

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

STATE **Virgin Islands of the United States**

PROJECT TITLE: **U.S. Virgin Islands Fisheries Disaster Assistance Program**

PERIOD: **01 August 2019 – 30 September 2022**

OBJECTIVE: **Provide disaster aid after Hurricanes Irma and Maria to USVI fishing industry sectors of licensed and registered commercial and charter fishers and fishing-dependent businesses.**

FUNDING: **Federal Share: \$ 10,727,597**
 Territorial Share: \$ 0.00
 Total: \$ 10,727,597

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This proposal for the distribution of appropriated disaster assistance to the U.S. Virgin Islands fishing community has been created by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources' Division of Fish and Wildlife with consultation from NOAA Fisheries and data provided by local fishers and businesses. Within this document, we review the need for assistance, share the results of a post-storm damage assessment of the USVI fishing industry, and propose a fair and equitable means of distributing funds to eligible parties. Approximately 88% of the appropriated funds will be designated to provide direct financial assistance to eligible individuals and businesses. This program will also create new opportunities for research, habitat restoration, and replacing necessary safety equipment aboard fishing vessels.

NEED:

Background

The U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) are a territory of the United States located in the southeastern Caribbean region, adjacent to another U.S. territory, Puerto Rico. The USVI consists of three primary islands (St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix) as well as a number of smaller islands, only one of which (Water Island) is inhabited. The population of the USVI was 106,000 at of the 2010 U.S. Census. As with many other Caribbean islands, the USVI has a tourism-dominated economy

that is strongly tied to benefits provided by the tropical marine environment, including commercial and recreational fishing (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014).

During the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season, the USVI were impacted by two major storms. On September 6, Category Five Hurricane Irma passed directly over St. John and St. Thomas. St. Croix is approximately 30 miles to the south and did not receive as direct a hit, but still experienced some destruction and damage from the storm. Two weeks later, on September 20, 2017, the eye of Category Five Hurricane Maria passed just offshore of the southwestern tip of St. Croix before turning north and crossing Puerto Rico. The combined effects of the two storms devastated much of the territory’s infrastructure, including that of the fishing industries. Significant damage was caused to fishing-related infrastructure, ports, docks, fishing businesses, vessels, and gear, and there was significant loss of income by workers in the fishing industry.

The USVI commercial fishing industry is relatively small-scale. There is no dealer network, with most commercial fishers harvesting their catch one day and selling it by the roadside or at fish markets the next, although a few fishers do sell directly to restaurants and resorts (Fleming, Armentrout and Crosson 2017). The fleets are largely in St. Thomas and St. Croix, with a few fishers working from the much less populated St. John. At the time of the storms, the commercial fleet consisted of 216 licensed commercial fishers in the territory. The USVI charter fleet likewise works mostly from St. Thomas and St. Croix, predominantly the former due to its larger share of tourism traffic. Commercial fishing produces approximately \$5 million worth of reported landings each year. Reported landings for recent years are below in Table 1.

Table 1. USVI Commercial fisheries reported landings, 2010-2015.

Year	Pounds	Value
2011	1,113,798	6,223,883
2012	904,200	5,423,043
2013	817,844	5,040,088
2014	813,367	5,100,884
2015	773,914	5,141,435

Post-Hurricane Economic Impact Assessment: Survey Design

Shortly after the passing of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in mid-September 2017, NOAA Fisheries contacted USVI DFW to offer assistance with conducting a rapid appraisal of damages to the fishing industry and its support businesses. The survey was based on a rapid-assessment form that had previously been used by NOAA and several states to assess hurricane impacts on fishing businesses and communities. DFW adapted the form and added several questions to address local needs based on known fishing methods and gear usage in the islands. The data used to conduct this impact assessment were gathered specifically to evaluate the economic and social impacts of the storm.

The primary targeted population was members of the commercial and charter fishing fleets based in the islands of the USVI. DFW targeted commercial fishers that had renewed their fishing licenses either in the current fishing year (July 2017 – June 2018), or the previous fishing year (July 2016 – June 2017). Surveyors also attempted to contact local fishing related and dependent businesses such as tackle shops and marinas. DFW staff utilized the commercial fishing databases to compile a list of licensed and active commercial fishers. For-hire fishing charter operators in the USVI are not licensed by DFW or NOAA, as those types of businesses are licensed through the VI Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. However, DFW staff are familiar with many of the boats of the for-hire fleet, and a list of those was compiled for surveying.

