

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Federal Grants Fund Biosecurity and Restoration Projects in U.S. Territories

With over \$1.5 million in federal grants, the initiative aims to enhance local capacity, protect ecosystems, and build resilience against ecological threats in the U.S. Virgin Islands and beyond

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The Office of Insular Affairs has launched a series of biosecurity training sessions across the U.S. territories, including the U.S. Virgin Islands, as part of a broader effort to strengthen local capacity against invasive species and ecological disruption.

This initiative, supported by funding from President Biden's Investing in America agenda, aims to enhance ecosystem restoration, protect coastal and island environments, and

increase community resilience.

Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor announced the program on Guam last week, highlighting the importance of proactive biosecurity measures. “Island communities can be particularly vulnerable to ecological disruption if the appropriate advance planning and biosecurity measures have not been established,” she stated. Training sessions will be held in the USVI, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), providing in-person and hands-on learning opportunities to build technical expertise and community resilience.

In addition to the training program, the OIA has allocated \$1,546,370 in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Ecosystem Restoration Program funds for various projects aimed at addressing invasive species and restoring ecosystems across the territories. Key projects and funding allocations include:

- U.S. Virgin Islands:
 - \$100,000 to the Nature Association of the Virgin Islands for the Python Watch Project, focused on early detection of invasive pythons.
 - \$75,000 to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources for biosecurity training and travel support.
- Guam:
 - \$100,000 for the Guam Department of Agriculture Pilot Invasive Species Project, which supports early detection surveillance for marine invasive species.
 - \$50,000 to the University of Guam for Phase 2 of the on-island biosecurity training.
- CNMI:
 - \$560,436 to the Department of Public Lands for the Managaha Island Erosion Impact Study and Native Ecosystem Restoration Initiative.
 - \$285,934 to the Department of Lands and Natural Resources for invasive species coordination.
- American Samoa:
 - \$75,000 to the Biodiversity Conservation Office for biosecurity resilience development and regional training.

Assistant Secretary Cantor emphasized the collaboration required for these initiatives, noting that these efforts align with the National Early Detection and Rapid Response Framework. This framework supports early surveillance and response to invasive species, ensuring the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystem health.

The Office of Insular Affairs administers discretionary grant funding programs to U.S. territories and oversees federal assistance under the Compacts of Free Association to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. These programs aim to enhance environmental protection, economic development, and sustainability in the insular areas.

Further details on these initiatives can be found at www.doi.gov/oia

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