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FEMA Awards Public Works \$484,650 to Address Longstanding Drainage Problem in Smith Bay

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on April 10, through the Virgin Islands Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), obligated \$484,650 to the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works (DPW) for a dual-phase drainage improvement project in Smith Bay, St. Thomas, the Office of Disaster Recovery has announced.

The Smith Bay Road stormwater mitigation project will remediate frequent flooding in the highly developed lower portion of the Water Bay sub-watershed, including Smith Bay Road, Pineapple Village, Margaritaville, and the Smith Bay ballfield, said the O.D.R.

“Phase 1 will take approximately one year to complete - which includes environmental reviews, design, and RFP development,” Pubic Works Commissioner Nelson Petty Jr. stated. “Phase 2 is

expected to be completed in two years and will entail procurement, construction, federal reviews, as well as project closeout.”

According to the release, structures will be installed to manage both instances of stormwater drainage, low flow, and high flow. Under low flow conditions, the runoff will be directed to a system of pipes and filters to improve water quality. Flooding in these locations causes considerable damage to the road due to washout and structural destabilization. Capturing and redirecting the runoff through a series of drainage structures will not only enrich water quality but also steer it away from flood risk areas.

“This newly funded mitigation project will also address how damaging runoff impacts water quality in the area,” said O.D.R. Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien. “Managing uncontrolled runoff supports a more resilient infrastructure.”

The total cost to complete the project is \$4,234,527, and Phase I has been obligated in the amount of \$484,650. Scope and costs are based on a hydrological study conducted in the Smith Bay Watershed Management Plan developed by the Horsley Witten Group in September 2017. Completing this plan was the first step in HMGP’s action plan to conduct a hydrologic study of the Smith basin and implement improvements to resolve flooding problems.