Post-Hurricane Economic Impact Assessment: Implementation

Implementation of the survey was advertised through a variety of different formats: flyers, social media and radio announcements, and government press conferences. DFW staff also publicized the survey via personal contact with fishers and visits to businesses. No phones were utilized in the process, as phone service had not yet been restored to the Territory. Surveyors were available at specified locations around the islands for three to four days a week for the duration of the assessment period. In total, DFW staff spent fourteen days on St. Thomas/St. John and nine days on St. Croix conducting surveys around the islands from October 27, 2017 to December 1, 2017. Staff were also available to conduct surveys at the DFW offices on other days during the week during and after the main assessment period, to accommodate fishers who were unable to attend any of the scheduled sessions.

Affected parties were asked to prepare as much documentation as possible about losses, such as the quantity and type of lost and damaged gear, estimates on the value of damaged capital, and photographs documenting the damage. The documentation was not collected during the surveys, but fishers were advised that should funds be awarded, they would likely need to complete an application process and submit documentation to support their damages and losses at that time. Fishers were also asked to estimate the length of time they were not able to fish and potential revenues lost to date at the time of the survey, in comparison with the previous year's revenues. Commercial fishers and charter captains and crew who did not sustain lost or damaged gear, but suffered loss of income due to not being able to fish, were also encouraged

to participate in the assessment. For fishers who were off-island during the survey period or had been unavailable, NOAA also set up an online form for DFW to collect late responses.

Post-Hurricane Economic Impact Assessment: Results

DFW staff surveyed 92 commercial fishers (43% of registered commercial fishers) and 18 charter captains. The latter group included five charter captains who also commercially fish. For the purpose of the analysis, respondents who categorized themselves as both charter and commercial fishers were placed into the charter category.

Most (84%) of the commercial fishers considered themselves to be full time, as did 83% of the charter fishers. Most (93%) reported themselves as the business owner. A majority (66%) of the respondents resided on St. Thomas, with 31% on St. Croix and the remaining 3% on St. John. Results from St. John were added to those of St. Thomas unless otherwise noted, as the two islands are managed as one unit.

Seven fishing-dependent and -related businesses were surveyed, including two bait and tackle shops, four marine supply stores, and one marina. DFW staff visited two additional marinas, but the marina staff declined to participate in the assessment, citing the need to first contact corporate representatives. DFW staff provided their contact information to marina staff, but received no further communication regarding the survey.

Commercial Fishing Operations

In the 2016 – 2017 fishing year, DFW records listed 104 licensed and currently registered commercial fishers on St. Thomas/St. John and 112 on St. Croix. However, not all of these licensed fishers were regularly active in commercial fishing. "Active" fishers were defined as licensed and registered fishers who fished for at least 3 months out of the year. DFW records indicated that there were 64 active fishers on St. Thomas/St. John and 88 on St. Croix in 2016. However, all fishers, whether active or inactive, were encouraged to participate in this assessment.

Losses were estimated differently for active and inactive fishers. To estimate capital losses (boats, gear, infrastructure, and other) for the fleet, we multiplied the average loss per respondent fishers by the number of *registered* fishers on that same island in the rapid assessment. To estimate lost income, we multiplied the average estimated loss per respondent fishers by the number of *active* fishers on that same island.

For St. Thomas/St. John, total capital losses were estimated at \$3,147,164 and lost revenue was estimated at \$485,641, with a total loss of \$3,632,806 at the time of surveying. These results are shown in Table 2. For St. Croix, total capital losses were estimated at \$1,473,815 and lost revenue was estimated at \$674,850, resulting in a total loss of \$2,148,665 at the time of surveying. These results are shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Estimated losses of the St. Thomas and St. John commercial fishing fleet.

Loss Category	Number impacted	Average loss	Total loss	Share of total loss
Vessel damage	104	\$11,167	\$1,161,383	32%
Gear damage	104	\$15,509	\$1,612,898	44%
Facilities damage	104	\$1,478	\$153,732	4%
Other damage	104	\$2,107	\$219,150	6%
Lost income	64	\$7,588	\$485,641	13%
Total economic loss			\$3,632,806	
Number of jobs lost			22.3	

Table 3. Estimated losses of the St. Croix commercial fishing fleet.

