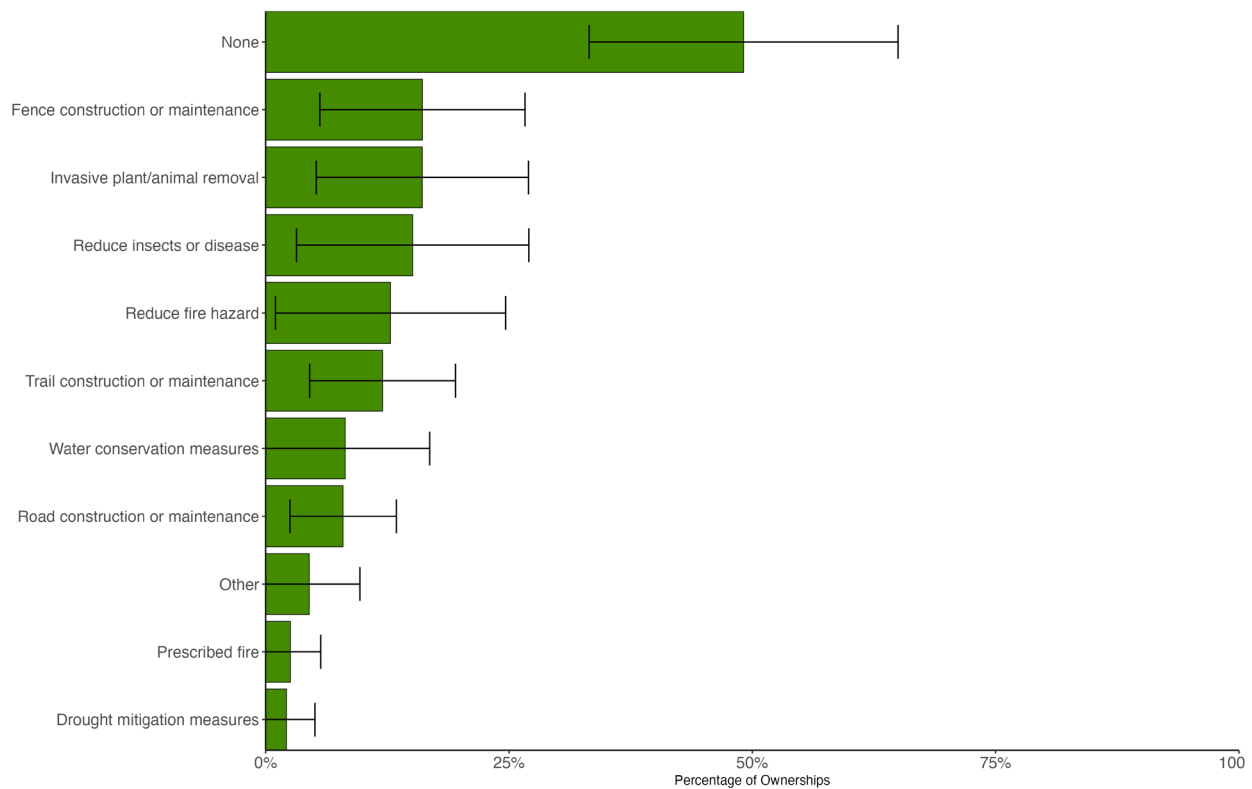


Figure 12—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by future (next 5 years) management practices, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021. Categories are not mutually exclusive. Error bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals (i.e., $1.96 \times$ standard error).

Management Plans and Assistance

Decisions about family forests in USVI are made primarily by the forest owner (78 percent) or by their spouse (29 percent; table A1.20 USVI-24-OWN). A written forest management plan may be developed to help the landowner meet their goals and make decisions about their forest land. However, few forest owners in the USVI are familiar with these plans (slightly to extremely familiar: 27 percent; table A1.21 USVI-23a-OWN) and very few have a written forest management plan in place for their forest land (3 percent; table A1.22 USVI-23b-OWN). Likewise, very few family forest owners are familiar with or participate in property tax or cost-share programs for their forest land (table A1.23 USVI-26a-OWN; table A1.24 USVI-27a-OWN).

Ninety five percent of ownerships, who own 85 percent of family forest acres, indicated that they have not received information or advice about the care, management, or protection of their forest land in the past 5 years (table A1.25 USVI-20a-OWN). When asked what information topics about their forest land would be helpful, 45 percent of owners indicated that information or advice on erosion control would be helpful, followed by invasive plants or animals (41 percent of family forest owners [FFOs]), and unwanted insects or diseases (40 percent of FFOs; fig. 13). When asked how they would like to receive information or advice on their forest land, 44 percent of owners would prefer to receive advice by written material, followed by talking to an expert (39 percent of FFOs), email (39 percent), and the internet (38 percent; table A1.26 USVI-22-OWN). Twenty one percent of

