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USVI Receives \$300,000 From EPA to Support Water Quality Monitoring for Safe Beach Recreation

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Cramer's Park Beach on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

The U.S. Virgin Islands is among 38 states, territories, and Indian Nations that will receive U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding for its beach monitoring and notification programs, the EPA said Wednesday.

The funding is being awarded under the BEACH Act. This year, EPA is expected to award about \$10 million across the country, and the U.S. Virgin Islands is expected to get \$303,000 in BEACH act funding, according to the release.

Since 2002 EPA's partners have used nearly \$206 million in BEACH Act grants to protect beachgoers by monitoring beaches for bacteria, maintaining and operating public notification

systems, identifying local pollution sources, and reporting results to EPA.

“It is always beach season in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and these BEACH Act grants enable our partners to ensure that beaches are safe and enjoyable for all,” said Lisa F. Garcia, EPA regional administrator. “With this grant funding, the EPA is helping U.S. Virgin Islands monitor beach water quality and protect people’s health so they can have fun without worry.”

Under the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act, EPA grants money to eligible state, territorial, and Indian Nations applicants to help them and their local government partners monitor water quality at coastal and Great Lakes beaches, the release stated. When bacteria levels are too high for safe swimming, these agencies notify the public by posting beach warnings or closing the beach.

EPA said its most recent Beach Report found that beaches on U.S. coasts and along the Great Lakes were open and safe for swimming 92 percent of the time in 2020. The agency encouraged residents to check with local public health authority on water conditions when making plans to go to the beach. The Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources issues notices on Fridays educating Virgin Islanders beach water quality.

EPA’s 2022 BEACH Act grant funding, contingent upon meeting the eligibility requirements, will be allocated to the following states, territories, and Indian Nations.