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Day 3 for American Samoa at the Territorial Climate & Infrastructure Workshop



In continuing the momentum of a resourceful packed schedule on day three (3), the Territorial Climate Infrastructure 2.0 begins with the Energy Infrastructure Reinvestment (EIR) program describing the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 appropriations and eligibility under the Energy Infrastructure Reinvestment 1706 EIR. The US Department of Energy Loan Program Office confirms their commitment whereby the LPO “engages early with applicants and remains a partner throughout the lifetime of the loan.” A special note states that IRA appropriates \$5

billion through September 30, 2026 to carry out EIR with a total cap on loans of up to \$250 billion. Next were federal presentations on Energy and Invasive Species then followed by roundtable discussions for the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands on Energy and the US Virgin Islands on Invasive Species with federal counterparts. The federal roundtable continued with American Samoa on Energy with National Renewable Energy Laboratory, US Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Energy, US Department of Transportation, US Department of Agriculture, and US Economic Development Administration.

The Environmental Justice Technical Assistance is presented by the US EPA Region 9 Laura Ebbert, Director of Tribal, Intergovernmental and Policy Division and CJ Mishima, Environmental Justice Coordinator. They described environmental justice as a “phrase we use to describe the principles of fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all persons.” The EJ grant programs shared are 1. Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers 2. Collaborating Problem Solving Cooperative Agreement and Government to Government, Environmental Justice Thriving Communities grants and Environmental and Climate justice grant programs. Some eligible grants activities include building refurbishment that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, development of disaster preparedness plans, community revitalization planning in support of climate resiliency and adaptation to name a few.

The American Samoa Government Chief of Staff High Chief Loa Tuimavave Tauapai Laupola and ASG BIL/IRA Team lead/Coordinator, ODAPM Director Lisa Tuatoo were invited by the Honorable Ms. Brenda Mallory, the Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to a meet and greet. This meeting is with each territory’s governor’s representatives to have an opportunity to listen and learn directly on issues of importance to them. The Chairman would like to learn about the US Territories climate change, conservation and environmental justice agenda and how the federal government can be a partner. The consensus from the territories were shared challenges with the National Environmental Policy Act, Build America Buy America Act, Supply chain shortage, Equity in competitive grant applications to include attention to the measuring tools such as Benefit Cost Analysis, Threat and Hazard Identification of Risk Assessment, etc. and to have a more uniformed holistic approach. For American Samoa, the issue of the lack of a Federal Aviation Administration tower at the Pago Pago International airport was raised. The COS HC Loa has pleaded with the Honorable Chairman to hear and understand our priority needs especially with critical climate and infrastructure priority projects expressed by Honorable Lemanu Mauga, Governor of American Samoa.

Mr. Tavita Togia presented on behalf of American Samoa during the Invasive Species federal roundtable sub-session with US DOI (Fish & Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey, National Park Service, Office of Insular Affairs), US Department of Agriculture (US Forest Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Agricultural Research Service) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Hawaii and

US Indo-Pacific Command with ASG directors and staff in attendance. He shared about specific invasive species in the territory and ongoing and completed eradication work thus far. The federal agencies representatives sang his praises, even highly commended Mr. Tavita Togia on his work and encouraged him and his team to continue doing great things.

The breakout sessions that follow are the Electric Vehicles, Energy Generation and Storage, Renewables and Advancing a National Early Detection and Rapid Response Framework for Invasive Species: Benefits of the Framework and Collaboration Opportunities with Territories. The concurrent sub-sessions afterwards were 1. National Renewable Energy Laboratory All Territory Roundtable Discussion on Territorial Energy and Security Plans 2. Protecting Island Communities through Biosecurity 3. Hazard Mitigation Planning (Federal Emergency Management Agency). During the Hazard Mitigation Planning session, American Samoa has been recognized by FEMA as having a completed and updated Territorial Hazard Mitigation Plan until 2025. American Samoa has a strong hazard mitigation program. The American Samoa State Hazard Mitigation Officer Sandi Tonumaiepa shared about the territory's Hazard Mitigation Council chaired by Honorable Talauega E.V. Ale, Lieutenant Governor and Governor's Authorized Representative who has been actively involved with the HM council and his visible proven leadership contributes to moving hazard mitigation projects forward.

The American Samoa team consisting of the COS HC Loa, DOC Director Petti Matila, ASTCA CEO Chuck Leota, ODAPM Director Lisa Tuatoo, Dr. Ginger Porter, Mr. Ted Leiato, Mrs. Edna Asalele Noga, Mr. Joseph Meredith met with the US Department of Commerce National Telecommunication and Information Administration representatives Mr. Tim Stelzig, Regional Director (Alaska, Territories IFA), Mr. Cort Buffington, Technical Assistance Advisor IFA), Mr. Ethan Lake and two others who provided important information about the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program. The Internet for All (IFA) "ensures that everyone in America has access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet." A good amount of time was spent discussing the "affordability" part of the IFA goal for American Samoa. The DOC Director Petti Matila inquired with the federal partners on the projected timeline of application, award, project installation and completion period relevant to the BEAD funding guidelines. The CEO Chuck Leota asked about the federal review status of the ASTCA's Middle Mile application under BIL and was advised by Mr. Seilzig that he will reach out to the Middle Mile team and inform the CEO. In his efforts to advocate for American Samoa, COS HC Loa requested with the NTIA team to help our territory achieve the goals of President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of the internet for all.

Day three workshop started on time at 9 a.m. and ended with closing session remarks and announcements at 5:30 p.m.

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