

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett Introduces Bipartisan Bill to Fund \$10 Billion in Coastline and Fisheries Projects Over Next Decade

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Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett.

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett has introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that, if passed into law, would give the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \$1 billion each year for the next decade to “implement projects that restore and protect coastline economies in the U.S.”, according to a release from Ms. Plaskett's office.

The bipartisan House Resolution 1196 was introduced last week, co-sponsored by Representatives Maria Salazar (R-FL-27), and Mary Peltola (D-AK), as well as Jennifer

González-Colón (R-PR), Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner.

The bill is a holdover from the 117th Congress, where Ms. Plaskett introduced it as the Shovel-Ready Restoration Grants for Coastlines and Fisheries Act alongside Don Young of Alaska, who died last March at the age of 88. "Given his strong support, the bill in the 118th Congress is titled the Don Young Restoration Grants for Coastline and Fisheries Act of 2023," the statement informed.

Ms. Plaskett noted that NOAA received \$167 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARPA) funding for job-creating coastal resilience projects, but had proposals for eligible projects in excess of \$3 billion. The projects, funded by the NOAA ARPA grants, returned \$15 in "net economic benefits for every dollar invested," Ms. Plaskett said.

By these metrics, H.R. 1196 is expected to generate significant economic activity in every region in which these projects are implemented, while providing "important investments to our coastal communities and the resources needed to protect our shorelines," according to the congresswoman.

Some of the work that could be done in this regard includes "projects to remove marine debris (including derelict vessels and abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear), bolster ecological infrastructure and marine fisheries, and increase U.S. coastal resiliency and adaptation to climate change are all important to protecting our coastline communities," the release stated.

The measure is now with the House Committee on Natural Resources as well as the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for consideration.

"I urge my colleagues to join me this Congress to pursue supporting coastal resilience projects to remove marine debris, bolster ecological infrastructure and marine fisheries, and increase U.S. coastal resiliency," Ms. Plaskett stated.