

## **Urban Water Partnership Meeting**

**Caño Martín Peña, San Juan, PR**

**June 9, 2017**

### **Meeting Notes**

#### **I. Participants**

Refer to Attachment 1 for list of participants.

#### **II. Welcoming remarks**

Ingrid Vila, Urban Water Ambassador (UWA) offered welcoming remarks highlighting this as the first Partnership meeting with the participation of the new incoming state-level administration. Mrs. Vila recognized the importance of the partnerships that have been established with local, state and federal entities and expressed interest in expanding collaborative efforts that will help move forward priorities and initiatives.

José Font, Deputy Director of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Caribbean Office also offered welcoming remarks to meeting participants highlighting the importance this project has for EPA and for Puerto Rico. He encouraged participants to focus on defined objectives as that helps continue moving forward even amidst the unstable financial conditions faced on the Island.

#### **III. Urban Water Program Overview**

Ingrid Vila provided an overview of the Urban Water Federal Partnership and its initial stages at the federal level in 2011 with the commitment of 14 federal agencies. The Caño Martín Peña (CMP) was designated in 2013 as one of 19 locations to benefit from the program. In July 2015 a Work Plan was adopted by the CMP Urban Water Partnership. Focus areas identified for 2016-17 include: Ecosystem Restoration – Planning, Engineering and Design (PED) phase, infrastructure projects, housing relocations, green infrastructure, energy efficiency/conservation/renewable, trashfree waters integration, urban farming, continuing scholarly investigation and further integration of partners.

#### **IV. San Juan Bay Estuary Update**

Dr. Jorge Bauzá, Scientific Director for the San Juan Bay Estuary (SJBE) presented an overview of work being conducted by the SJBE and the specific estuary work plan actions that align with the restoration of the Caño Martín Peña. He also informed of the completion of the first update to the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the SJBE.

Dr. Bauzá also provided results on the water quality monitoring stations located in the CMP (parameters included: dissolved oxygen, fecal enterococcus, fecal coliform). Although water quality index scores continue to be poor for the CMP, the trend shows a slight improvement in water quality in the period from 2008-2016. However, data from 2014, 2015 and 2016 show a marked deterioration trend that must continue to be observed and studied to determine possible causes. The SJBE reaffirmed its commitment to supporting work geared towards the dredging of the CMP and associated infrastructure projects, as restored connectivity and sound wastewater and stormwater management are the ultimate solution to water quality problems in the area.

#### **V. Enlace update**

Lyvia Rodríguez, Executive Director for the Enlace Corporation (Enlace) provided an update on the ecosystem restoration and indicated they are currently working with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on several documents related to the PED phase. She also informed that the CMP project was recently presented by the government of Puerto Rico as 1 of 3 projects for federal funding consideration. The project was able to obtain the certification of compliance with the Floodplain Management Plan from FEMA and is pending approval of the Hydrologic Hydraulic Study (Integral Determination Report) from the USACE.

Currently work is concentrating on development of Phase 1A and IB which would enable the preparation of the staging and disposal areas in the San José Lagoon as well as dredging of the entrance channel to the Caño Martín Peña.

Lyvia Rodríguez also informed that on February 16, 2017 they obtained the Use Permit for the two eco-friendly housing units developed by the Community Land Trust. These units were designed through a participatory design process integrating community members' opinions and recommendations and include provisions for solar panels and water harvesting.

Carlos Clausell from Enlace went on to explain the Buena Vista Santurce stormwater management project that proposes the integration of green infrastructure and grey infrastructure to manage stormwater in the community. The planning phase for this project was first developed through an Urban Water Small Grant. Further planning has been conducted through EPA's Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) project which has enabled to development of green infrastructure typologies in this area. The SGIA proposed typologies for detention ponds at the Albert Einstein Public

School as well as water plazas at various points within communities. Enlace now seeks financing mechanisms to design and construct these grey and green infrastructure projects. Enlace is also interested in integrating water harvesting at the residential lot level to also contribute to the management of stormwater in the area.

Carlos Clausell also informed that Enlace was in the process of designing a solar community workshop with the interest of facilitating a solar community pilot project in the Buena Vista Hato Rey community. This initiative is being developed with the collaboration of Dr. Efrain O'Neill and Dr. Agustín Irizarry, professors at the Univ. of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez. Initial discussion sessions with community members have already been conducted and residents have demonstrated interest in learning more about the benefits and implications of developing a solar community. The workshop is being coordinated for July-August 2017.

