

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Interior Provides \$1.3 Million In Fiscal Year 2018 Funding To Protect Coral Reefs In USVI And Other Territories

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Doug Domenech, U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary, Insular and International Affairs, this week approved \$1,345,256 in fiscal year 2018 grant funding under the Coral Reef and Natural Resources initiative to the U.S. territories and the freely associated states, according to a release issued Friday. Office of Insular Affairs Director Nikolao Pula was in American Samoa this week to co-chair the 40th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting where he announced the funding.

“The Assistant Secretary and I are pleased to provide these grants to the U.S. territories and the freely associated states and help protect coral reefs and marine resources,” Mr. Pula said. “From rehabilitation of corals, to outreach, restoration, and removal of invasive species and pests, these projects support an important aspect economies and livelihood for people in the islands.”

The U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Coastal Zone Management received \$122,791 to support coral restoration and coral nursery operations, and participation in the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meetings.

American Samoa Coral Reef Advisory Group received \$173,200 to restore and rehabilitate coral reefs at the Ofu-Olosega islands in American Samoa that have been damaged by an algae outbreak of *Valonia fastigiata*. Project managers will be working closely with the National Park Service.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality received \$166,949 to support several projects including 1) participation in the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meetings; 2) Laolao Watershed Management Plan Development; and 3) the Coral Nursery Development Project.

Guam Bureau of Statistics and Plans - \$220,231 to support several projects including 1) Marine Tour Operator Workshop; 2) Coral Reef Management; 3) Coral Reef Conservation Outreach and Education; 4) Removal of an invasive bamboo plant, *Bambusa vulgaris* from priority watershed areas; 5) the Tasi Guides Program; and 6) the geotechnical investigation of rainfall-induced landslides in Piti-Asan watershed.

Women’s Aquaculture Farming Initiative, Republic of the Marshall Islands - \$134,582 to support a Women’s Coral Farming initiative in Mili and Arno Atolls to grow hard and soft corals for local use and to ensure protection of wild coral reef resources.

The Hawai’i State Museum of Natural and Cultural History and the Palau International Coral Reef Center - \$185,503 to establish biology-based regulations for the sustainable harvest of reef fishes in the Republic of Palau, build research capacity in Palau to develop the sustainable use of coral reef fishes, and help meet the subsistence and artisanal fishing needs of Palau residents.

Mariana Islands Nature Alliance - \$142,000 to support the Tasi Watch Ranger Program which was developed to build and strengthen CNMI youth and community’s involvement in management of coastal and near-shore marine resources. This project includes efforts to remove invasive tanga trees, *Leucocephala*, and restore native species of trees and plants that were lost during Typhoon Soudelor in 2015.

Earlier this year, [\\$200,000 was provided](#) to support the 2018-2020 National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Program in American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to the release.

Funds are made available through the Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs’ Coral Reef and Natural Resources Initiative. Applications are generally submitted from October through May 1st each year. Funds are awarded once OIA receives appropriations from the U.S. Congress until they are exhausted.