Loss Category	Number impacted	Average loss	Total loss	Share of total loss
Vessel damage	112	\$4,212	\$471,699	22%
Gear damage	112	\$7,639	\$855,600	40%
Facilities damage	112	\$156	\$17,500	1%
Other damage	112	\$1,152	\$129,017	6%
Lost income	88	\$7,669	\$674,850	31%
Total economic loss			\$2,148,665	
Number of jobs lost			10.6	

In the survey, fishers were asked to report their crew size, or intended crew size, after the storms as well as their crew size prior to the storms. Many boats were not running after the storms, and it was expected that many fishers and crew members lost jobs. Lost jobs were calculated based on the number of crew jobs reported pre-storm and the time the vessel owners reported it would take to return to fishing (up to one year). This provided the number of annual job equivalents that would be lost. In many cases, these job losses are temporary, as most jobs will be recuperated once vessels return to fishing. Based on this approach, it was calculated that 22.3 commercial fishing jobs were lost for St. Thomas/St. John, and 10.6 jobs were lost for St. Croix, for a total of 32.9 full time equivalents (FTEs).

Charter Operations

DFW was familiar with at least 27 active charter operations on St. Thomas/St. John, and at least 14 on St. Croix at the time of the storms. As with commercial fishers, we multiplied the average loss per charter operation by the estimated number of total charter operations on that same island in the rapid assessment. To estimate lost income, we did the same, assuming that all charter operations were actively engaged in fishing.

For charter businesses in St. Thomas/St. John, total capital losses were estimated at \$1,151,604 and lost revenue was estimated at \$533,230, resulting in a total loss of \$1,684,834 at the time of surveying. These results are shown in Table 4. For charter operations in St. Croix, total capital losses were estimated at \$50,750 and lost revenue was estimated at \$276,500, with a total loss of \$327,250 at the time of surveying. These results are shown in Table 5.

Table 4. Estimated losses of the St. Thomas and St. John charter fleet.

Loss Category	Number impacted	Average loss	Total loss	Share of total loss
Vessel damage	27	\$35,438	\$956,824	57%
Gear damage	27	\$5,321	\$143,660	9%
Facilities damage	27	\$287	\$7,740	0%
Other damage	27	\$1,607	\$43,380	3%
Lost income	27	\$19,749	\$533,230	32%
Total economic loss			\$1,684,834	
Number of jobs lost			5.3	

Table 5. Estimated losses of the St. Croix charter fishing fleet.

Loss Category	Number impacted	Average loss	Total loss	Share of total loss
Vessel damage	14	\$3,625	\$50,750	16%
Gear damage	14	\$0	\$0	0%
Facilities damage	14	\$0	\$0	0%
Other damage	14	\$0	\$0	0%
Lost income	14	\$19,750	\$276,500	84%
Total economic loss			\$327,250	
Number of jobs lost			.5	

Job losses in the charter sector were calculated as in the commercial fishing sector, multiplying crew size by estimated time to return to fishing. This generated estimates of 5.3 full-time equivalent jobs (FTEs) lost on St. Thomas/St. John ,and .5 FTE lost on St. Croix.

Fishing-Dependent and Fishing-Related Businesses

The total number of affected fishing-dependent and -related business in the USVI at the time of the storms was not known. However, we surveyed six tackle shops and marine supply stores, which reported a total of \$242,392 in damages to, in decreasing order, the facility, equipment/supplies, and bait. They also reported a loss of seven employee positions (from 59 to 52). Since only one marina was surveyed and responses were confidential, the marina’s economic losses were not included in the assessment final report.

Damage Assessment: Estimations for the Entire Fishery

The damage assessment estimated provisional damages for the commercial and charter fishing fleets of the United States Virgin Islands from the combined effects of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017. The responses of 110 owners and crew were classified by sector and island group, then scaled up to estimate damages for their respective fleets. Total damages were projected to have been \$7,793,555 and 39 jobs were lost, at least in the short term. An additional \$242,392 in damages were reported by the tackle and marine supply shops interviewed, with another seven jobs lost and over one million dollars in lost business, but these numbers were not scaled to represent all of the potentially affected marine-related businesses.

