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DPNR Secures \$69 Million Grant for Climate Resilience Projects

Grant will fund job creation, community partnerships, and the expansion of the Territorial Park System, with a focus on climate-resilient initiatives over the next five years

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The V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources announced Monday that it has successfully secured a \$69 million grant from the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, a competitive \$575 million program under the Biden administration.

The grant aims to enhance the territory's resilience to climate change and coastal hazards, with activities set to commence in October, according to the release.

“This grant presents an incredible opportunity for the people of the Virgin Islands,” said DPNR Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol. “With job creation, support for community partners, and the expansion of the Territorial Park System, we anticipate a range of exciting projects over the next five years to safeguard our natural resources.”

The grant’s initiatives will focus on three primary pillars: the Implementation of Watershed and Coastal Improvement Plans, Climate-Resilient Land Conservation and Park Development, and Education and Workforce Development. These activities will utilize nature-based, community-guided solutions to address environmental challenges.

“The success of this grant is rooted in the dedication of the conservation community in the Virgin Islands,” said Director Kristina Edwards of the Division of Territorial Parks & Protected Areas. “Collaboration with community organizations has been key, and I am excited to share updates on their projects. The next five years will be transformative for conservation efforts in the Virgin Islands.”

Mr. Oriol highlighted the capacity-building efforts that will be supported by the grant. These efforts include hiring staff, interns, and technical experts, as well as investing in educational organizations and their young audiences. “This grant will create five new positions within the Department, 24 full-time positions across five community partner organizations, and provide paid training opportunities and internships for at least 100 Virgin Islanders. Stay tuned for updates on each program as the grant progresses,” he stated.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. expressed his gratitude for the federal support, emphasizing the territory’s commitment to tackling climate change. “This grant underlines our unwavering commitment to not just confront, but proactively combat the impacts of climate change. I extend my deepest gratitude to the Biden-Harris Administration for this vital support. With these funds, and in partnership with our resilient community, we are determined to fortify our islands’ defenses against environmental adversities. Through innovative conservation strategies and steadfast community engagement, we are setting a robust example for climate resilience. Together, we are ensuring that the Virgin Islands remain a safe, sustainable paradise for future generations,” he concluded.

The grant, part of the Biden administration’s Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, will support a series of nature-based projects aimed at enhancing the territory’s environmental resilience and sustainability, ensuring a brighter future for the Virgin Islands.