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USVI Benefits from Historic Federal Investments at 3rd Annual Territorial Climate Workshop

Workshops in Honolulu highlight transformational investments from President Biden’s Investing in America plan, focusing on climate resilience, infrastructure restoration, and addressing significant challenges in U.S. territories

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TCIW3.0 group photo.

The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs, Carmen G. Cantor, along with the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA), hosted the 3rd Annual Territorial Climate and Infrastructure Workshop (TCIW3.0) in Honolulu from July 30 to August 2.

The TCIW3.0 brought together climate and infrastructure officials from U.S. territories, federal agencies, and other stakeholders to highlight transformational investments from President Biden's Investing in America agenda and to discuss the successful implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act in the territories.

"The interagency and cross-cutting discussions we have shared this week to highlight implementation efforts has been extremely useful," said Assistant Secretary Cantor. "Through President Biden's Investing in America agenda, we are delivering historic investments to the territories that will build resilience for the future, especially as climate change continues to impact these areas."

This year's TCIW3.0 facilitated direct conversations and roundtable working sessions on next steps for successful project implementation in the territories. The workshop emphasized in-person engagement and maximized productive conversations from face-to-face interaction among more than 250 representatives from the territories, federal agencies, and partner organizations participating in person, and another 75 or more representatives attending virtually. Previous workshops were held in 2022 and 2023.

Topics addressed during the workshop included water, energy, built infrastructure, invasive species, nature-based solutions, and broadband. Additional sessions focused on coral restoration, environmental justice, offshore wind energy development, biosecurity, food system infrastructure, gray-to-green solutions, and solid waste management.

Federal agency partners who participated in this year's workshop included representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Communications Commission, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Transportation.

To date, the Office of Insular Affairs has provided \$3.9 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for climate and infrastructure restoration projects in the territories. Additionally, the Inflation Reduction Act provided the Office of Insular Affairs with \$15 million to support climate change planning, mitigation, adaptation, and resilience for the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

These investments will help the territories implement and execute projects that will address many significant challenges related to ecosystem restoration and climate change. Projects supported in the territories to date include trainings and workshops to enhance biosecurity efforts, the development of databases and strategies for countering invasive species, and reclamation and restoration efforts that will protect and restore critical ecosystems in the territories.

Additionally, these investments are supporting the development of climate-related planning documents, updating models related to sea-level rise, and supporting the valuation of where potential coral reef restoration could decrease the hazards of erosion and flooding faced by coastal communities in the Pacific territories.

In 2023, the department launched a BIL map tracking projects across the United States, including the territories, to provide transparency and accountability for these significant federal investments. The U.S. Virgin Islands, along with other territories, stands to benefit greatly from these initiatives aimed at building resilience and addressing the pressing challenges posed by climate change.