The estimates are likely to be underestimating the full extent of economic losses for two reasons. First, the estimates for lost income and wages are only for the time period up to the respondents’ answering the survey, which was in the months immediately following the storm. Large portions of the islands suffered significant infrastructure damage that impaired both the local population and the tourism sector. This affected the seafood markets and the volume of clients available to charter boats in the for-hire fleet. Second, due to the limited number of respondents, we did not have estimates for impacts to all the related marine sectors like tackle shops (some of which are only partially selling bait and tackle) and marinas.

The estimated damages and losses by sector of the USVI fishing industry in the months following the hurricanes are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Total estimated economic losses by sector.

Fishing Sector	Estimated Damages	Estimated Income Losses	Job Losses	Total Estimated Loss
Commercial	\$4,620,978	\$1,160,491	32.9	\$5,781,469
Charter	\$1,202,354	\$809,730	5.8	\$2,012,084
Total Commercial and Charter	\$5,823,332	\$1,970,221	38.7	\$7,793,553
Fishing-Dependent Businesses	\$242,392	\$1,216,232*	7*	\$1,458,624*

**Values for estimated damages, income loss, and job losses were not scaled up for fishing-dependent businesses (e.g., tackle shops, marine supply stores).*

Citation for need statement and background information:

Hurricanes Irma and Maria Damage Assessment: Provisional Results for the U.S. Virgin Islands Commercial and For-Hire Fisheries. 60-day Interim Report. Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), with the assistance of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). April 2018.

OBJECTIVES:

The primary objective of this grant proposal is to offer financial assistance to eligible fishers and businesses within the USVI fishing industry that suffered damages and losses from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which occurred in September 2017.

The objectives of the grant are as follows:

1. Provide direct financial assistance to eligible individuals and businesses in USVI fishing industries that have documented uninsured losses as a direct result of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
2. Efficiently and fairly review applications to ensure that eligible individuals and fishing-dependent businesses receive financial assistance following the processes outlined in this proposal.
3. Provide safety gear to eligible fishers to assist them in complying with U.S. Coast Guard safety regulations for fishing vessels operating in federal waters around the USVI.
4. Implement a communication and outreach plan to notify potential applicants of the opportunity for financial assistance and an understanding of the application process.
5. Support research, monitoring, and restoration related to USVI fisheries and marine habitats impacted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

APPROACH:

The total amount of appropriated funds for the U.S. Virgin Islands is assumed to be \$10,727,597. \$341,404 (approximately 3%) will be allocated for administrative and coordination purposes. An additional \$195,000 (2%) will be allocated for the purchase of U.S. Coast Guard-regulated safety equipment needed for fishing vessels operating in U.S. waters around the USVI. \$746,500 (7%) will be allocated towards research, monitoring, and restoration projects geared towards fisheries and marine habitats impacted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The remaining funds of \$9,444,693 (88%) will be distributed as direct financial assistance to commercial fishers, for-hire/charter fishers, and fishing-dependent businesses.

The breakdown of funding per category and sector within the fishing industry will be as follows in Table 7.

Table 7. Breakdown of funding per category and fishing sector.

Category	Total Funding
Administration and Coordination	\$ 341,404
Safety Equipment	\$ 195,000
Research, Monitoring, and Restoration	\$ 746,500
Fishing Industry	\$ 9,444,693
Total	\$ 10,727,597

OBJECTIVE 1: PROVIDE DIRECT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

Individuals and businesses working within the commercial and for-hire fishing sectors experienced significant loss and economic hardship as a direct result of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. While other assistance programs were available, such as FEMA emergency assistance grants, Small Business Administration (SBA) loans, and unemployment assistance, many fishers did not qualify for this assistance or were unable to take on the SBA loans offered to them. Furthermore, these other assistance programs are not specific to fishing businesses and gear. As such, many fishers remain in need of assistance to allow them to repair and replace their fishing vessels, gear, and related equipment. However, fishers will need to disclose any aid received for any fishing vessels, gear, or facilities on their application.

