

CORAL BAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL, INC.

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Funding Available for Rainwater Infiltration and Detention, Road Paving and Reduction of Sediment entering the Ocean Waters (3-12-09)

Here is an extraordinary opportunity for funding for improvements of drainage on private and public land and roads. It will be a challenge to all of us! Let's hope we can find ways to work together to bring these funds to the VI. This funding will pass directly from the Federal Government to nonprofit agencies for contracting out. These funds will not pass through the VI government, but come directly to nonprofit agencies.

Background: NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) is recognizing that land-based sources of pollution must be curbed to help ensure the continued existence of coral reefs, including endangered species, such as elkhorn and staghorn coral. New federal funding policies are being developed that anticipate funding on private and public land to eliminate sedimentation in runoff waters into the ocean. Therefore stormwater retention, paving of dirt roads, and restoration of wetlands and salt pond habitats are anticipated to be eligible for future federal grant funds during the next decade.

Today: As part of the national Economic Stimulus package, NOAA has received \$170 Million to distribute for habitat restoration and coral protection programs. Reducing sediment into the ocean is one of the objectives. The funding can be made directly to nonprofit organizations, as well as to government agencies. The Coral Bay Community Council has worked continuously with NOAA and EPA staff to identify ways and funding to reduce the impacts of sedimentation into our Coral Bay waters. The \$300,000 two-year grant from EPA is funding a stormwater engineer to design appropriate stormwater retention devices and areas on both public and private land in Coral Bay, with the permission of and in partnership with private owners and the VI government.

This project is just getting actively underway with the hiring of the engineer within the next month. **Meanwhile we have an immediate opportunity to apply for Federal Funds up to \$5 million to be spent within the next 18 months to cure and reduce sediment runoff into Coral Bay. CBCC received the written request for proposals on March 6th and the final application is due in just 4 weeks.** We are cooperating with the Virgin Islands Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. (VIRC&D) to present a single \$10 Million Virgin Islands proposal to NOAA to improve the chance of funding. VIRC&D will be the lead agency.

CBCC is asking all private landowners (and groups of adjacent owners) with erosion problems, steep dirt roads, wetlands and ghuts with poorly modified drainage to step forward. Let's begin discussions with CBCC to add rehabilitation of natural drainage on your land and reduction of erosion and sedimentation to a large list of needed restoration

projects. CBCC is also asking Public Works to participate and cooperate in this project, on the same basis as private landowners are being included.

Projects will be prioritized for funding on this list by: 1) the amount of reduction of sediment reaching the bay, 2) the ready cooperation by affected land owners, 3) the ability to do the construction quickly, in conformance with federal economic stimulus rules. 4) potential for other funding sources. We anticipate building a list of needed projects that may exceed \$15 Million in costs, and, if we are lucky, doing the first \$2 to 5 Million during the next two years.

Some projects may be very small, and some will involve the cost of paving of a mile or more of roadway.

To be added to this list early –and be considered for this NOAA grant opportunity, CBCC needs the following by March 19th:

1. A letter from the landowner(s), indicating

a) a willingness to participate with CBCC, the Virgin Islands Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. and the VI Government in designing, permitting, and constructing water retention and sediment reduction devices and road paving to be located on your private land, and **authorizing access to the land and agreeing to execute on a timely basis --mutually agreed to -- future documents.**

b) any volunteer labor, paid labor or cash outlays that will be made by the owner toward constructing this total project. (not necessary, but desirable, improves chances of grant)

c) a willingness to enter into a future agreement (such as forming a landowner's deeded or voluntary association) to maintain perpetually the sediment reduction devices and roadways.

2. Available design plans, parcel maps, photographs, documents, topographical maps, and deeds to facilitate the planning and permitting processes.

Please also understand that your projects may not be selected for inclusion in this initial funding application. However, they will be added to the longer list for future funding opportunities – and will demonstrate the great need for these funds.

Thank you for considering this. **If you have questions, please contact CBCC at coralbaycommunitycouncil@hotmail, or come by or call the CBCC office Monday, March 16th or Tuesday, March 17th between 12 and 4 pm, 776-2099.**

There will also be a CBCC-sponsored meeting at Sputnik's at 6pm on Monday, March 16th to explain the funding possibilities and how to participate. Everyone is welcome – bring your questions.

Sharon Coldren, President, CBCC 776-2099, or 513-4298