

## **Urban Waters Partnership Meeting**

**Caño Martín Peña, San Juan, PR**

**September 27, 2019**

### **Meeting Notes**

#### **I. Participants**

Refer to Attachment 1 for list of participants.

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

Ingrid Vila, Urban Waters Ambassador (UW Ambassador) offered introductory remarks highlighting work progress attained, welcoming new participants and highlighting Lyvia Rodríguez' work as Executive Director of Enlace from 2004 to 2019. Under her leadership great progress was attained in defining and moving forward the Ecosystem Restoration Project for the Caño Martín Peña (CMP). Lyvia Rodríguez will be now pursuing new objectives in the private sector. Ingrid Vila also welcomed Mario Núñez-Negrón who was recently appointed as Executive Director of Enlace. Mr. Núñez-Negrón is a long time community leader and his appointment completes a main objective of the project to have community leadership leading the project.

José Rivera, EPA Team Lead of the Clean Water Act Team, offered welcoming remarks and introduced Carmen Guerrero, EPA CEPD Director, who participated by phone. Carmen Guerrero offered welcoming remarks to meeting participants highlighting EPA's continued commitment to the CMP project. She also recognized Lyvia Rodríguez' contributions to the Caño Martín Peña and welcomed Mario Nuñez Negrón offering him all the help needed as he transitions to this new role. Carmen Guerrero announced that an environmental funders' event was being coordinated for February 2020 in Puerto Rico and that it could be an opportunity to showcase the Caño Martín Peña project.

#### **III. Update on CMP Ecosystem Restoration Project**

Mario Nuñez-Negrón, Executive Director for Enlace, addressed the group thanking EPA's and Urban Waters' long time commitment to the Caño Martín Peña. He highlighted that 2019 marks the 15 year anniversary of the law that created Enlace. He also recognized Lyvia Rodríguez' commitment and dedication to the Caño Martín Peña and described his appointment as attaining the goal that the project be led by residents and community leaders. He indicated he looks forward to continued collaboration and progress in upcoming years.

Estrella Santiago, Environmental Affairs Manager for Enlace, then proceeded to provide an update of the CMP Ecosystem Restoration Project. Project costs have

changed to \$255M because of increases in labor and construction costs. Every year that passes exposes the project to further increases in costs. The 35% of the cost share assumed by the Enlace corresponds to acquisitions and relocations. Over 100 acquisitions and relocations have been completed already.

In terms of technical aspects, Ms. Santiago explained that the hydrodynamic modeling began in order to demonstrate how conditions in CMP can address flooding, even though it is not a flood control project. Results should be available by March 2020. US Army Corps of Engineers(USACE) is continuing with development of plans and specifications for following phases of Contract #1.

There are currently large areas of vacant lots and the community does not want them to become a nuisance so Enlace will be issuing a Request for Proposals for a master plan to repurpose these lots.

Still over 300 houses have blue tarps serving as roofs. “Techos for the Caño” initiative completed over 100 roofs but they don’t have any more donations to continue.

Ms. Santiago alerted that CDBG DR prohibits use of funds in floodplain and that will cause displacement. Enlace is working with local government to amend Action Plan to allow rehabilitation/reconstruction in floodplain.

Another key objective is to secure federal funding for the project. For this Enlace seeks that Congress approve enough construction starts for the USACE and that in turn that the USACE chooses the Caño Martín Peña as one of its New Starts in 2020. Enlace seeks support from partners to convey the importance of the project to Congress, to the Assistant Secretary of the Army and to the Office of Management and Budget.

María Concepción, Program Director for OXFAM Puerto Rico offered support with senior policy advisors located in Washington D.C.

Carmen Guerrero suggested a brief with EPA Region 2 Administrator, Pete Lopez on current status of CMP funding to gather support and define strategy to address USACE Assistant Secretary and HUD on issues raised by Enlace.

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

10:10-10:30am

Jorge Bauzá, Scientific Director for the San Juan Bay Estuary Program (SJBEP) offered an update on scientific studies that the SJBEP will be conducting in the San José Lagoon to better understand the role of cyanobacter/spirulina on recurring detriment in water quality in the lagoon leading the mass fish mortality. The study will be conducted

in coordination with EPA. Dr. Bauzá emphasized that the dredging of the CMP would certainly improve water quality conditions in the San José Lagoon.

Dr. Bauzá also provided an update on the SJBEP water quality monitoring efforts. The SJBEP monitors 15 water bodies within the watershed through a program run mainly by volunteers. Results are used by both state and federal agencies. 20% of the water bodies monitored are in good condition. The Caño Martín Peña has poor water quality, as is to be expected, but, in spite of this, improvements in water quality results have been recorded, probably corresponding to wastewater infrastructure projects that have corrected direct sewage discharges to the channel.

During the month of December 2019 the SJBEP will be presenting the “State of the Bay Report 2019” which has been update to include a post Hurricane María report.

To questions raised regarding the San José Lagoon Study, Dr. Bauzá indicates that they have not yet been able to identify what is the trigger for the events or the frequency with which they occur. Jennifer Santos from the University of Puerto Rico asks if there is an initiative to alert fisherman of this situation and offers assistance on this if needed.

## **V. CMP Urban Waters 2019 Draft Work Plan Discussion**

Ingrid Vila, led a discussion on the Draft Caño Martín Peña Work Plan was discussed to better define outcomes and goals. An updated version will be presented to the group for final comments and adoption.

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**Attachment 1 – Sign-in sheet**

**Caño Martín Peña Urban Waters Federal Partnership Meeting**

September 27, 2019

9:30am-11:30am

USEPA – Caribbean Environmental Protection Division

ATTENDANCE

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Irme Purdy	EPA	on phone	
(A) Lynn	EPA	"	
(Armin J. ...)	EPA	"	
Steve Koppel	EPA, Regional	"	
José Ayala	FEMA	"	
Angel Meléndez	DNER	"	
Jorge Torres	USACE	"	

Enrique ...  
 DNER      "