Approximately 88% of the appropriated funds will be designated to provide direct financial assistance to eligible individuals and businesses. The funds will allow them to repair and replace their lost and damaged vessels, gear, and other equipment used in their fishing businesses, and will supplement their lost income for those who were unable to fish following the hurricanes. Funds received are taxable. Applicants will need to meet the following eligibility guidelines in order to receive aid:

1. Eligible commercial fishers, charter fishing companies, and fishing-dependent businesses must have had a valid, current USVI business license in 2017 issued by the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. Personal-use recreational fishers are not eligible under this grant program;
2. Eligible commercial fishers must have also had valid, current commercial fishing licenses renewed by the USVI Department of Planning and Natural Resources for the 2017 – 2018 fishing year;
3. For-hire (charter) crew and commercial fishing helpers applying for assistance must submit proof of employment in the fishing industry in 2017 as of the date of the storms (e.g., commercial fishing helpers must show valid Commercial Helper's Permit issued by DPNR; crew must show W-2 or 1099 tax forms).
4. Eligible applicants must have been legally permitted to work in the United States in order to receive assistance checks from the USVI government and must be at least 18 years of age as of the time of the storms;
5. Must have documented eligible damages or losses sustained as a direct result of the hurricanes. For physical damages (e.g., boat, gear, or facilities damages), documentation may include receipts, quotes, or invoices for repairs or replacement gear; photographs; logbooks; and related documentation. Documentation to demonstrate lost income may consist of commercial catch reports, charter trip logbooks, pay stubs, tax forms, etc.
6. Must have eligible needs after accounting for other sources of disaster-related assistance (e.g., vessel insurance, unemployment benefits). Applicants must disclose insurance

received for their vessels or fishing-related facilities on the application to prevent duplication of benefits;

7. Must submit completed application with all required supplemental documentation (commercial catch reports/logbooks, proof of damages, receipts, employment records, etc.) within the 60-day application period;
8. Damaged vessels which are claimed must have had valid, current registration in the USVI in 2016;
9. Eligible fishing-*dependent* businesses (e.g., bait and tackle shops) must attest to the fact that at least 50% of their income is directly related to the fishing industry. Eligible fishing-*related* businesses (e.g., marine supply stores) that make less than 50% of their income from fishing must provide documentation showing what percentage of their business is directly related to the fishing industry;
10. All applicants must sign an agreement acknowledging that all information they provide is true and accurate to the best of their knowledge, and that falsification of information will result in their ineligibility for assistance and other possible legal consequences;

Eligible losses include, but are not limited to:

- Repair or replacement of fishing vessels;
- Lost or damaged fishing gear and equipment (including but not limited to traps, nets, rods and reels, spearfishing equipment, hydraulic winches, buoys, fishing vessel electronics, freezers, ice machines, trailers, engines, etc.);
- Replacement or repair of infrastructure owned by the applicant (facilities, business space, shed or storage units);
- Lost income from 6 September 2017 – 31 December 2017 compared to the previous year's documented income.

Direct assistance grants for eligible applicants who are able to show documented proof of loss will be a minimum of \$2,500 and a maximum of \$75,000. In an effort to distribute funds to as many applicants as possible and to those with the greatest need, all eligible applicants will receive direct financial assistance in the form of a base payment, with the potential to receive additional assistance in the form of a percentage of their total eligible documented losses.

Approximately half of all respondents surveyed in the disaster assessment reported less than \$20,000 in damages and lost income, and approximately 80% reported less than \$50,000 in losses. Only a handful of respondents reported over \$100,000 in physical damages and lost income. While the assessment collected preliminary responses and fishers may have discovered additional damages and lost more income as time passed, DPNR anticipates that the appropriated funds will cover much of the losses experienced by most individuals. The following distribution plan is proposed:

1. Commercial fishers and charter fishing business owners who meet the eligibility requirements will receive a base payment of \$5,000. Those who have eligible losses in

excess of \$5,000 will be required to submit documentation for their claimed losses in order to receive additional assistance of up to 75% of their total documented losses capped at \$75,000, including the base payment.

2. Eligible commercial fishing helpers and charter captains or crew (non-business owners) will receive a base payment of \$2,500 to assist them with their lost income.
3. Fishing-dependent businesses are defined as bait and tackle shops or similar businesses whose income is at least 50% directly related to the fishing industry. These businesses are eligible for base payments of \$5,000 to assist them with their losses. Furthermore, fishing-dependent businesses are eligible for additional assistance of up to 75% of their total documented losses above that amount capped at \$75,000, including the base payment.
4. Fishing-related businesses that make less than 50% of their income from fishing are eligible for base payments of \$2,500.

We estimate the following allocations by sector, based on the disaster assessment that was conducted: \$6.4 million for commercial fishers; \$1.87 million for charter business owners; \$470,000 for commercial helpers; \$280,000 for charter fishing captains and crew; \$330,000 for fishing-dependent businesses; and \$94,000 for fishing-related businesses. These apportionments are estimates and may change based on the number of eligible applicants in each sector.

