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VIPD Marine Unit Rescues Fisherman From Savana Island After Dinghy Breaks Down, Ending Hourslong Coast Guard-Led Search

A VIPD marine unit found Conrad E. Pondt on Savana Island after his dinghy became disabled during a Thursday fishing trip, concluding four air and five surface searches involving Coast Guard, federal, territorial and volunteer responders near St. Thomas.

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Conrad E. Pondt. By. U.S. COAST GUARD.

ST. THOMAS — A fisherman reported missing after failing to return from a Thursday trip was rescued Friday morning from Savana Island, ending a multiagency search that covered approximately 430 square nautical miles by air and sea.

A V.I. Police Department marine unit found Conrad E. Pondt, 54, stranded on the uninhabited island after his 12-foot gray and white dinghy became disabled.

Savana Island is an ecological sanctuary located approximately three miles off the west end of St. Thomas.

Mr. Pondt, a resident of the U.S. Virgin Islands, had departed from Krum Bay on a fishing trip Thursday morning but did not return as expected later that afternoon.

After his rescue, Emergency Medical Service personnel provided assistance because he was dehydrated. He was otherwise in good health.

“We commend the Virgin Islands Police Department unit on a successful rescue and all partner agencies and rescue organizations for their efforts in the search,” said Capt. Robert E. Stiles, Coast Guard Search and Rescue mission coordinator for the case. “It was a great outcome! Our Sector Command Center staff did an exceptional job managing this case from the initial report through the rescue. The safe recovery of the survivor is a testament to the strong partnerships, seamless coordination, and resolve of all responding units.”

Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan were alerted at 8:41 p.m. Thursday through a call from the V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency’s 911 Operations Center.

The call connected watchstanders with a friend of Mr. Pondt who reported that the fisherman had failed to return.

The friend told authorities that Mr. Pondt typically fished near Mermaid Chair, Flat Cays or Frenchman’s Bay. His vehicle and boat trailer remained in a Krum Bay parking lot.

During the search, authorities asked anyone with information about the case to contact Coast Guard Sector San Juan at 787-289-2041.

Before the rescue, participating agencies and organizations completed four air searches and five surface searches across approximately 430 square nautical miles.

The multiagency operation involved an MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen, the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Doyle, a 33-foot Special Purpose Craft from Boat Forces Unit St. Thomas, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Caribbean Air and Marine helicopter and marine unit, a Civil Air Patrol aircraft, VITEMA, St. Thomas Rescue and the V.I. Police Department.

The Coast Guard and its partner agencies concluded the search after the VIPD marine unit located and rescued Mr. Pondt.

Coast Guard Southeast District crews remain available around the clock to respond to mariners in distress, working alongside partner agencies to protect lives and promote safety on the water.