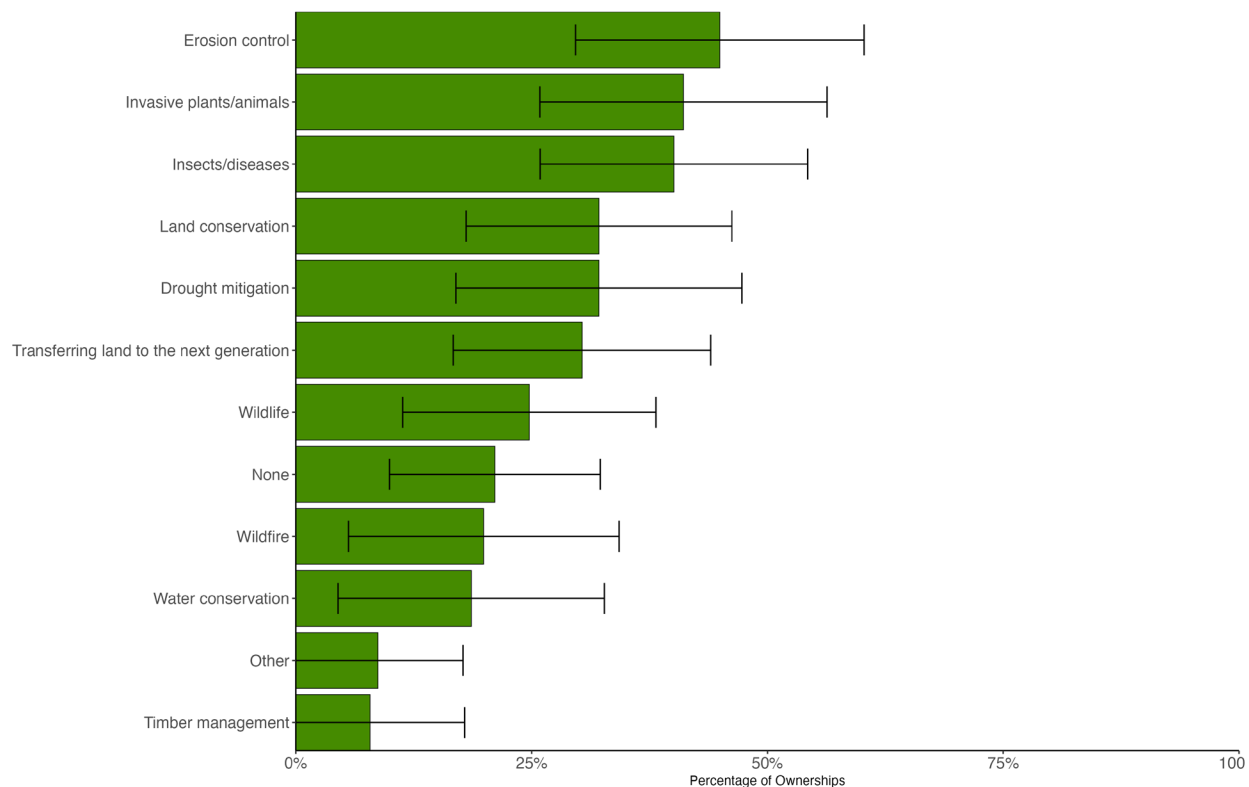


Figure 13—Estimated percentage of family forest ownerships by preferred topics of information and assistance, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021. Categories are not mutually exclusive. Error bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals (i.e., $1.96 \times$ standard error).

owners indicated that they do not want or need any of the listed advice related to their forest land (fig. 13).

Demographics

The primary decisionmakers of family forest ownerships are typically 55 years or older, with 24 percent being under 55 years old (table A1.27 USVI-33-OWN). An estimated 62 percent of family forest decisionmakers are male (table A1.28 USVI-34-OWN) and 70 percent have a bachelor's degree or advanced degree (table A1.29 USVI-35-OWN). An estimated 91 percent of ownerships who own 88 percent of family forest land do not derive any of their household income from their forest land (table A1.30 USVI-38-OWN; table A1.31 USVI-38-ACRE). Most primary decisionmakers are either White (68 percent) or Black/African American (36 percent; table A1.32 USVI-37-OWN) and 3 percent are of Hispanic or Latino

origin (table A1.33 USVI-36-OWN). These results differ from demographic data in the 2020 Census of Island Areas, which reports 71 percent of the population is Black or African American, 13 percent is White, and 18 percent are of Hispanic or Latino origin (USDC Census Bureau 2020). The Census of Agriculture data for the USVI also reports a higher count of full-owner agricultural producers who identified as Black/African American (USDA NASS 2025). These differences may be due to the small sample size of the NWOS of the USVI and potentially undetected nonresponse bias.

DISCUSSION

This report summarizes the results of the NWOS conducted in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 2021. Key findings of the NWOS USVI include: most owners in the USVI take a hands-off or passive approach to managing their forest land;

most people own their forest land for aesthetic, privacy, or family legacy purposes; while most ownerships indicate that they are unlikely to sell or transfer their land in the next 5 years, ownerships holding almost half of family forest acres in the USVI would sell their forest land if offered a reasonable price; and family forest ownerships in the USVI share some characteristics with those in the U.S. mainland, including some reasons for owning and concerns about their forests, but differ in many regards, most prominently in terms of size of forest holdings and harvesting activities.

A Hands-off Approach to Family Forest Management in the USVI

In general, there appears to be a mostly hands-off approach to managing family forest land in the USVI. Ownerships' primary motivations for owning their land are to enjoy beauty or scenery, land investment, to protect nature or biological diversity, to pass land on to children or other heirs, and privacy. The hands-off approach to much of the family owned forest land in the USVI may be likened to "passive ownership", which has been the subject of some study, mostly in Europe and some in the United States. Passive forest owners often are characterized as those who do not actively engage in forest management, wood production or timber sales and may not have specific or strong objectives for their forest land (Matilainen and Lähdesmäki 2023, Rickenbach et al. 2005, Weiss et al. 2019). Nevertheless, forest owners in the USVI likely have varying levels of involvement in managing their forest land.

While 74 percent of ownerships have not participated in the management activities listed (fig. 10), more ownerships reported undertaking activities for reducing risk from natural disturbances (table A1.14 USVI-15-OWN). This connects to one of their primary concerns: damage to land from hurricanes or tropical storms. Forty-five

percent of ownerships reported that advice on erosion control would be of interest (fig. 13). Increased rates of erosion in the USVI and Puerto Rico after hurricanes Maria and Irma was previously reported by forest owners and farmers (McGinley et al. 2022). Forest owners may be more inclined to undertake management activities, such as erosion control, once they receive advice or assistance.

It is also possible that forest owners on the USVI may believe that leaving nature "as is" is best for protecting it. Most holdings are small and owned for aesthetic purposes rather than production; thus, the hands-off management approach aligns with forest owners' primary reasons for owning their land.

The mostly passive or hands-off approach to forest management in the USVI also may reflect forest types and age classes and forest sector context. Growing stock and timber production are limited due to much of the forest being classified as young and in a recovery stage following agriculture abandonment, with forest area dominated by trees <5 inches diameter at breast height (Brandeis and Turner 2013, Marcano-Vega 2020). Additionally, the forests in the dry life zones of the USVI which make up approximately 71 percent of the forest land also have slower growth rates and smaller diameter trees (Brandeis and Turner 2013, McGinley et al. 2017). Harvest of wood products from forests is typically for artisanal purposes (McGinley et al. 2017). Non-wood forest products are also harvested for artisanal, horticultural, and medicinal uses (Palada et al. 2005, Taylor 2005). However, there is very limited primary or secondary processing capacity in the USVI and the forest products sector is typically characterized as an aging cottage industry. Therefore, lack of management may reflect limited forest and local capacity for commodity production in addition to forest owners' reasons for owning their land.

