

Questions from Rep. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan

- 1) Title VI of the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act directs NOAA's Office for Coastal Management to provide technical assistance to the insular areas to enhance their coastal management and climate change programs. **Can you describe what that technical assistance might look like and why it is important that we include this language?**

Response: NOAA's Office for Coastal Management (OCM) provides technical assistance in a number of ways to help coastal communities access and apply tools, technology, policy, science, and other knowledge to address coastal management issues. NOAA also provides subject-matter expertise that allows coastal decision-makers to make the best use of tools and techniques to answer specific questions or resolve issues. A few examples of NOAA's technical assistance include:

- Training on topics, tools, and processes. The OCM has recently provided training on topics such as nature-based solutions for coastal hazards and climate adaptation planning to the territories, and demand for these trainings continues. For example, Puerto Rico has interest in more nature-based solutions trainings. The OCM also provides demos of different Digital Coast tools such as the sea level rise viewer and the coastal flood exposure mapper and can help insular areas apply those tools to their location in order to assess vulnerabilities and prioritize adaptation actions.
- Providing geospatial support: The OCM helps insular areas acquire geospatial data by partnering on data acquisition under our existing geospatial contract. The OCM also provides technical assistance accessing and applying data on the Digital Coast, such as lidar, shoreline, and land cover change data. The OCM also offers training on coastal inundation mapping that helps local staff with GIS expertise learn how to do specialized mapping.
- Facilitating and/or assisting in planning partner workshops and meetings: The OCM has expertise in planning and facilitating meetings, and can support insular areas in identifying desired outcomes, applying different process techniques such as breakout groups, and executing a well-run event.
- Supporting Coastal Zone Management (CZM) and Coral programs: The OCM liaison positions support the territories as they apply for, execute, and report out on their use of NOAA grant funds, and they share lessons and best practices from other states and territories. One liaison serves Coral and CZM programs in each territory. Also, the OCM supports fellowships that build capacity in territories' coastal and coral programs.
- Regional networking: By maintaining a strong regional presence in the Southeast and Caribbean as well as the Pacific, the OCM often serves as the first point of contact for coastal programs looking for partners in the continental U.S. For example, the OCM helps connect partners in other NOAA programs, federal agencies, academia, and non-profit organizations.

Importance of technical assistance language being included:

- The territories often face more significant capacity limitations than their stateside

counterparts due to historic inequities. Providing technical assistance is critical to ensure insular areas can access and apply available science and data, can learn from others in the coastal management field, and can maximize the impact of grant funding they receive. Over time, this technical assistance builds on-the-ground capacity and enables partners to take full advantage of not only NOAA funding but other federal, non-profit, or foundation funding.

- Insular areas need access to online data, tools, and references, as well as *high-touch delivery* of the science that enables them to apply it in decision-making.
- Another important aspect of technical assistance is taking the time to listen to and understand needs. The OCM has staff living in the territories and working directly with partners. That enables the OCM to learn about the challenges faced, the capacities and expertise available locally, and the opportunities to make gains. Then, assistance can be tailored to best fit needs.