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U.S. Virgin Islands Included in Extension for Energizing Insular Communities Grant Applications Amid Typhoon Recovery Efforts

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On Thursday, May 25, 2023, the Hagatna River in Guam exceeded its capacity as a result of Typhoon Mawar, causing a deluge that flooded the Bank of Guam's parking lot located in Hagatna.

Amid the ongoing recovery efforts following Typhoon Mawar's impact on Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, along with other U.S. territories, has been granted an extension for the submission of grant proposals under the Energizing Insular Communities program for fiscal year 2023, the U.S. Dept. of Interior announced Wednesday.

The EIC provides grant funding for energy strategies that reduce the cost of electricity and reduce dependence on foreign fuels. The anticipated total funding available to the territories is \$15.5 million.

Typhoon Mawar, referred to as "Betty" in the Philippines, has been classified as one of the most potent Northern Hemisphere tropical cyclones on record for the month of May, and the strongest globally for the year 2023. This formidable storm wreaked considerable havoc on the island of Guam, setting an alarming precedent for the year's typhoon season. The extent of Mawar's devastation in Guam was captured by astonishing rainfall figures, with totals ranging from 14 to 29 inches across the island. Dededo, one of the island's villages, saw almost 7 inches of rain fall per hour, emphasizing the severity of the storm.

This announcement was made by Carmen G. Cantor, D.O.I. Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs. "OIA's EIC 2023 funds are now available to support the territories in achieving sustainable energy strategies that mitigate climate change, reduce reliance and expenditures on imported fuels, develop and utilize domestic energy sources, and improve the performance of energy infrastructure and overall energy efficiency," said Cantor during the original announcement in March. "I would encourage the territories to embrace this important opportunity through OIA and submit applications for consideration as soon as possible."

The extension prolongs the application period to July 17, 2023. The new deadline offers additional time to eligible applicants, which include local government entities, independent authorities, and educational institutions in the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as those in American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The OIA, under the supervision of the Assistant Secretary of Insular and International Affairs, fulfills the Secretary of the Interior's obligations for the U.S. territories. In addition to the EIC grant program, the OIA also handles federal assistance under the Compacts of Free Association, which extend to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. Additionally, a discretionary Technical Assistance Program is administered by the OIA for all Insular Areas.