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Day 5 for American Samoa at the Territorial Climate & Infrastructure Workshop



Friday, May 12th, 2023 is the last day of the Territorial Climate Infrastructure Workshop 2.0 and is still well attended by the American Samoa delegation especially since the morning session is focused on Office Hours. These office hours are one-on-one opportunities between territories and their federal counterparts in the seven focus areas of this workshop; Water, Broadband, Cleanup, Revitalization, and Recycling, Energy, Nature based solutions and Invasive Species and

Built Infrastructure. The territories utilize these office hours to discuss in detail grants related issues to include federal regulations and solutions to help push priority projects forward. The US Department of Interior Secretary Honorable Debra Haaland heard the territories' unified request during the TCIW 1.0 last year to allow more time for office hours and this is the reason for these interactive sessions addressing the territories' needs and challenges with their application development and submissions under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act funding opportunities.

The last and critically important session for the TCIW 2.0 is the National Environmental Policy Act presentation by the US Army Corp of Engineers. The presentation was done by Ms. Marian Dean, the Environmental Planner for the USACE. All territories attended and asked environmentally related questions about the NEPA process and compliance issues. The presentation included photos of the Faleasao solar panel area, the High Court of American Samoa and the Jean P. Hayden museum slides discusses whether the sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and if operations and maintenance is approved by the Territorial Historic Preservation Office, and if there will be changes in structural capacity, appearance, site or area, change in property boundary, archaeological site change in land use and if there will be an increase of traffic in the area that will affect the new proposed historical landmark project.

In her closing remarks, Ms. Gretchen Sierra Zorita shares her awareness of the pacific territories in these two TCIW and would like to strengthen these relations in a country that is focused on east coast region." She thanked everyone for "such amazing discussions of sharing and relationship building." The Honorable US Department of Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs, Carmen , G. Cantor thanked the dedicated DOI team lead Mr. Basil Ottley, Vanitha Sivarajan, Julianna Rice, Mathew Dutko, Lydia Faleafine Nomura, Marina Tinitali and the rest of the hard working staff for effective coordination in getting the federal partners and territories together for the workshop. She thanked the OIA team that "has come together to organize and host a successful workshop 2.0, they have worked for several months and from all I have heard from federal partners and territorial stakeholders, the team has over delivered on their promise to make this week an invaluable experience to all who attended."

Ms. Cantor joins Gretchen in her recognition of the "tremendous support our federal partners have enthusiastically and consistently provided throughout this workshop. The office of insular affairs has a broad mandate for advancing the territory's priorities throughout the federal system and we depend on our federal partners to provide and share their expertise they have delivered. Thank you to all the federal partners that have attended in person and virtually and thank you to White House office of intergovernmental affairs of introductory Rodriguez and associate director Gretchen Sierra Zorita for your continued support and collaboration, we cannot do this successfully without you two."

She continued, “to our brothers and sisters from American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana islands Guam and the US region islands, I wish all of you safe travels home. Please thank your respective governors for allowing you to spend a week away from your normal duties and responsibilities and for having faith in our promise that this workshop will be a worthwhile investment. You have spent your time at the workshop gaining important insights investing in new relationships and identifying new opportunities. We have also listened to your challenges and we understand your frustrations. IA is committed to working with you and our federal partners to find ways to push through the obstacles and barriers so that you can have the opportunity to build the infrastructure you need to develop and sustain prosperous and safe communities.”

Mr. Basil Ottley then thanked and acknowledged all the BIL/IRA Coordinators from each territory and asked the ASG Chief of Staff Loa Tuimavave Tauapai Laupola to end the TCIW 2.0 with farewell remarks from American Samoa delegation with singing of the “Ua Faafetai” song and a short taualuga dance to end the five-day event on a higher note. American Samoa opened the workshop with a warrior dance and it’s only proper to end it the Faa Samoa way. Viia le Atua. O le faamoemoe ua taunuu, o le laau o le soifua lea. The final day began at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 12:30 p.m. Safe travels home to everyone.

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