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Territory Receives Nearly \$2 Million From FEMA to Repair St. Croix Libraries; Target Completion Date is April 2022

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Florence A. Williams Public Library in Christiansted By. OFFICE OF DISASTER RECOVERY

The Office of Disaster Recovery has announced the obligation of \$1,813,143 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance Program to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources to complete repairs and replace damaged contents at the Florence A. Williams Public Library in Christiansted and Athalie M. Petersen Public Library in Frederiksted on St. Croix.

The Florence A. Williams Public Library, located on King Street in downtown Christiansted is comprised of a split four-story and two-story building. During the 2017 hurricanes, the facility and its contents were damaged by heavy rains, which overwhelmed the drainage system causing water to seep through the upper-level walls and down to the lower floors, according to O.D.R.

Originally constructed as a residence in 1803, the three-story Athalie M. Petersen Public Library located on Strand Street in the town of Frederiksted suffered significant damage when rainwater breached exterior doors and entered parts of the building through broken windows, the release stated.

A solicitation for construction will be released in May, and once a contractor is selected, work can begin to restore the facilities to their pre-disaster condition, O.D.R. said.

D.P.N.R. Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol applauded the successfully coordinated efforts of DPNR, FEMA and O.D.R. "The Territories libraries are top projects for Governor Bryan and DPNR. We welcome this recent obligation and look forward to restoring these essential services," he said.

According to the release, the refurbishment of the library in Christiansted includes the repair of the elevator as well as replacing contents in the children's room, reading room, theater room and computer lab, including carpeting, computers, shelving, books and cabinets.

"Repairs to the Florence A. Williams Public Library and Athalie M. Petersen Public Library will strengthen the educational and cultural footprint for St. Croix. Libraries provide a myriad of services and house volumes of resources filled with knowledge as well as cultural and historical facts where families could gather to read, schoolchildren visit to study and community groups meet to share ideas," said FEMA USVI Acting Recovery Director John Covell. "Supporting the restoration of the Petersen Library highlights FEMA's commitment to helping the U.S. Virgin Islands maintain its environmental and historical treasures."

The obligated funds for the Petersen Library in Frederiksted incorporates the restoration of historical nuances such as steel guttering, French doors, quarry tile, wooden shutters, and ironworks in accordance with historic preservation standards and guidelines, according to the release. The scope also includes the repair of the elevator, ceiling and wood floors in addition to the replacement of furniture, tiles, glass windows, light fixtures, and office supplies.

"DPNR has been obligated \$5.1M to repair damages and replace contents at libraries throughout the Territory," said O.D.R. Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien. "The Office of Disaster Recovery thanks FEMA for this award and applauds the staff at DPNR and the State Historic Preservation Office for their commitment to restore public spaces and preserve the historical significance of the Territory's structures."

The target completion date for both libraries is April 2022.