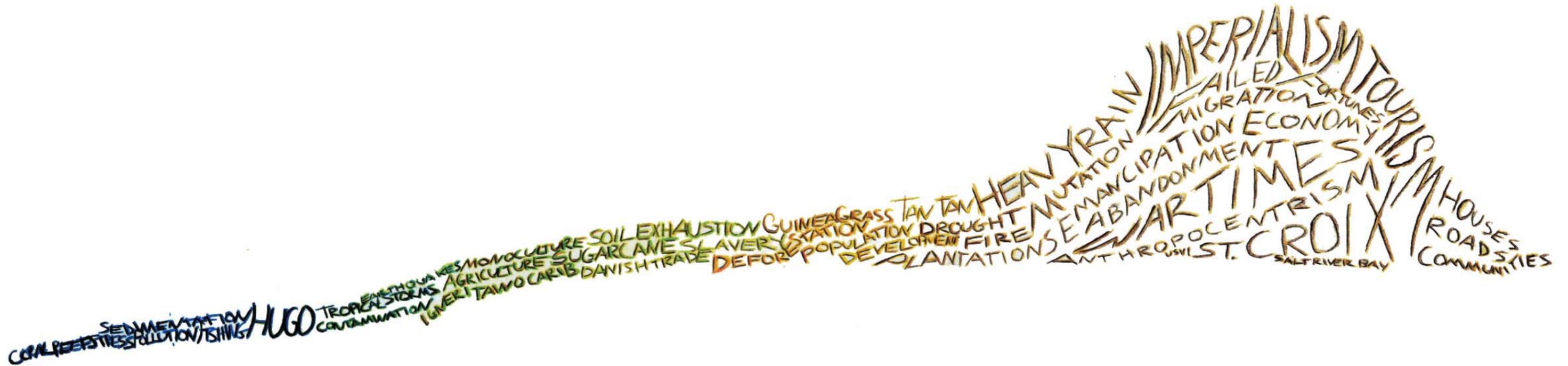


LOW IMPACT EXPERIENTIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Designing a park within Salt River Bay presents the opportunity to educate the public of issues relating to land management and how it directly affects marine ecosystems. A major program design challenge is creating an experiential and educational connection between the terrestrial and marine landscape. The possibility is very real to envision the fusion of these two diverse landscapes in order to develop awareness of the important connection between the land and water.

Protecting existing experiential landscapes contributes to the diversity of Salt River Bay. Celebrating the bioluminescent lagoon by not disturbing it is prioritized. All major building locations that will exude artificial light will be placed far enough away from the lagoon in order to not disturb it. All archeology zones within the site boundary are prioritized and delineated to be preserved and experienced. Any proposed trails through the archeology areas will have the least impact of any trails within the park with a maximum of 4 foot width. Underwater snorkeling and diving trails are extensions from the archeology trails and are included to enhance the connection between land and water. Soil conservation and water runoff are also major objectives included in the design. Terracing with natural stone walls and bio-swales are placed strategically in areas with signage where the park visitor can experience them with the hope of being educated about the important relationship that water runoff and sedimentation have with coral reefs and other marine ecosystems.



Land use directly affects marine ecosystems through soils, topography, agriculture and development. This is specifically apparent on the U.S. Virgin Island of St. Croix. For hundreds of years the island of St. Croix has been a major producer of sugarcane and other crops. Plantation owners were not stewards of the land and helped contribute to the degradation of the soil. Droughts, heavy rains, and fires also contributed to the soil problems. After the sugarcane era ended in St. Croix the majority of agriculture was abandoned, and soils were left exhausted and infertile. Hundreds of years later the effects are still seen. The lack of terracing and improper farming has led to massive amounts of soil erosion and the increase of invasive species, all which have a major impact of the coral reefs and other marine life. The diagram that I have drawn is a section cut, using words, through the MREC site in Salt River Bay, from the bay to the highest elevation on site. The intent is to illustrate the effects that land use and natural disasters has had on marine life. I used many words to describe the natural disasters and land uses that have gone on in St. Croix. This concept drawing will further help lead my design of the MREC site in Salt River Bay.