Family Forest Owners Value Aesthetics, Privacy, and Legacy

The top three most important reasons for owning forest land in the USVI are to enjoy beauty or scenery, privacy, and to pass land on to children or other heirs. Other common reasons are for land investment and to protect nature or biological diversity (fig. 5), which may further illuminate many owners mostly “hands-off” or passive management approach. Forest owners frequently rated firewood, timber, and nontimber products of little to no importance, which may reflect in part the limited opportunities for commodity production in the USVI due to much of the forest being in a recovery stage, slow growth rates, and harvesting for artisanal purposes, as previously documented by others (Brandeis and Turner 2013, Marcano-Vega 2020, McGinley et al. 2017, Palada et al. 2005, Taylor 2005). However, 21 percent of ownerships collected edible forest products and 18 percent planted trees for food in the past 5 years (fig. 9), which may indicate a focus on forests for sustenance and well-being beyond commercial production. Additionally, an estimated 91 percent of ownerships do not derive any of their household income from their forest land (table A1.30 USVI-38-OWN).

In the USVI, 65 percent of ownerships purchased their land (compared to 38 percent who inherited) (table A1.6 USVI-10a-OWN) and 55 percent have their primary residence at least 1 mile away from their forest land (table A1.5 USVI-6-OWN). Majumdar et al. (2009) found that those who inherited their land valued production of timber and nontimber forest products and owning their forest land as part of a farm or ranch as more important than non-inheritors. They also found that non-inheritors placed more importance on privacy, aesthetics, and protection of biodiversity

than inheritors. This aligns with ownership characteristics on the USVI—an estimated 65 percent of ownerships purchased their land compared to 38 percent who inherited (table A1.6 USVI-10a-OWN).

Variation in Family Forest Owners' Intentions to Retain or Sell Their Forest Land

While most ownerships do not plan to sell or transfer their land in the next 5 years, a higher proportion of family forest acres may still transfer to new owners; ownerships who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “I would sell my land if I was offered a reasonable price” own 49 percent of family forest acres (fig. 4; table A1.9 USVI-13b-ACRE). This also indicates that those who own larger forest land holdings may be more inclined to sell if offered a reasonable price. Granted, what owners interpret as “reasonable price(s)” will likely vary substantially and just because the land is sold does not mean it will be developed or parcelized. The economic aspect of selling their forest land is likely appealing to some when considering most family forest owners do not live directly on their land, do not consider timber products as an important reason for owning their land (due to the lack of an established timber products sector), and do not derive significant income from their land. Additionally, the forest land may be part of larger, nonforest parcels that the ownership holds. Nonforest land uses within their holdings, such as agriculture or residential, may dictate what occurs on the landscape.

Moreover, 57 percent of owners, who own over half of the family forest acres in USVI, disagree, strongly disagree, or neither agree nor disagree with the statement “I want my wooded land to stay wooded” (fig. 4; table A1.9 USVI-13b-ACRE). These responses may indicate uncertainty for future forest cover.

Similarities and Differences Between Family Forest Ownerships in the USVI and U.S. Mainland

There are core commonalities between family forest ownerships in the USVI and family forest owners in the United States. Most ownerships in both geographies own smaller holdings (between 1 to 9 acres; table A1.2 USVI-3-OWN) (Butler et al. 2021), the most common tenure is between 10 to 24 years (table A1.8 USVI-10c-OWN) (Butler et al. 2021), most acquired their forest land by purchasing (table A1.6 USVI-10a-OWN) (Butler et al. 2021), and most primary decisionmakers are 55 years or older (table A1.27 USVI-33-OWN) (Butler et al. 2021). As with the USVI, most ownerships in the United States are not at all familiar with (65 percent) and do not have (89 percent) written management plans (Butler et al. 2021), although these proportions are slightly lower than the estimated proportions for the USVI. Participation in property tax (9 percent) and cost-share programs (2 percent) is also low in the United States (Butler et al. 2021), which is similar to, but slightly higher than, the USVI (table A1.23 USVI-26a-OWN, table A1.24 USVI-27a-OWN).

Other similarities between family forest owners in the USVI and those in the United States include rating “to enjoy beauty or scenery” as a top reason for owning forest land (fig. 5) and reporting “high property taxes” and “keeping land intact for future generations” as great concerns (fig. 7) (Butler et al. 2021). Additionally, family forest owners have strong emotional attachments to their wooded land in both the USVI, where 75 percent agree or strongly agree with the statement “I have a strong emotional attachment to my wooded land” (fig. 4), and in the United States, where 78 percent agree or strongly agree (Butler et al. 2021).

However, there are also important differences. While an estimated 51 percent of family forest acres in the USVI are on holdings of less than 10 acres (table A1.3 USVI-3-ACRE), 7 percent of family forest land in the United States is on forest holdings of less than 10 acres (Butler et al. 2021). This is likely due in part to differences in land bases (mainland states compared to smaller islands) and the opportunity for large landholdings in the continental United States. In the USVI, an estimated 55 percent of ownerships’ primary residence is at least 1 mile away from their forest land (table A1.5 USVI-6-OWN). This contrasts with the United States, where an estimated 29 percent of ownerships are in this category (Butler et al. 2021).

Harvesting activities differ as well. Two percent of ownerships have cut and/or removed trees for sale and 13 percent have cut and/or removed trees for personal use in the USVI in the past 5 years (table A1.34 USVI-28-Own), compared to 21 percent of ownerships in the United States who cut or removed trees for sale and 42 percent who did so for personal use (Butler et al. 2021). These differences may reflect in part the limited opportunities for timber and other wood products production in the USVI compared to the United States, as mentioned previously.

Some ownerships’ future plans also differ between the USVI and the United States, which suggest varying future land cover scenarios between the geographies. In the United States, 86 percent of ownerships agree or strongly agree that they want their forest land to stay forest (Butler et al. 2021) while less than half of ownerships in the USVI agree or strongly agree with this statement (fig. 4). Additionally, a slightly higher proportion in the USVI (32 percent) agree or strongly agree that they would sell their forest land if offered a reasonable price (fig. 4) compared to 24

percent of ownerships who agree or strongly agree with this statement in the United States (Butler et al. 2021).

Finally, some of the demographics of family forest owners are different. An estimated 97 percent of primary decisionmakers in the United States identified themselves as White (Butler et al. 2021) while 68 percent of primary decisionmakers in the USVI identified themselves as White, followed by 36 percent who identified themselves as Black (table A1.32 USVI-37-OWN). In the USVI, 70 percent of primary decisionmakers have a bachelor's or advanced degree (table A1.29 USVI-35-OWN) while 53 percent in the United States have at least a bachelor's degree (Butler et al. 2021).

