



Coalition of islands call attention on the power of collaboration to face climate change

Climate vulnerable Islands partner to showcase climate resilience and growing opportunities

San Juan — February 26, 2020 | Island communities, from the Pacific to the Caribbean are facing the climate crisis head on and uniting to share practices, resources, and identify ways to strengthen national policies and funding to support their efforts.

At the second Climate Strong Islands Dialogue taking place in Puerto Rico this week, nonprofits, foundations, universities, and private sector discussed access to clean, reliable, and cost-effective energy, food security, and the value of U.S. island communities working together to respond to accelerating climate change. Today, dozens of organizations across the nation have signed the Climate Strong Islands Declaration to highlight the particular needs and incredible potential of islands

The Declaration emerged from nearly two years of discussions about the struggles and chronic underinvestment that many U.S. islands have endured over the past fifty years. Correcting this historic inequity is a matter of basic fairness, as the world's islands have produced only 1 percent of the emissions that are heating the planet, but are often already bearing the brunt of the consequences. "Whether they are as remote as the Samoan islands or nearby Miami Beach, policymakers in Washington, D.C. must keep these communities front of mind and abandon a one size fits all approach to a wide array of policies and infrastructure investments" said Dawn Shirreffs, Senior Policy Director for **The Miami Foundation**

"**Rocky Mountain Institute** (RMI) supports the Climate Strong Islands Declaration and will work to support the capacity strengthening efforts of the network. RMI is committed to driving energy leadership and collaborating with partners to enhance resilience on islands and to share best-practices and lessons learned. Resilience requires coordination of resources across networks and this is an opportunity for island initiatives to share capacity, expertise and actions regardless of their jurisdiction", said Martyn Forde, Energy and Knowledge Management Consultant.

“I am pleased that Guam is the first to commit to this important decision. Signing this declaration gives us a stronger voice in the national and global community,” said **Guam** Governor Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero. “Locally, our government has several initiatives to address climate change including the Climate Change Resiliency Commission and Guam Green Growth. Further, I have gratitude for the hard work and passion of the other signatories to address climate change on our island and to ensure that we have a livable island for future generations.”

“Although we are each unique, we share much in common. This declaration takes seriously the potential for islands to accomplish more together than separately. Our communities are on the front line of climate change. Working together we can ensure that resources and policies amplify all the islands have to teach the world about confronting the climate crisis” Dr. Rob Snyder, President-**Island Institute**

“When we take the time to understand the context of a community and philanthropically invest in it, we are empowering them to face their future, this is our example with the first solar community in the island – Toro Negro, Ciales – and what we are about to do in the municipal island of Culebra. We must make more flexible governmental policies allowing for communities to become more resilient.”, said Dr. Nelson I. Colón Tarrats, CEO of **Fundación Comunitaria de Puerto Rico**.

“The impacts of our changing climate and the growing threat of natural disasters are already being felt by island communities like Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that have experienced the devastation caused by extreme weather events firsthand. We need to ensure that we build housing that is strong enough to withstand extreme weather events and adapt to a changing climate”, Laurie Schoeman, Senior National Program Director for Resilience and Disaster Recovery at **Enterprise Community Partner**.

“Ultimately, adaptation is going to be the great equalizer for communities like ours (and for the field of Philanthropy). And, in the end, just like the systems Philanthropy invests in with the intent of facilitating social change, our field will also have to build the courage and resolve to adapt and to lean into our own institutional evolution in order to support coastal communities into this radically changing new world”, said Deanna James, president of the **St. Croix Foundation for Community Development**.

“We celebrated this initiative. Island communities and peoples have proven time and again that they are amongst the most resilient, inventive, and adaptable cultures around,” said Arturo Garcia-Costas, Program Officer for the Environment at **The New York Community Trust**, “Whether its energy, food, transportation, or solid waste, they can help co-create and perfect the climate-friendly systems we need in the 21st Century.”

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