

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Shawn-Michael Malone Now Climate Change Coordinator For Mapp Administration

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp announced the appointment of former Senator, Senate President and Delegate to Congress candidate Shawn-Michael Malone as his administration's Federal Programs Coordinator with a direct concentration on climate change issues affecting the Virgin Islands.

The announcement came at Mapp's Wednesday press conference at Government House in Christiansted, where the territory's leader made known to residents the information he gathered from the Guam conference on global warming.

Mapp said his trip to the Guam, organized by the U.S. Department of Interior, encouraged him to hire someone who would specifically work with the federal government to coordinate the territory's readiness efforts in relation to climate change, because there's currently no strategy in place.

He made mention of the adverse effects that climate change will have on the territory, including hotter summers, a rise in the chikungunya virus, Dengue fever and rising sea levels -- all with the potential to negatively impact the islands if a readiness plan is not put in place.

"One of the things that we learned that we need to have is someone that sits at the center of this process to bring together those issues that will affect the private sector and public sector," Mapp said.

"When temperatures in the Virgin Islands are at 90 degrees, how should the agencies be responding, talking and informing the community. When the temperature gets to 100 degrees, what is our response and what do we need to mobilize in terms of resources. How do we go out into the community and look for those that are most vulnerable, because we're going to see those temperatures," Mapp said.

Representatives of various government departments also accompanied the governor on the Guam trip, including Director of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency Mona Barnes, and representatives from UVI and DPNR. These arms, along with the other government agencies and departments will help create the territory's response to climate change.

Malone will sit "at ground zero and bring all of these pieces together," Mapp said.