All applications will be reviewed and determinations will be made once the 60-day application period closes. This will allow all eligible applicants to receive equitable assistance. The application review and determination processes will remain transparent, and all applicants will receive written explanations of their decisions and award amounts. Applications which do not appear to meet the eligibility criteria or which contain incomplete information will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. These applicants will be contacted to collect the information needed to determine their eligibility, losses, and need.

OBJECTIVE 2: REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

USVI DPNR requests that approximately 2% of the available funds (\$332,903) be allocated for program administrative and coordination costs to ensure that applications are reviewed efficiently and objectively. One temporary employee will be hired by DPNR to serve as the program administrator. This employee will be stationed on St. Thomas and will travel between the islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix to oversee the program. The employee will be paid at a rate of \$20.00/hr and will serve for a period of 1560 hours (9 months of full-time work). The employee will be required to have a background in project management and administration in order to efficiently and successfully carry out the tasks of this grant program. This individual will provide unbiased review of applications and objective decisions regarding funding determinations. They will manage and coordinate outreach and communication, the application process, and determination of applicants' eligibility in their assigned district. This individual will report to the Commissioner of DPNR.

The program administrator will perform the following duties and tasks:

- Review applications and make decisions regarding financial assistance awards according to the specified application evaluation process;
- Contact applicants by mail to inform them of the decision and explain the award amount in written letters;
- Work with DPNR's Division of Business and Administrative Services and the Department of Finance to ensure that payments are processed in a timely manner;
- Correspond with applicants concerning the appeals process and review appeals;
- Provide DPNR with updates on the number of eligible applicants in each tier and the total amount of funds awarded so that the tier system may be revised if necessary to fairly distribute funds prior to disbursement of funds;
- Supervise the four assistants as they perform their described responsibilities, including outreach and communication, interacting with potential and eligible applicants, receiving applications, and other supporting tasks;
- Prepare reports on the progress of the application program.

Four (4) program assistants will be hired (two (2) on St. Thomas/St. John, and two (2) on St. Croix). These employees will be paid at a rate of \$14 per hour for 1560 hours each (9 months of full-time work). These individuals will be required to have strong customer service skills and experience working with the public. Individuals with experience working in the disaster recovery field will be preferred. These individuals must not have direct ties to fishers or fishing-dependent businesses in order to remain impartial and unbiased during the grant process. The four assistants will serve under the program administrator and will perform the following tasks:

- Communication and outreach with the public and fishing industries (Objective 4);
- Explain the application process and eligibility requirements to interested individuals;
- Receive applications;
- Provide support to program administrator throughout the grant program.

The Director of the Division of Business and Administrative Services will manage fiscal aspects of the program, including processing of payments and preparation of checks for fishers and businesses and processing purchases of supplies and contract agreements needed to implement the grant program.

To streamline the grant application process and reach a wider audience, a website will be developed to provide information about the program. The website will allow applicants to download the application and view eligibility requirements, application deadlines, and program updates.

Program administration and coordination costs will also include the following:

Outreach and promotion (flyers, radio ads, newspaper ads, mailed letters to fishers);

- Rental office space for 6 months with communications and utilities (1 per district);
- Storage space for applications and related documents (1 per district);
- Rental of a copier and paper shredder (1 per district);
- Personnel time for DPNR DFW staff to conduct program coordination as described below.

DPNR staff will perform the following tasks:

- Hire program administrators and assistants;
- Familiarize hired administrator and assistants with fishing industry sectors;
- Develop the grant application required for fishers and fishing-dependent businesses;
- Develop evaluation protocols that the program administrator will utilize to review applications and make determinations;
- Copy and distribute fisheries economic assessment paperwork to the fishers who participated in the survey and contact these individuals to inform them of the grant opportunity;
- Collate commercial fishing data (e.g., number of traps reported on commercial catch reports, list of registered commercial fishers);
- Liaise with fishers and fishing-dependent businesses about this program;
- Hiring of contractors to develop the website to provide information about the program;
- Purchase safety gear described in Objective 3;
- Develop and hire contractors to implement research, monitoring, and restoration projects described in Objective 5 (PHASE 2 of program).

