

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Insular Affairs Allocates \$350,000 to U.S. Virgin Islands for Coral Reef Protection in \$1.4 Million Fund

Environment / **Published On September 06, 2023 06:40 AM /**

Staff Consortium **September 06, 2023**



The U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) has announced a total of \$1,432,994 in fiscal year 2023 grant funding to protect and support coral reefs and natural resources in U.S. territories and freely associated states. Of this sum, the U.S. Virgin Islands will receive \$350,000 to bolster ongoing research in Coral Larval Growth and efforts to nurture resilient coral colonies.

Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs, Carmen G. Cantor, stressed the importance of the funding, stating, "Coral reefs are not only vital for tourism and food industries in island economies but also offer crucial protection against erosion and wave actions from storms. We are grateful to Congress for providing this funding to help the

Insular Areas safeguard these unique natural resources.”

Other allocations from the Coral Reef and Natural Resources Program for fiscal year 2023 include \$325,000 for Guam, \$299,994 for the Republic of Palau, and \$245,000 for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The funds will support various local departments in their efforts toward management, education, outreach, and research related to the protection of coral reef natural resources.

Furthermore, the National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Program will receive \$213,000 to support a new cohort of fellows in American Samoa, the CNMI, Guam, and the USVI. Managed by Nova Southeastern University’s Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography, the fellowship aims to provide state and territorial coral reef management agencies with highly qualified individuals who have graduate-level education and work experience tailored to each jurisdiction's specific needs.

The OIA emphasized that the Coral Reef and Natural Resources Program is discretionary, focusing solely on needs and training related to coral reef resource management and the combatting of invasive species in the Insular Areas. This program is part of OIA’s portfolio that also includes the recently announced Maintenance Assistance Program and the Technical Assistance Program.

Funding under these discretionary programs is made available through a competitive grant application process, which opens each year in October on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under CFDA 15.875.

For more details about these funds and other programs available through the Office of Insular Affairs, visit www.doi.gov/oia.