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NEWS

Thirty-Five New Projects Will Support Underserved Communities through Habitat Restoration and Capacity Building

April 21, 2023

Nearly \$25 million in funding recommended under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will support habitat restoration efforts of underserved communities.

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Funding will support the Native Village of Levelock, Alaska, in assessing how future climate scenarios could affect their community. Credit: Rich Buzard/Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys.

NOAA is recommending nearly \$25 million in funding for 35 new projects that will advance the coastal habitat restoration priorities of underserved communities. The investment is provided through the Biden-Harris Administration's [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) with funding leveraged from the Inflation Reduction Act. These projects will support community-driven habitat restoration and help build the capacity of underserved communities to more fully participate in restoration activities.

[View the full list of projects recommended for funding >](#)

Advancing the Coastal Habitat Restoration Priorities of Underserved Communities

Every community has its own unique needs and priorities for engaging in habitat restoration efforts. Some communities have started to identify habitat restoration or coastal resilience activities that affect them, but need additional capacity to take the next steps. Other communities have already completed the initial stages of developing a habitat restoration project, and will use this funding to support the final stages of planning or construction.

Building Capacity

Projects that build capacity include activities such as hiring someone as a project manager, facilitating community participation through surveys or events, or creating foundational plans to guide and prioritize future restoration. In Washington, funding for Long Live the Kings will build capacity for the Nisqually Indian Tribe to incorporate their vision into habitat restoration in the Nisqually River Delta. The Native Village of Levelock, Alaska, will increase their capacity to address the impacts of climate change by assessing how future climate scenarios could affect their community. Along the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor—which stretches from North Carolina through Florida—increased capacity will help create a plan for restoration and resilience that reflects the priorities of Gullah Geechee community members.

Some capacity-building projects include training opportunities such as workforce development or certification programs that may provide a path to a new profession and encourage future careers in the habitat restoration field. In Puerto Rico, expansion of the [BoriCorps](#) [↗](#) workforce training program will engage local young adults in habitat restoration and coastal resilience projects, providing on-the-job experience and leadership skills.

Restoring Habitat

Restoration of shorelines, wetlands, and other habitats can help communities address issues like poor water quality, flooding, and lack of access to green space. On-the-ground restoration projects will be led by or conducted in close coordination with local communities, to ensure they share in the benefits these projects may provide. In Virginia, the Mattaponi Indian Tribe will work to restore shorelines threatened by erosion and sea level rise on reservation lands. Residents of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans, Louisiana, will collaborate with local partners on two projects to restore wetlands bordering their community. Native Hawaiians from the Waihee and Waiehu communities will participate in culturally-rooted land stewardship and habitat restoration at a wildlife refuge on Maui.

Supporting Urban Communities and Ecosystems

Many projects will advance the restoration and coastal resilience priorities of underserved communities living in urban areas. The City of Providence, Rhode Island, will collaborate with residents of the South Providence and Washington Park neighborhoods to identify opportunities for future habitat restoration along the Port of Providence shoreline. In Buffalo, New York, community members in the Black Rock, Riverside, East Side of Buffalo, and western Cheektowaga neighborhoods will help inform a plan to restore habitat and improve resilience along nearby Scajaquada Creek.

Engaging Underserved Communities in Habitat Restoration

Of the 35 projects recommended for funding, nearly 90 percent will be led by partners that NOAA Fisheries has not funded previously. Engaging with new partners is critical to ensuring that the habitat restoration efforts we support are built around the needs of local communities. We look forward to collaborating with both new and existing partners as they advance projects of significance to their communities.

Across both capacity building and on-the-ground restoration activities, each of these projects will work to ensure that the needs and priorities of underserved communities are at the center of habitat restoration efforts happening in their communities.

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