Lyvia Rodríguez mentioned the continued interest of students in all matters related to the Caño Martín Peña. She highlighted some of the activities in which students actively participate: school gardens, water quality monitoring, flood response workshops, development of reusable bags (a plastic bag ban enters into effect in Puerto Rico June 30, 2017).

The focus of Enlace is centered on securing funds already identified, thinking outside the box to bring new investment alternatives and continue developing and reinforcing partnerships and commitments.

## **VI. Opportunities for Community Gardens**

Aracelis López, from US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services offered a presentation on the various programs and opportunities available to community and school gardens. Among the alternatives Mrs. López mentioned: the availability of USDA grants for planning, developing or improving community or school gardens; technical assistance programs; and the Farm to School program which has never been used in Puerto Rico. Yolanda Arriaga, teacher at the Albert Einstein School and coordinator of the school garden, expressed interest in learning more about these opportunities. Follow-up meetings will be coordinated to further discuss opportunities for school and community gardens.

## **VII. Final questions and discussion**

To close the meeting, a final question and discussion session was opened for participants to raise any concerns or clear doubts.

- Ernesto Díaz from the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources raised a question as to how climate change elements such as sea level rise and infrastructure adaptation are being incorporated into project design.
- Estrella Santiago from Enlace explained that this is a recurring theme in Technical Committee Meetings of the project and that as the project now enters planning and design phase it is something that must be included and taken into account.
- Ernesto Díaz is concerned that climate change issues are usually addressed as an afterthought of traditional design processes.
- Ingrid Vila recommended to Enlace that they constitute a Climate Change Task Force to ensure constant development and integration of these issues working hand in hand with designers and planners.
- Tischa Muñoz from US Forest Service offered support in the integration of climate change scenarios as they are producing data through the Urban Resiliency to Extreme Events initiative that could prove useful in this effort.

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**Attachment 1 – Sign-in sheet**

| URBAN WATER PARTNERSHIP MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET      |   |
|--|---|
| <b>UW Location:</b> Caño Martín Peña, San Juan, PR | <b>Meeting Date:</b> June 9, 2017                             |
| <b>Meeting time:</b> 1:30pm                        | <b>Place/Room:</b> Rainforest Room, EPA Offices, Guaynabo, PR |

| Name                    | Entity/Agency                          | Phone                              | E-Mail                            |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Jose Ayala              | TEMA                                   | on the phone                       |                                   |
| Brenda Calvente         | USACE                                  | on the phone                       |                                   |
| Ebrian O'Neill          | UPR                                    | on the phone                       |                                   |
| Yolanda Arriaga         | <sup>UNU-EINSTEIN</sup> Dept. de Educ. | 939-642-0121                       | yolondina@gmail.com               |
| Juan Carlos Perez Bobit | AAA                                    | 787-620-2277                       | juan.perez@acueductospr.com       |
| Brenda Gonzalez         | ADS                                    | (787) 765-7575                     | bgonzalez@ads.pr.gov              |
| Jose K. Bauza           | Enlace                                 | 787-475-1085                       | jbauza.mta@unfipera.org           |
| Carlos Clausell         | ENLACE                                 | 787-729-1594                       | cclausell@martinpena.org          |
| Aracelis Lopez          | USDA, FNS                              | 787-766-5586                       | x2 aracelis.lopez@fns.usda.gov    |
| Tisha A. Muniz-Erdeson  | USFS - EITF                            | 928-600-1613                       | tamunorenderson@fs.fed.us         |
| José J. Rivera Sambora  | AAA                                    | 787-999-1717<br><del>787-620</del> | Jose.RIVERA3@acueductospr.com     |
| Wilfredo Ortiz          | H4D                                    | 2745807                            | Wilfredo.j.ortiz@h4d.gov          |
| Jorge Bauza             | SJEDP                                  | 787-638-9474                       | jbauza@ortgonia.org               |
| ERNESTO L. DIAZ         | DNER - CZM                             | (787) 999-2200 x2721               | ediaz@drna.pr.gov                 |
| Evelyn Huerbas          | US EPA                                 | 717-997-5852                       | huerbas.evelyn@epa.gov            |
| Lidia H. Rodriguez      | ENLACE                                 | 729-1594                           | lrodriguez@martinpena.org         |
| Maylene Perez Bobit     | Mun. San Juan                          | 480-6000                           | mayperet@sanjuancindaelpatria.com |
| Evelyn Quinones Ortiz   | M-8                                    | 757-407-9984                       | evelyn4292@gmail.com              |
| Chynthia Toro           | M-8 Israel                             | (787) 368-8057                     |                                   |