While there are many similarities between family forest owners in the USVI and the United States, there are enough differences that suggest programs and policies geared toward family forest ownership in the mainland United States may not effectively transfer to the USVI and may need adjusting to fit local contexts and characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

This report presents the results of the first NWOS of the USVI. When we interpret these results, it is important to understand the limitations of the data and data collection. First, the sample size was small. Of the 938 individuals we contacted, we received 70 complete surveys for a cooperation rate of just 12.5 percent, which is lower than the 39.7 percent cooperation rate from the United States (Butler et al. 2021). The small sample size contributes to the wide confidence

intervals in our estimations. Additionally, although we tested for nonresponse bias by comparing early to late respondents, there is still a potential for undetected nonresponse bias as we only tested 13 variables.

Despite these limitations, the results provide us with important insights into family forest owners' attitudes, activities, and intentions in the USVI that were not previously studied as part of the NWOS. These findings, which encompass the social aspects of family owned forests, can provide important context to the biophysical results of the NFI, and vice versa, to paint a comprehensive picture of forest ownership and implications for future land cover in the USVI. The results also help to fill a major gap in the social aspects of forest data for the USVI and set a baseline against which future NWOS results can be compared. The key findings of this report can assist natural resource professionals and policymakers with designing programs that are appropriate for forest owners in the USVI. These takeaways include: 1) most ownerships take a hands-off approach to managing their forest land; 2) most people own their forest land for aesthetic, privacy, or family legacy purposes; 3) while most ownerships indicate that they are unlikely to sell or transfer their land in the next 5 years, ownerships who hold almost half of family forest acres indicate their willingness to sell their forest land if offered a reasonable price; and 4) family forest ownerships in the USVI are different from those in the United States in some key ways, most prominently in terms of size of forest holdings and harvesting activities.

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APPENDIX 1—TABLES

Table A1.1 USVI-1—Sample size and cooperation rate for family forest ownerships for the USDA Forest Service, National Woodland Owner Survey, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Sample size (n)	No/insufficient contact information (n)	Nonresponses (n)	Partial responses (n)	Complete responses (n)	Cooperation rate (percent) ¹
938	377	472	19	70	12.5

¹ Cooperation Rate = Complete Responses/(Complete Responses + Partial Responses + Nonresponses).

Table A1.2 USVI-3-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by size of forest holdings, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Size of forest holdings (acres)	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
1–9	4,371	435	96	1	50
10–19	77	25	2	<1	5
20–49	54	15	1	<1	4
50–99	45	9	<1	<1	6
100–199	25	5	<1	<1	4
200–499	3	1	<1	<1	1
500–999	–	–	–	–	0
1,000–4,999	–	–	–	–	0
5,000+	–	–	–	–	0

SE = standard error; – = not applicable.
The average (mean) value per ownership is 5 (SE = <1); median is 2.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.3 USVI-3-ACRE—Estimated family forest ownership acreage by size of forest holdings, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Size of forest holdings (acres)	Acres	SE	Percentage	SE	n
1–9	10,850	900	51	4	50
10–19	978	306	5	1	5
20–49	1,836	466	9	2	4
50–99	2,835	576	13	3	6
100–199	4,201	809	20	4	4
200–499	620	245	3	1	1
500–999	–	–	–	–	0
1,000–4,999	–	–	–	–	0
5,000+	–	–	–	–	0

SE = standard error; – = not applicable.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.4 USVI-5a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by number of owners, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Number of owners	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
1	1,773	318	39	8	19
2	2,029	310	44	7	30
3–5	714	185	16	5	16
6–9	20	6	<1	<1	1
10+	39	14	<1	<1	4

SE = standard error.

The average (mean) value per ownership is 2 (SE = <1); median is 2.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.5 USVI-6-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by whether their primary residence is within 1 mile of their forest land, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Primary residence within 1 mile	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Yes	2,065	305	45	8	35
No	2,510	361	55	8	35

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.6 USVI-10a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by acquisition type, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Acquisition type ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Purchased	2,959	358	65	7	44
Inherited	1,737	264	38	7	29
Gift	269	102	6	3	5
Other	60	33	1	1	1

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.7 USVI-10b-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by acquisition source, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Acquisition source ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Parents	1,766	244	39	6	31
Spouse	298	145	7	4	3
Other family	374	121	8	4	7
Other individual	1,997	287	44	7	30
Business	163	54	4	2	5
Government	—	—	—	—	0
Other	519	204	11	6	4

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.

SE = standard error; — = not applicable.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.8 USVI-10c-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by length of ownership, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Length of ownership (years)	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
<10	1,130	245	25	7	15
10–24	2,156	407	47	9	28
25–49	1,098	198	24	6	20
50+	191	79	4	2	7

SE = standard error.

The average (mean) value per ownership is 21 (SE = 2); median is 20.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.9 USVI-13b-ACRE—Estimated family forest ownership acreage by landowner attitudes about selling land, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Sell land	Acres	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Strongly agree	3,567	696	17	3	12
Agree	6,924	897	32	4	17
Neither agree nor disagree	2,852	569	13	3	9
Disagree	2,070	426	10	2	10
Strongly disagree	5,908	828	28	4	22

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.10 USVI-11-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by likelihood of land sale or transfer in the next 5 years, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Likelihood of transfer in next 5 years	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Extremely likely	468	172	10	5	7
Likely	474	129	10	4	11
Undecided	710	224	16	6	9
Unlikely	991	244	22	7	15
Extremely unlikely	1,933	307	42	8	28

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.11 USVI-12-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by likely recipient of transferred land in the next 5 years, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Transfer recipient ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Children	2,778	356	61	8	40
Other family members	400	165	9	5	8
Other individuals	1,083	237	24	6	21
A business	84	42	2	1	4
A government agency	15	4	<1	<1	2
Other	130	65	3	2	4
Don't know	1,078	239	24	7	13

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.
SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.12 USVI-14a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by damage to wooded land from hurricanes and tropical storms, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Damage from storms	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Extremely damaged	403	149	9	4	7
Moderately damaged	1,024	211	22	6	17
Somewhat damaged	1,189	247	26	7	19
Slightly damaged	761	203	17	6	12
Not at all damaged	926	249	20	7	12
Not applicable	272	133	6	4	3

SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.13 USVI-14a-ACRE—Estimated family forest ownership acreage by damage to wooded land from hurricanes and tropical storms, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Damage from storms	Acres	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Extremely damaged	3,974	749	19	3	7
Moderately damaged	4,770	733	22	3	17
Somewhat damaged	4,616	682	22	3	19
Slightly damaged	3,191	573	15	3	12
Not at all damaged	4,084	688	19	3	12
Not applicable	687	301	3	1	3

SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.14 USVI-15-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by past (previous 5 years) activities to reduce risk from natural disturbances, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Activity ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Brush or debris removal	1,820	283	40	7	29
Removal of invasive plants	646	178	14	5	11
Removal of invasive animals	194	95	4	3	5
Erosion control practices	784	203	17	6	14
Flood control practice	255	87	6	3	6
Tree trimming or pruning	1,452	275	32	7	25
Other	226	145	5	4	1

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.
SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.15 USVI-17a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by who has recreated on forest land in the previous 5 years, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

People recreating ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Owner and/or spouse	2,391	356	52	8	33
Children	956	155	21	5	22
Other family	742	177	16	5	14
Friends	517	121	11	4	14
Neighbors	366	86	8	3	13
General public (free)	16	8	<1	<1	1
General public (for fee)	11	4	<1	<1	1
Other	113	78	2	2	2
Nobody	2,010	308	44	8	32

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.
SE = standard error
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.16 USVI-18a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by whether certain activities have been restricted by posting, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Land is posted	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Yes	824	154	18	5	23
No	3,751	425	82	5	47

SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.17 USVI-19-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by whether activities have been restricting through fencing, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Land is fenced	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Yes	2,835	365	62	7	49
No	1,740	263	38	7	21

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.18 USVI-19-ACRE—Estimated family forest ownership acreage by whether activities have been restricting through fencing, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Land is fenced	Acres	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Yes	13,869	826	65	4	49
No	7,452	820	35	4	21

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.19 USVI-29-ACRE—Estimated family forest ownership acreage by past (previous 5 years) management practices, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Management practice ¹	Acres	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Reduced fire hazard	1,036	369	5	2	4
Prescribed fire	486	249	2	1	3
Road construction or maintenance	3,068	630	14	3	11
Trail construction or maintenance	4,050	641	19	3	10
Invasive plant/animal removal	1,935	448	9	2	9
Reduced insects or disease	156	141	<1	<1	1
Drought mitigation measures	618	257	3	1	2
Water conservation measures	1,515	375	7	2	3
Other	1,903	439	9	2	4
None	13,634	898	64	4	43

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.20 USVI-24-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by forest management decisionmaker, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Decisionmaker ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Owner	3,559	413	78	6	55
Spouse	1,335	262	29	7	16
Children	282	102	6	3	6
Parent	82	22	2	<1	3
Other family	29	8	<1	<1	2
Business partner	36	30	<1	<1	3
Forester	61	52	1	2	1
Other	44	16	<1	<1	4

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.
SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.21 USVI-23a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by familiarity with written management plan, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Familiarity with written management plans	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Extremely familiar	251	130	5	4	3
Moderately familiar	85	26	2	<1	6
Somewhat familiar	213	89	5	3	4
Slightly familiar	695	156	15	4	11
Not at all familiar	3,332	375	73	6	46

SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.22 USVI-23b-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by written management plan status, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Has a written management plan	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Yes	61	15	1	<1	6
No	4,423	434	97	2	62
Don't know	90	48	2	2	2

SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.23 USVI-26a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by familiarity with property tax programs, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Familiarity	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Extremely familiar	36	24	<1	<1	3
Moderately familiar	273	129	6	4	4
Somewhat familiar	80	53	2	2	4
Slightly familiar	448	139	10	4	5
Not at all familiar	3,738	381	82	6	54

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.24 USVI-27a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by familiarity with cost-share programs, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Familiarity	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Extremely familiar	259	130	6	4	2
Moderately familiar	9	5	<1	<1	1
Somewhat familiar	3	1	<1	<1	1
Slightly familiar	493	200	11	5	3
Not at all familiar	3,810	352	83	6	63

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.25 USVI-20a-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by whether advice was received in the previous 5 years, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Advice received	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Yes	230	75	5	2	9
No	4,345	419	95	2	61

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.26 USVI-22-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by preferred methods of receiving information and assistance, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Preferred assistance method ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Talk to neighbor	132	62	3	2	2
Talk to expert	1,793	318	39	8	30
Site visit	421	165	9	5	10
Written material	2,003	307	44	8	35
Internet	1,760	277	38	8	25
Email	1,771	271	39	7	29
Conference/workshop	962	225	21	6	17
Other	9	5	<1	<1	1
Don't want/need information	964	209	21	6	12

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.27 USVI-33-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by age of the primary decisionmaker, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Owner age (years)	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
<45	410	202	9	6	4
45–54	679	216	15	6	8
55–64	892	206	20	6	15
65–74	1,667	327	36	8	28
75+	926	208	20	6	15

SE = standard error.

The average (mean) value per ownership is 63 (SE = 2); median is 66.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.28 USVI-34-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by gender of the primary decisionmaker, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Owner gender	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Male	2,568	374	56	9	43
Female	2,007	354	44	9	27

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.29 USVI-35-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by educational level of the primary decisionmaker, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Owner education	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Less than 12th grade	140	65	3	2	3
High school/GED	265	120	6	3	6
Some college	575	245	13	7	11
Associate degree	399	169	9	5	5
Bachelor's degree	1,780	305	39	8	23
Advanced degree	1,415	255	31	7	22

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.30 USVI-38-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by percentage of household income derived from woodland, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Income	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
0	4,157	411	91	3	61
1–4	46	36	1	1	2
5–19	321	109	7	3	5
20–49	47	31	1	<1	1
50+	4	3	<1	<1	1

SE = standard error.

The average (mean) value per ownership is 1 (SE = <1); median is <1.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.31 USVI-38-ACRE—Estimated family forest ownership acreage by percentage of household income derived from woodland, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Income	Acres	SE	Percentage	SE	n
0	18,837	701	88	2	61
1–4	639	272	3	1	2
5–19	912	282	4	1	5
20–49	187	124	<1	<1	1
50+	745	449	3	2	1

SE = standard error.

Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.32 USVI-37-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by race of the primary decisionmaker, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Owner race ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
American Indian or Alaska Native	156	82	3	3	2
Asian	64	29	1	<1	3
Black/African American	1,642	341	36	8	28
Native Hawaiian/Other Islander	—	—	—	—	0
White	3,099	353	68	8	44

¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.
SE = standard error; — = not applicable.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table A1.33 USVI-36-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by ethnicity of the primary decisionmaker, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Hispanic or Latino origin	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Yes	118	69	3	2	2
No	4,457	431	97	2	68

SE = standard error.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

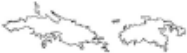
Table A1.34 USVI-28-OWN—Estimated number of family forest ownerships by past (previous 5 years) activities, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2021, 1+ acres

Activity ¹	Ownerships	SE	Percentage	SE	n
Cut and/or removed trees for sale	83	50	2	2	2
Cut and/or removed trees for own use	599	182	13	5	9
Planted trees for food	804	177	18	5	15
Planted trees for wood	6	4	<1	<1	1
Livestock grazing	58	38	1	1	5
Commercial leasing	22	24	<1	<1	1
Used for tourism	27	9	<1	<1	2
Collected edible forest products	960	217	21	6	17
Collected medicinal forest products	371	121	8	3	7
Collected decorative forest products	18	7	<1	<1	2
Collected landscaping materials	38	13	<1	<1	3
Collected livestock fodder	—	—	—	—	0
Other	123	79	3	2	2
None	3,034	379	66	7	39

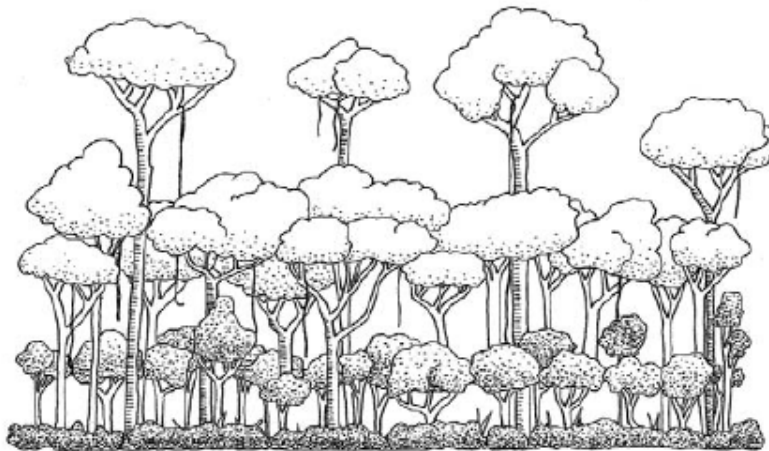
¹ Categories are not mutually exclusive.
SE = standard error; — = not applicable.
Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

APPENDIX 2—SURVEY INSTRUMENT

This is a reproduction of the original survey instrument with minor changes for layout and accessibility purposes.



National Woodland Owner Survey of the Virgin Islands



USDA Forest Service, National Woodland Owner Survey



160 Holdsworth Way, Amherst MA 01003

Phone (toll-free): (855) 233-3372

Email: nwos@fs.fed.us

Internet: www.fia.fs.fed.us/nwos



OMB No. 0596-0078

Approval Expires 10/31/2021

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0596-0078. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 25 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

Instructions

- ✓ Please provide answers for all of the wooded land that you own in the U.S. Virgin Islands. If you are part of more than one group that owns wooded land, please respond for the group that is listed on the outside of the envelope.
- ✓ The owner who makes most of the decisions about your wooded land in U.S. Virgin Islands should answer this survey.
- ✓ If this survey is received by a company or other organization, please have a person knowledgeable about the organization's wooded land in U.S. Virgin Islands answer this survey. If the company listed on the envelope is a subsidiary of a larger company, please respond for the larger, parent company.

General Questions About Your Land

If you own any wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands, please complete this survey.

1. How many total acres of land do you currently own in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

_____ Acres of land in the U.S. Virgin Islands

2. There are many types of lands in the U.S. Virgin Islands. About what percentage of your land is described by each of the following categories?

Forest or wooded land - areas with trees that are not mowed, including unmanaged farmland where trees have established naturally or by planting and what is locally referred to as bush.

Wooded land: _____ %

or: _____ Acres

If you do not own any wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands, please return this survey in the postage paid envelope provided and write on the cover "No Wooded Land".

Developed or built-up land - residential, commercial, golf courses, or paved areas.

Developed land: _____ % or _____ Acres

Crop land - areas where crops are produced or have been produced in the past and are not currently covered by bush or trees. Cropland includes fruit and nut tree orchards.

Pasture - land used for livestock or livestock forage, or covered in grasses.

Pasture: _____ % or _____ Acres

Beach - sandy or rocky areas above the high water mark.

Beach: _____ % or _____ Acres

Other: _____ % or _____ Acres

(please specify): _____

General Questions About Your Ownership

3. Which category below best describes your ownership?

Check only one.

- ☐ Individual
- ☐ Joint, with husband or wife
- ☐ Joint, such as with other family members or friends
- ☐ Family partnership or family LLC or LLP
- ☐ Family trust or estate
- ☐ Corporation or business
- ☐ Other (please specify):

4. How many people are a part of this ownership, including you?

_____ Owners

5. Do you currently own more than one separate, unconnected property with wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Is your home (primary residence) on or within a mile of any of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

7. Do you own a vacation home or secondary residence on or within a mile of any of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

8. Do you have a stream or gut on or abutting your property that has water all or part of the year?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The History of Your Wooded Land

9. Have you ever sold or given away any of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. a. How did you get your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

Check all that apply

- ☐ Purchased
- ☐ Inherited
- ☐ Received as gift
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

b. From whom did you get your wooded land?

Check all that apply

- ☐ My parent(s) and/or my spouse's parent(s)
- ☐ My husband or wife
- ☐ Another family member
- ☐ Other individual(s)
- ☐ A business
- ☐ A government agency
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

c. In what year did you first take ownership of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands? _____ Year

The Future of Your Wooded Land

11. How likely is it that you will sell or give away any of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands in the next 5 years?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Extremely
likely | Likely | Undecided | Unlikely | Extremely
unlikely |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

12. If you were to sell or give away your wooded land, who would likely receive it? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ My children
- ☐ Another family member(s)
- ☐ Other individual(s)
- ☐ A business
- ☐ A government agency
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ Don't know

13. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Check one box for each item.

