



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CZM 309 ASSESSMENT & STRATEGY REPORT APPROVED AND AVAILABLE TO VIEW

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources is pleased to announce that the approved Section 309 Assessment and Strategy report, completed by the Division of Coastal Zone Management, is now available to view and download.

Section 309 of the CZMA establishes a program to encourage states and territories to improve their coastal management programs in the following nine enhancement areas: 1) wetlands, 2) coastal hazards, 3) public access, 4) marine debris, 5) cumulative and secondary impacts, 6) special area management planning, 7) ocean resources, 8) energy and government facility siting, and 9) aquaculture. States and territories are encouraged to conduct assessments of their coastal programs in these nine areas every five years, and to develop strategies to address priority program needs that are identified in the assessment. This report has been prepared for the 2021-2025 program cycle.

The Office for Coastal Management (OCM) has completed its review of the United States Virgin Islands Coastal Management Program's Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2025 Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) Section 309 Final Assessment and Strategy. With an approved Assessment and Strategy, the USVI Coastal Management Program is eligible for FY 2021-2025 weighted formula (or base) funds under Section 309 of the Coastal Zone Management Act to implement the work plan as presented in USVI's strategy. Based on allocations from the Office for Coastal Management, the territory could receive approximately \$80,000 per year for a three-year project.

Programs with approved strategies that address an enhancement area of national importance are also eligible to compete for Project of Special Merit funding to further their strategies. Coastal Hazards is designated as an enhancement area of national importance for the FY2021-FY2025 enhancement cycle. Therefore, the program is currently eligible to apply for competitive Projects of Special Merit funding to further the strategy "Increase Community and Coastal Resource Resilience Through Improved Permitting."

The goal of this strategy is to support improved and more consistent regulation and management of development within the USVI coastal zone by improving and expanding the permit application and permit review processes to require appropriate coastal setbacks, stormwater management, and BMPs that include consideration of climate change impacts in both Tier 1 and Tier 2 to minimize impacts from coastal hazards and enhance community and ecosystem resilience.

CZM permit application and permit review guidelines will be reviewed and revised using the most current information on coastal hazard risks. To enhance understanding of the new requirements, new permit review guidance as well as educational and capacity development materials will be created for DPNR agency staff. To enhance compliance with the new requirements, educational materials including trainings to meet new certification requirements will be developed for applicants and contractors based on the updated permit application process, and education and outreach content on coastal hazards will be developed for the public.

To view the document visit <http://dpr.vi.gov/resources/management-plans/> where you can click to view or download the 309 Assessment and Strategy Report. For any questions, please contact the Division of Coastal Zone Management at czm@dpr.vi.gov.