

The Virgin Islands Consortium

EPA Allocates \$10.6 Million for Beach Water Quality Monitoring; U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico to Benefit

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Cramer's Park on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

In a move that bolsters public health measures in coastal areas, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced this week that it will allocate \$10.6 million in grant funding to support water quality monitoring efforts at various beach locations. Of this sum, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are set to receive \$653,000, subject to eligibility requirements being met.

The announcement, made on June 20, 2023, disclosed the breakdown of the allocation with Puerto Rico earmarked for \$344,000 and the U.S. Virgin Islands for \$309,000. The funds are intended to aid states, Tribes, and territories in conducting comprehensive water quality surveillance, as well as public notification programs for their beaches.

“Many people spend time in the summer splashing, swimming, and playing at a favorite beach, which is why EPA is providing more than \$10 million to help states and local partners monitor water quality,” explained EPA Assistant Administrator for Water, Radhika Fox. “These grants help states, Tribes, and territories fund programs to ensure that our coastal waters are safe for swimming and recreation.”

The initiative falls under the purview of the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act, according to the release. Under this legislation, the EPA provides grants to eligible states, Tribal, and territorial applicants to assist them and their local government partners in water quality monitoring at coastal and Great Lakes beaches. When bacteria levels rise beyond the threshold of safety for swimming, the responsible agencies notify the public and impose beach warnings or closures as necessary.

Since the introduction of the BEACH Act in 2001, the EPA has awarded nearly \$216 million in grants. These funds have been instrumental in conducting tests for illness-causing bacteria in beach waters, aiding in public notification, and identifying the sources of contamination. This continued investment underlines the EPA's commitment to protecting the health of beachgoers nationwide.