OBJECTIVE 3: PROVIDE SAFETY EQUIPMENT TO ELIGIBLE FISHERS

USVI DPNR will allocate \$195,000 (approximately 2%) for the purchase of U.S. Coast Guard-regulated safety equipment for fishing vessels operating in the USVI. This equipment will adhere to USCG regulations and will include flares and flare guns, whistles, horns, flashlights, first aid kits, personal flotation devices (PFDs), and waterproof boxes in which to store the smaller items. Each eligible vessel owner who applies for financial assistance will receive one (1) kit. This will ensure that this essential safety equipment, which is often difficult and expensive to obtain locally, is available to fishers immediately and will alleviate the burden of fishers having to replace these items themselves. The estimated cost per kit is approximately \$650, and 300 kits are expected to be distributed.

DPNR DFW will obtain quotes for the items in order to identify the most cost-effective solution for purchasing these items in bulk. Once the supplies are procured, DPNR DFW will assemble the safety kits in waterproof boxes or dry bags. If funds are left over after purchasing the estimated needed amount of safety kits, the funds may be reallocated to another objective described within this grant proposal, such as disbursement as direct financial assistance (Objective 1) or for research, monitoring, and restoration projects (Objective 5).

OBJECTIVE 4: COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH PLAN

The following communication plan will be implemented to ensure that the public, including individuals within all sectors of the USVI fishing industry, is aware of the opportunity for direct financial assistance under this grant program. The program administrator and four assistants that are hired will be responsible for carrying out the outreach and communication plan. Methods of communication will include:

- Mailed and emailed correspondence to registered commercial fishers and known for-hire fishers and fishing-dependent businesses;
- Radio advertisements;
- Newspaper advertisements;
- Media press releases;
- Fliers distributed and posted in ports and around the islands;
- Town hall meetings;
- Applicants that completed the fishery disaster economic assessment conducted by USVI DPNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife will be personally notified of the grant opportunity and will be given a copy of their assessment to assist them with their applications.

OBJECTIVE 5: RESEARCH, MONITORING, AND RESTORATION PROJECTS

\$745,000 will be allocated towards research, monitoring, and restoration projects geared towards fisheries and marine habitats impacted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. At least two specific projects will be undertaken: a pilot derelict trap survey, and an artificial reef development project. If funds remain after the development of the two specified projects, additional projects may be considered which have relevance and value to conserving and restoring the fisheries and marine environments in the USVI.

1. The disaster economic assessment conducted by DFW staff revealed that most commercial fishers in the Territory lost fish and lobster traps in the Hurricanes, with some traps being dragged miles from their initial locations. These traps may be causing damage to or putting pressure on nearshore benthic habitats. Many fishers commented that they either knew or suspected where the traps had wound up, and some had found the traps but were unable to recover them as they had become jumbled up in a large pile that was too heavy for their winches to lift. During the first year of the grant, commercial fishers will be surveyed by DFW staff to gain as much information as possible regarding the locations of their fish and lobster traps that were lost during the Hurricanes. Fishers will be asked to provide the last known location of the traps, number of missing traps, suspected area that the traps were dragged to, and any other relevant information. GIS maps will be produced based on the survey responses to map the known or suspected locations of lost or damaged traps. The data will be assessed to determine the feasibility of removing the traps. If

these efforts suggest that some of the traps are able to be removed, a derelict trap removal study may be developed in the future, dependent upon identification of an appropriate funding source.

2. Habitat creation and enhancement efforts will be undertaken. Many nearshore coral reefs were impacted by the storms, losing large percentages of coral and live benthic cover. A prime example of this is Coki Beach, a popular spearfishing location on the northeast side of St. Thomas. Prior to the storms, the reef had high coral cover that supported thriving fish and invertebrate communities. After the storms, DFW staff surveyed the reef and discovered that a lot of the coral, sponges, and gorgonians had been destroyed or dislodged, significantly reducing coverage of coral and other living organisms. DFW is in the process of carrying out a planning grant (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Award # VI-F-F18AF00055) to investigate whether the site at Coki Beach would be a suitable location to install an artificial reef, which would create new habitat in an area that recently lost a significant portion of its natural reef. A portion of the appropriated funds will be designated towards implementing this project. Funds will be used to hire consultants who are experienced in the development and creation of artificial reefs, to undergo the required permitting process and consultations with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries), to create design plans and site maps, and to initiate artificial reef construction and installation tasks.