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
I want my wooded land to stay wooded	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would sell my land if I was offered a reasonable price	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know my wooded land very well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I want to know more about my wooded land	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a strong emotional attachment to my wooded land	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe my wooded land provides benefits to my community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

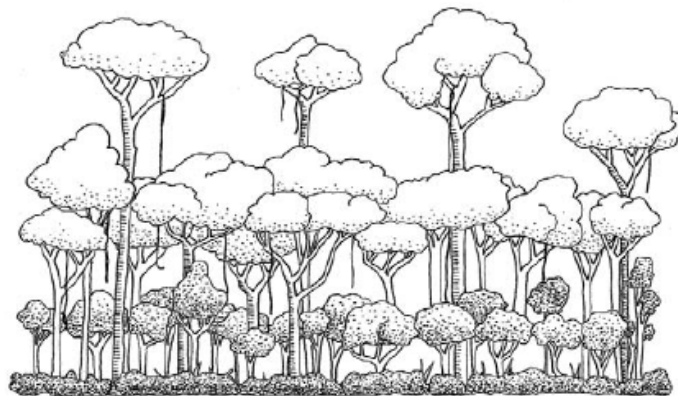
Natural Disturbances

14. To what extent, if any, has your wooded land been damaged by the following natural disturbances in the **past 5 years**?

	<i>Extremely damaged</i>	<i>Moderately damaged</i>	<i>Somewhat damaged</i>	<i>Slightly damaged</i>	<i>Not at all damaged</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Hurricanes and/or tropical storms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drought	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fire	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pests and/or plant disease	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Invasive plants and/or animals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Floods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (Please specify): _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. Please indicate which of the following activities, if any, you've done in the **past 5 years** for the primary purpose of reducing risk of damage from natural disturbance to the wooded portion of your land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No Brush/debris removal
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Invasive plant(s) removal
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Invasive animal(s) removal
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Erosion control practices
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Flood control practices
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Tree trimming or pruning
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Other (please specify)
-



Concerns

16. Please indicate your level of concern about each of the following topics for your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

	Great concern	Concern	Moderate concern	Of little concern	No concern	Not applicable
Air pollution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Climate change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Damage from animals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Damage from hurricanes or tropical storms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Development of nearby lands	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drought or lack of water	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Damage or noise from off-road vehicles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Government regulation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
High property taxes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Invasive plants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Keeping land intact for future generations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Misuse of wooded land, such as vandalism or dumping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Neighbors' property use or decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trespassing or poaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unwanted insects or diseases	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Water pollution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wildfire	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (Please specify): _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Recreation on Your Wooded Land

17. a. Who, with your permission, has hunted, hiked, or otherwise recreated on your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands in the **past 5 years**?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Me and/or my husband or wife
- ☐ My children
- ☐ Other family members
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Neighbors
- ☐ The general public for free
- ☐ The general public for a fee
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ Nobody *If nobody, skip to question 18.*

- b. How did you/they recreate?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Hunting
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Hiking/walking
- ☐ Nature viewing
- ☐ Bicycling
- ☐ Camping
- ☐ Horseback riding
- ☐ Cultural or spiritual activities
- ☐ Off-road vehicles
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

18. a. Is any of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands posted to restrict access and/or use by the general public?

☐ Yes ☐ No *If no, skip to question 20.*

- b. If yes, what is restricted?

Check all that apply

- ☐ Trespassing
- ☐ Hunting
- ☐ Motorized vehicles
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

19. Is any of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands fenced to restrict access and/or use by the general public?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Sources of Information and Assistance

20. a. Have you talked with anyone or received information/advice about the care, management, or protection of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands in the **past 5 years**?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please answer b, c, and d. If no, skip to question 21.

b. What was it about?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Unwanted insects or plant diseases
- ☐ Wildlife or wildlife habitat
- ☐ Timber production
- ☐ Land conservation
- ☐ Fire safety or fire risk reduction
- ☐ Invasive plants and/or animals
- ☐ Drought mitigation
- ☐ Erosion control
- ☐ How to transfer land to the next generation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

c. How did it happen?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Talked to someone
- ☐ Someone visited my land
- ☐ Received a brochure or other written material
- ☐ From the Internet
- ☐ Email/E-newsletter
- ☐ Attended a conference or workshop
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

20. d. Who was involved?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ State or local government employee
- ☐ Extension forester or other university employee
- ☐ Federal government employee
- ☐ Private consultant
- ☐ Another landowner
- ☐ Family member or friend
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

21. Which of the following information/advice topics about your wooded land would be helpful to you?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Unwanted insects or diseases
- ☐ Wildlife or wildlife habitat
- ☐ Timber production
- ☐ Land conservation
- ☐ Fire safety or fire risk reduction
- ☐ Invasive plants and/or animals
- ☐ Drought mitigation
- ☐ Water conservation
- ☐ Erosion control
- ☐ How to transfer land to the next generation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ None of the above

22. How would you **prefer** to get information or advice related to your wooded land?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Talk to a neighbor
- ☐ Talk to an expert
- ☐ Have someone visit my land
- ☐ Written materials, such as brochures or other publications
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Email/E-newsletter
- ☐ Conference or workshop
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ I don't want/need information or advice

Uses of Your Wooded Land

23. A management or stewardship plan may be written in order to help the landowner meet their goals for their wooded land.

a. How familiar are you with these types of plans?

Extremely familiar	Moderately familiar	Somewhat familiar	Slightly familiar	Not at all familiar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Do you have a written management or stewardship plan for any of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

If yes, please answer c, d, and e. If no or don't know, skip to question 24.

c. Who wrote it?

Check one.

- ☐ I did
- ☐ Private consultant forester
- ☐ Forest industry forester
- ☐ State or local government forester
- ☐ Federal Government forester
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

d. How was it funded?

- ☐ I paid for it
- ☐ Forest Stewardship Program
- ☐ NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

e. Have you taken actions to implement it?

☐ Yes ☐ No

24. Who makes the management decisions, such as whether or not to cut or harvest trees, for your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Me
- ☐ My husband or wife
- ☐ My children
- ☐ My parents
- ☐ Another family member
- ☐ My business partner
- ☐ My land manager or forester
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

25. a. Have you ever leased your wooded land in U.S. Virgin Islands?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please answer b. If no, skip to question 26.

b. What leasing activities did they use it for?

