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Governor Lemanu and U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Discusses the Path Forward

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On Thursday, January 19, 2023, a meeting was held between the American Samoa Government officials and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Regulatory personnel. This meeting was to establish communication between the Territory and the federal agency on ways to resolve outstanding actions that have caused the standstill of ongoing projects.

As a result of the meeting, Acting Director Leah Caldwell recommended that ASG resubmits documentations and reports to explicate the continuation of the projects under the emergency declaration. “Obtaining a permit is a timely and lengthy process, however, we are grateful for the conversations and discussions that have happened today with USACE, to move American Samoa forward in this matter,” stated Governor Lemanu Palepoi Sialega Mauga. He continued, “As a small island territory, the effects of climate change knows no limitations and no boundaries. It is paramount that the government must continue to do the work to protect our people, and preserve the land that we are losing to the rising tides.”

In a separate meeting involving the USACE and Chief of Staff Loa Tuimavave T. Laupola, large project federal permit applications, BIL Technical Assistance, and communication road ahead were key issues discussed. As a result of the meeting, Acting Director Caldwell answered favorably and encouraged submitting federal permit applications for a multi-jurisdictional large projects that will include multi-village shoreline projects. Acting Director Caldwell also shared that the USACE received BIL funding that can provide the technical assistance to the Territory in anticipation of large infrastructure projects made possible under the BIL funds. This will allow ASG the opportunity to request further assistance and funding. In moving forward, these proactive discussions will continue with the USACE and ASG to provide the best and appropriate solutions for American Samoa, and mitigate the ongoing effects of climate change.

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