MILESTONE SCHEDULE –

Task	Approximate timeline of tasks											
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep
Grant submission, approval, and award	X											
Administration (hire program and financial administrators, secure needed equipment)	X	X	X									
Outreach and promotion	X	X	X	X								
Application period			X	X	X		X	X	X			
Application review and determination					X	X			X	X		
Disbursements of funds						X	X	X		X	X	X
Purchase of safety equipment (Phase 2)	X	X	X	X								
Research, monitoring, and restoration projects (Phase 2)									X	X	X	X

PHASE 2:

Research, monitoring, and restoration projects will continue throughout the second phase of the project.

Notes:

Timeline is an estimate and will depend upon when the grant is awarded and funds are received.

If funds remain after the application and disbursement process, they may be utilized in additional relevant research, monitoring, and restoration projects, which will be submitted to NOAA for approval.

PHASE 1 BUDGET

Category	Subcategory	Item	Unit	Unit Cost	#	Budget
Personnel	Personnel					\$11,430
	Overtime					\$0
	Total Personnel					
Fringe	Fringe					\$4,803
	Total Fringe					
Travel						
		Interisland Travel		\$250.00	20	\$5,000
Total Travel						\$5,000
Equipment						
Total Equipment						\$0
Supplies	*Will become property of DFW upon completion of program	Laptop Computers	Ea	\$1,500.00	5	\$7,500
		Computer Accessories	Ea	\$2,000.00	1	\$2,000
		File Cabinets	Ea	\$1,200.00	4	\$4,800
		Office Supplies (stamps, envelopes, misc.)	Ea	\$1,000.00	2	\$2,000
		Shredder	Ea	\$400.00	2	\$800
		Safety equipment kits for fishers (est. \$650/kit x 300 kits)	Ea	\$195,000.00	1	\$195,000
Total Supplies						\$212,100
Contractual		Website Development	Ea	\$10,000.00	1	\$10,000
		Program Administrator (STT, \$20/hr, 1560 hrs)	1	\$20.00	1560	\$31,200
		Assistants St. Thomas/St. John (2) (\$14/hr, 1560 hrs)	2	\$14.00	1560	\$43,680
		Assistants St. Croix (2) (\$14/hr, 1560 hrs)	2	\$14.00	1560	\$43,680
Total Contractual						\$128,560
Grants In Aid		Direct assistance for fishers		\$9,444,693.00	1	\$9,444,693
Total Grants In Aid						\$9,444,693
Construction						
Total Construction						\$0
Other	Printing/Outreach	Outreach Printing (flyers, posters, banner)	USVI	\$1,393.00	1	\$1,393
		Radio Outreach	USVI	\$4,500.00	1	\$4,500
		Newspaper Outreach	USVI	\$4,500.00	1	\$4,500
	Rent	Office Rent (6 months x 2 districts)	USVI	\$4,000.00	12	\$48,000
		Printer Rental (6 months x 2 districts)	USVI	\$1,000.00	12	\$12,000
		Website Maintenance Fee	USVI	\$400.00	12	\$4,800

	Rent of meeting room space (2 per district)	USVI	\$1,200.00	2	\$2,400
Communications	Internet and phone (6 months x 2 districts)	USVI	\$500.00	12	\$6,000
Utilities	Utilities (6 months x 2 districts)		\$1,000.00	12	\$12,000
Total Other					\$95,593
Indirect Cost					\$60,678
Total Indirect					\$60,678
Total				PHASE 1	\$9,962,857

PHASE 2 BUDGET

Category	Subcategory	Item	Unit	Unit Cost	#	Budget
Personnel	Personnel					\$10,625
	Overtime					\$0
Total Personnel						\$10,625
Fringe	Fringe					\$4,541
Total Fringe						\$4,541
Travel						\$0
Total Travel						\$0
Equipment						\$0
Total Equipment						\$0
Supplies		Field work supplies	Ea	\$1,500.00	1	\$1,500
Total Supplies						\$1,500
Contractual		Artificial Reef Project		\$745,000.00	1	\$745,000
Total Contractual						\$745,000
Construction						\$0
Total Construction						\$0
Other						\$0
Total Other						\$0
Indirect Cost						\$3,074
Total Indirect						\$3,074
Total						\$764,740
					PHASE 1 Total	\$9,962,857

				PHASE 2 Total	\$764,740
				Grand Total	\$10,727,597