

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI To Receive \$10 Million Grant From N.O.A.A. For Fisheries Disaster Funding

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Bunch of Tuna

Today, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross allocated \$200 million in disaster funding appropriated by Congress to help fishermen and the businesses and communities that rely upon them to recover and rebuild following hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in 2017, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (N.O.A.A.) announced Wednesday.

Out of the \$200 million allocation, the U.S. Virgin Islands will receive \$10 million, according to Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett. "This grant will help with a wide range of activities that support commercial or recreational fisheries, industries like processors and fish houses and communities affected by the disaster. NOAA Fisheries, like the ones in the Virgin Islands, provide science-based conservation and management for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, marine mammals, endangered species, and their habitats," Ms. Plaskett said.

"This grant will benefit the Virgin Islands tremendously with our ongoing rebuilding efforts making the Virgin Islands whole again after experiencing two devastating hurricanes. The United States government and the international community has an obligation to help in the reestablishment of our islands. The grant award is a vital component of that concern," the congresswoman added.

N.O.A.A. Fisheries used commercial fishery revenue loss as the common metric to allocate funding among eligible disasters, according to the release. In addition to revenue loss, the agency also took subsistence uses and long-term impacts to the fishery into account to further ensure an equitable distribution of funds.

N.O.A.A. said the funds can help commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, charter businesses, shore-side infrastructure, subsistence users, and the fishing ecosystem and environment. Activities that can be considered for funding include infrastructure projects, habitat restoration, state-run vessel and permit buybacks, job retraining, and other activities, as specified by the law and limits of the request.