

## **EPA Support for US Insular Areas – February 2014**

**EPA is proud of the** support it has been able to provide to the US jurisdictions of American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands, from historic increases in infrastructure funding to improve the safety and availability of drinking water in all islands, to supporting the first LEED Platinum building between Hawaii and Australia, to coral reef protection.

**HISTORIC INCREASES IN FUNDING** – Since 2009, EPA has provided more than \$175 million dollars in water and sewer construction funding to the jurisdictions of American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands – more than all prior years combined. This is a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding in FY09, and, more importantly beginning in FY10, a change in the way EPA allocates water and wastewater infrastructure funds to the US Insular Areas. For example, in FY13, EPA provided over \$32 million in infrastructure funding to the Insular Areas. These funds are being used in all territories to improve the availability of safe drinking water. For example, they are being used to increase water storage, improve water distribution, and enhance water treatment and disinfection. In some territories, such as American Samoa, EPA funds are helping to extend the main water system to remote villages. Likewise, wastewater construction grants are being used to protect the health of people and the marine environment in the Insular Areas. For examples, they have been used to extend the sewer system in underserved parts of the islands, upgrade sewage treatment plants, and to build new sewer outfalls to protect swimmers, fishers, and the coral reef. These funds are being used strategically to make large systemic improvements, such as asset management and better electronic monitoring, and to develop long-term master plans, as well as upgrading the existing infrastructure.

**IMPROVEMENTS IN WATER QUALITY** – EPA has been using all tools available – funding, enforcement, technical assistance, and partnership – to significantly improve drinking water and nearshore water quality in the Insular Areas. A decade ago in Guam, boil water notices were common. Today they are a rarity. A decade ago on the island of Saipan, only about 10% of the population had access to continuous 24-hour water. Today that has increased to 95%, improving the quality of life for many residents. EPA has partnered with DOI OIA, the local utilities, and the Governors' offices to prioritize and support improvements in water quality.

**SUPPORT FOR LOCALLY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION** – In FY13, EPA provided over \$11 million to support the American Samoa EPA, CNMI DEQ, Guam EPA, and USVI DPNR/DEP. EPA has worked with local governments to strengthen the financial and technical capabilities of these agencies to oversee solid waste, monitor beach and drinking water safety, reduce land-based impacts to coral reefs, reduce fuel spills, reduce the risk from air pollution, pesticides and contaminated soil, and otherwise protect the environment and health of their communities. EPA uses the Omnibus Territories Act to improve grant efficiency at federal and local levels, and waive matching requirements.

**MILITARY BUILDUP** – The military buildup is bringing opportunities and challenges to Guam, even as the scope of the buildup has changed. EPA, along with DOD, other federal agencies, and the Government of

Guam, has taken a leadership role in the buildup environmental review process, in quantifying the impacts to Guam's civilian infrastructure, and in formulating a framework agreement for implementing Adaptive Program Management, a key mitigation measure. EPA will continue to take a strong role in the buildup as it evolves and as additional environmental reviews are conducted.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE, SOLID WASTE, AND CLEANUP** – EPA's Superfund program has a long history of responding to natural disaster in the Pacific and Caribbean, and will continue to do so. It has also undertaken cleanup or removal of sites contaminated by petroleum or other chemicals in all insular areas.

**REDUCING LEPTOSPIROSIS** – EPA has supported the American Samoa Government's efforts to reduce the potentially fatal disease of Leptospirosis, spread through contact with animal waste, by replacing poor pig waste management with a more sustainable practice. Supported by EPA funding, and in partnership with USDA's EQUIP program, the American Samoa EPA has led an effort to decrease the number of illegal piggeries, and to promote more sustainable pig management. The results: a cumulative nutrient load reduction of over 16,000 pounds of nitrogen and 63,000 pounds of phosphorous into American Samoa's water ways, a large reduction in bacterial loading into streams and onto beaches, and the removal of 5 water bodies from EPA's list of polluted water bodies.

**SUPPORTING THE FIRST LEED PLATINUM BUILDING BETWEEN HAWAII AND AUSTRALIA** – In October 2012, construction was completed on a new "green" building to house the American Samoa EPA. In 2013 it was certified as LEED platinum, the highest certification for a green building. The new building has a green roof and generates 60 kW of energy through photovoltaic solar panels. The building's power bill was lowered from over \$2000.00 per month to just \$5.00 in the first full month of use. The building has also achieved "net zero" for energy, meaning the building produces more energy through renewable power generation than it consumes annually. The American Samoa EPA's former building was damaged in the 2009 tsunami. The new building was funded by EPA, DOE, NOAA, and FEMA.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY** – EPA has partnered with DOI OIA, DOE NREL, and local government in the development and ongoing activities of the territorial energy task forces. Additionally in CNMI, EPA helped establish a wind turbine and photovoltaic system at Saipan Southern High School, the first such system on the island, by allowing a hazardous waste violator to build a renewable energy system in lieu of a fine paid to the US Treasury. Using this as a model, other CNMI schools built renewable energy systems with available DOE ARRA funding.

**ULTRA LOW SULFUR DIESEL (ULSD)** – EPA worked with the Guam EPA, the Guam Legislature, and interested private sector partners to introduce ULSD to Guam's gas stations in 2011, replacing what had been very high sulfur fuel. In American Samoa, EPA worked with FEMA to use ULSD in the diesel generators which replaced the power plant destroyed in the 2009 tsunami. There are significant health benefits associated with replacing high sulfur fuel with ULSD. In 2011, EPA made territories eligible for the first time for grants under the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act.

**SUSTAINABILITY** – EPA continues to support local efforts to improve sustainability in the Insular Areas from the bottle bill in Guam, to improving recycling rates. EPA has provided technical assistance to

Guam in developing a bottle bill, which could divert a significant waste stream. Additionally, EPA has worked closely with the Guam EPA, DOD, and local Guam recycling and disposal companies to establish a recycling measurement system that will be used to track Guam's progress toward Zero Waste. In November 2012, the Guam EPA announced its first-ever calculated island-wide recycling rate of 18%. By 2013, Guam's recycling rate had jumped to 28%.

**CORAL REEFS** – EPA works with local governments and other federal agencies to protect coral reefs in the Insular Areas. EPA is a member of the US Coral Reef Task Force and its Steering Committee, and partners with the Insular Areas and other federal agencies to prevent land-based sources of pollution, such as stormwater, sediment, or sewage from impacting coral reefs. In addition, EPA has developed coral reef biocriteria to aid resource managers, and has supported research on coral resilience to climate change impacts. EPA Regions 2 and 9 have drafted coral reef strategies and plans to improve the protection of coral reefs in Hawaii and the US Insular Areas. These aim to mainstream coral reef protection efforts, highlight the impacts of climate change on coral reefs, and utilize the Clean Water Act and other authorities to improve the protection of coral reefs in the Pacific and Caribbean. Additionally, in January 2013, EPA Region 2 announced the formation of the Caribbean Coral Reef Protection Group, an interagency effort to protect coral reefs off the shores of Puerto Rico and USVI. In addition to EPA, the Caribbean Coral Reef Protection Group will include USVI DPNR, NOAA, and FWS, among others, and will work to coordinate more effective government strategies in protecting coral reefs.

**CARE GRANT TO USVI** – Through an EPA \$300,000 CARE award, the Coral Bay Community in St. John, USVI was able to leverage over an additional \$1.5 million in other federal and private funding sources for continued environmental sustainability. The CARE project focused on minimization of toxics, including loading of sediments transported via storm runoff, related to rapid development of the area, in order to protect the coral ecosystem within the 3000 sq acres watershed community of Coral Bay.