

The Virgin Islands Consortium

In Light Of Rapidly Changing Weather Patterns, Territory's Climate Change Program Moves Forward

VIC News / **Published On August 30, 2018 08:22 PM /**

Staff **August 30, 2018**



The climate change adaptation program for the U.S. Virgin Islands, launched by Governor Kenneth Mapp in 2015, continues to move forward and the devastation caused by Hurricanes Irma and Hurricane Maria has focused greater attention on local efforts to reduce the risks associated with the world's changing weather patterns, Government House announced Thursday.

The program was officially established by Mr. Mapp's Executive Order No. 474-2015 to ensure that that climate change adaptation policy and planning is conducted in a coordinated and collaborative manner, said Program Consultant Lloyd Gardner. He said planning is now underway for the first major meeting of the U.S. Virgin Islands Climate

Change Council.

“Governor Mapp acted to establish the program as he understands the vulnerability of the U.S. Virgin Islands to climate change in the form of potential adverse impacts on ecological systems, human health, the economy, and the community at large,” he said.

Acknowledging the necessity for all groups to work together to build a resilient community, the executive order provides for "coordinated planning by the public agencies and other instrumentalities of the government, and facilitates cooperation between and among the public sector, private sector, non-profit sector, and various stakeholder groups.”

“That cooperation has thus far resulted in a number of projects and capacity development activities coordinated by local government agencies, local nonprofits, and federal agencies,” Mr. Gardner said.

Local initiatives underway or completed in regard to climate change include:

- Technical assistance grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior to the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands to undertake vulnerability and risk assessments of key sectors to support preparation of the climate change adaptation strategy for the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Technical assistance grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior to the St. Thomas East End Medical Center Corporation to increase community health literacy and education regarding the impact of climate change and non-communicable and chronic diseases.
- Workshop on "Sea Level Rise and the Impact on Economic Activity in Coastal Communities" in the U.S. Virgin Islands, held February 15-16, 2017. The workshop was organized by the Office of the Governor, with technical assistance provided by the Governors' Institute on Community Design.
- Workshop on "Climate Impacts and Adaptation for Resource Management in the U.S. Virgin Islands", held on St. Croix by the USDA Caribbean Climate Hub, August 17, 2017.
- The increased awareness of the potential impact of climate change in the U.S. Virgin Islands also led to an examination of the economic implications by the 31st Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands during a "Hearing on the Economic Impact of Climate Change on the U.S. Virgin Islands" in April 2016.

Climate change and resiliency were also a major focus of the Hurricane Recovery Task Force's research and report, the final draft of which is near completion.