Check all that apply.

☐ Hunting

☐ Recreation (other than hunting)

☐ To graze/pasture livestock

☐ Other (please specify): _____

26. Some state and local governments have programs that defer, reduce, or eliminate property taxes for wooded land, such as the Forest Stewardship Program.

a. How familiar are you with these programs?

Extremely
familiar

☐

Moderately
familiar

☐

Somewhat
familiar

☐

Slightly
familiar

☐

Not at all
familiar

☐

b. Is any of your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands currently enrolled in one of these programs or something similar?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

27. Cost-share programs provide landowners with money to help them establish or otherwise manage their wooded land. Examples include the Conservation Reserve Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

a. How familiar are you with cost-share programs?

Extremely
familiar

☐

Moderately
familiar

☐

Somewhat
familiar

☐

Slightly
familiar

☐

Not at all
familiar

☐

b. In the past 5 years, have you used a cost-share program to help you establish or manage your wooded land in U.S. Virgin Islands?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

28. Which of the following activities have occurred on your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands **in the past 5 years?**

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Cut and/or removed trees for sale
- ☐ Cut and/or removed trees for own use
- ☐ Planted trees for food production
- ☐ Planted trees for wood production
- ☐ Livestock grazing
- ☐ Leased for commercial use
- ☐ Used for tourism (including horseback riding, hiking, tours, etc.)
- ☐ Collected edible forest products, such as tamarind or qenip
- ☐ Collected medicinal forest products, such as Bay rum or Jamaican caper
- ☐ Collected forest products for decoration, such as ironwood or teyare/silverthatch palm
- ☐ Collected nontimber forest products for landscaping, such as transplants
- ☐ Cut tree and/or shrub branches for livestock feed (fodder)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ None of the above

29. Which of the following management practices have occurred on your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands **in the past 5 years?**

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Reduced fire hazard
- ☐ Controlled burn/prescribed fire
- ☐ Road construction or maintenance
- ☐ Trail construction or maintenance
- ☐ Eliminated or reduced invasive plants and/or animals
- ☐ Eliminated or reduced unwanted insects or diseases
- ☐ Drought mitigation measures
- ☐ Water conservation measures
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ None of the above

30. Which of the following activities will likely occur on your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands **in the next 5 years?**

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Cut and/or remove trees for sale
- ☐ Cut and/or remove trees for own use
- ☐ Plant trees for food production
- ☐ Plant trees for wood production
- ☐ Livestock grazing
- ☐ Lease for commercial use
- ☐ Use for tourism (including horseback riding, hiking, tours, etc.)
- ☐ Collect edible forest products, such as tamarind or qenip
- ☐ Collect medicinal forest products, such as Bay rum or Jamaican caper
- ☐ Collect forest products for decoration, such as ironwood or teyare/silverthatch palm
- ☐ Collect nontimber forest products for landscaping, such as transplants
- ☐ Cut tree and/or shrub branches for livestock feed (fodder)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ None of the above

31. Which of the following management practices will likely occur on your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands **in the next 5 years?**

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Reduce fire hazard
- ☐ Control burn/prescribed fire
- ☐ Road construction or maintenance
- ☐ Trail construction or maintenance
- ☐ Fence construction or maintenance
- ☐ Eliminate or reduce unwanted insects or diseases
- ☐ Eliminate or reduce invasive plants and/or animals
- ☐ Drought mitigation measures
- ☐ Water conservation measures
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ None of the above

Your Reasons for Owning Wooded Land

32. How important are the following as reasons for why you currently own your wooded land in the U.S. Virgin Islands?

	Very important	Important	Moderate important	Of little importance	Not important	Not applicable
To enjoy beauty or scenery	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To protect nature or biological diversity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To protect water resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To protect or improve wildlife habitat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For land investment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For privacy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To raise my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To pass land on to my children or other heirs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For firewood or fuelwood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For timber products, such as logs or sawn boards	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For nontimber forest products, such as medicinal plants or herbs or artisanal wood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For hunting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To graze and/or shade animals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For recreation, other than hunting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For cultural or spiritual reasons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (Please specify): _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

General Questions About You

This section asks questions about you to help us understand private forest owners more broadly. As with the rest of the survey, your responses are anonymous and will not be used to identify you. If you are responding on behalf of a company or other organization, please skip this section.

33. What is your age?

_____ Years

34. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

35. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

☐ Less than 12th grade

☐ High school/GED

☐ Some college

☐ Associate degree

☐ Bachelor's degree

☐ Advanced degree

36. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?

☐ Yes ☐ No

37. What is your race?

Select one or more.

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian

☐ Black or African-American

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ White

38. On average, what percentage of your household's annual income comes from the wooded land that you own?

_____ Percent

If there are any additional comments or concerns that you would like to share, please write them below.

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Please return the survey in the
postage-paid envelope provided.

If you would like a copy of the results of this survey, print
your name and address on the back of the return envelope.

Comments or questions?

Please contact us:

USDA Forest Service
National Woodland Owner Survey
160 Holdsworth Way
Amherst, MA 01003
Toll-Free Telephone: (855) 233-3372
Email: nwos@fs.fed.us
Internet: www.fia.fs.fed.us/nwos



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This report summarizes the results of the National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) for the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). The charge of the NWOS includes gathering and reporting information on private forest ownerships from across all U.S. States, protectorates, and territories. The survey was conducted in the USVI for the first time in 2021. This report focuses on families, individuals, trusts, estates, and family partnerships, collectively referred to as family forest ownerships, that own at least 1 acre of forest land in the USVI. The summary results include information about their forest land, their reasons for owning it, what they have done with it in the past and plan to do with it in the future, their concerns, and information about the landowners themselves. Key results include: 1) most owners in the USVI take a hands-off or passive approach to managing their forest land, 2) most people own their forest land for aesthetic, privacy, or family legacy purposes, 3) while most ownerships indicate that they are unlikely to sell or transfer their land in the next 5 years, ownerships holding almost half of family forest acres in the USVI would sell their forest land if offered a reasonable price, and 4) family forest ownerships in the USVI share some characteristics with those in the United States mainland, including some reasons for owning and concerns about their forests, but differ in many regards, most prominently in terms of size of forest holdings and harvesting activities.

KEYWORDS: Family forest owners, National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS), U.S. Virgin Islands, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA), forestry, private forest owners.



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