

**Urban Waters Partnership Meeting**  
**Caño Martín Peña, San Juan, PR**  
**July 11, 2018**  
**Meeting Notes**

**I. Participants**

Refer to Attachment 1 for list of participants.

**II. Welcoming remarks**

José Font, Deputy Director of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Caribbean Office, offered welcoming remarks to meeting participants highlighting EPA's continued commitment to the Caño Martín Peña (CMP) project. He encouraged participants on continuing to work towards improving conditions in these communities and collaborating to further CMP dredging efforts.

Ingrid Vila, Urban Waters Ambassador (UW Ambassador) also offered introductory remarks highlighting the impact of Hurricane María on the Caño Martín Peña communities and the resilience demonstrated that allowed them to respond effectively to residents' needs. She encouraged partners to identify and pursue funding opportunities that will accelerate the dredging and the related projects, as Hurricane Maria clearly exposed the vulnerability and risks that the clogged channel represents for community residents.

**III. San Juan Bay Estuary Program Relief Efforts**

Dayamiris Candelario and Argenis Catala, both Urban Waters Coordinators for the San Juan Bay Estuary Program (SJBEP), presented work performed in the communities of Caimito (San Juan), Juana Matos (Cataño) and Loiza to provide relief and recovery assistance following Hurricane María. Brenda Torres, SJBEP Executive Director and Ingrid Vila, UW Ambassador, collaborated in defining objectives for the Urban Waters Program Relief Efforts in the Urban Watershed of the San Juan Bay Estuary. These are: improve access to safe and clean water, improve watershed quality and connectivity, promote sustainable materials / debris / solid waste management and enhance community preparedness and resilience.

Javier Laureano, EPA Region 2 Clean Water Division Director, requested that context be provided as to how these communities were selected for the relief program. Ingrid Vila informed the group that following the impact of Hurricane María on the Island, a need was identified to expand the work being conducted by San Juan Bay Estuary Program to directly assist communities. The intention was to provide support to communities that proved vulnerable to weather events, faced environmental justice

issues, had high poverty levels and lied within the San Juan Bay Estuary footprint. Caimito, Juana Matos and Loiza complied with all these requirements.

The Urban Waters Coordinators explained that work in communities, which began during the month of January 2018, has included distribution of water filters, assessment of roof repairs and preparation of proposals for funding, installation of solar panels in community center (Caimito), evaluation of river channel obstructions, among other initiatives. Community meetings to assess post-hurricane conditions and self-preparedness measures are helping tailor community preparedness plans and assistance.

#### **IV. Caño Martín Peña Update**

Lyvia Rodríguez, Executive Director for the Enlace Corporation (Enlace), provided an overview of the impact of Hurricane María in the Caño Martín Peña communities, as well as, community response and relief efforts. In summary: Hurricane Maria completely destroyed approximately 75 homes; 1,000 houses lost their roofs partially or totally; 70% of the communities were affected by floods; and there was significant loss of vegetation further clogging the channel.

The strong partnerships the community has developed over the years enabled a quick response including receiving 800 tarps within 30 days, the installation of over 500 blue roofs, as well as transitioning from tarps to permanent roofs. Direct relief was also coordinated with partners including providing hot meals, drinking water and health related assistance. Debris removal was also facilitated by partners, as well as, providing three community centers with solar energy installations and storage.

The “Mi Casa Resistente” (My Resistant House) competition will enable the construction of three homes during FY 2019 that will provide greater resiliency to homeowners in future weather events.

Lyvia Rodríguez also offered an update on the dredging of the Caño Martín Peña and related infrastructure projects, including housing acquisitions.

Elí Díaz, President of the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) announced during the meeting that an agreement between Enlace and PRASA will allow the start of construction, by January 2019, of the Borinquen Potable Water Relocation. This is a critical project for the dredging of the channel. Elí Díaz also announced that PRASA had also finalized an agreement with the Puerto Rico Highway

and Transportation Authority to work on the rehabilitation of the Barrio Obrero Marina wastewater vacuum system.

Lyvia Rodríguez informed that unfortunately the Caño Martín Peña project had not been included as a construction start for the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for this year and had not been presented in the list of projects to be addressed by the USACE through the supplemental funding as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018.

Estrella Santiago, Environmental Affairs Manager for Enlace, explained that Enlace is expanding the Scope of Contract 1 to include dredging of the San José Lagoon and other components that are shovel ready so that when funding arrives the project can move at a faster pace. Among other strategies, Enlace seeks to work with local government so that Community Development Block Grant- Recovery Program funds that are allocated to Puerto Rico be used for the Caño Martín Peña project.

José Javier Rivera, Infrastructure Design Director for PRASA, recommended that Enlace review the Recovery Plan prepared by the government of Puerto Rico, provide feedback and request that the Caño Martín Peña be explicitly included as a project for recovery funding. PRASA President, Elí Díaz, indicated they have talked to central government officials about the importance of the Caño Martín Peña project.

Louise Legonis from USDA-NRCS asked whether housing units within the CMP were mainly single family or multi-family units. Lyvia Rodríguez responded that there was a little bit of everything.

#### **V. USDA- NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program**

Luis Hernández, USDA-NRCS Acting Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Manager for the Caribbean Region, and Damaris Medina, from USDA-NRCS, provided an overview of the EWP Program which is designed to help people and conserve natural resources by relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, drought, windstorms, and other natural occurrences. All projects must be related to a sudden watershed impairment and erosion control. Projects may fall within two categories:

- Urgent and Compelling (Exigency) – An imminent threat to life and property exists and requires immediate federal action. To be completed within 10 days of accessing the site in order to protect life and property.
- Emergency (Non-Exigency) – A situation where the threat to life and property is high enough to constitute an emergency, but is not considered urgent and

compelling. Does not require immediate action, but should be completed as soon as possible (within 220 days from starting work).

The current 100% cost share deadline is December 10, 2018.

Luis Hernández offered a summary of work done to date and collaborations that have enabled the work to progress effectively, and encouraged meeting participants to consider the EWP Non-Exigency program if there are situations caused by the hurricane that are causing channel/watershed obstructions resulting in threats to life and property.

## **VI. Resiliency Hubs and Urban Resilience SRN**

Tischa Muñoz-Erickson, from the U.S. Forest Service's Institute of Tropical Forestry, briefed participants on work done by the Urban Resilience to Extreme Events Sustainability Research Network (UREx SRN). San Juan is one of ten cities that are part of the network. UREx SRN is an interdisciplinary network of scientist and professionals seeking to promote, design and implement resilient urban infrastructure to provide eco-systemic services, improve social well-being and harness technology in ways to benefit all citizens equitably.

Several workshops/meetings have been held in San Juan that have allowed for the development of Urban Resilience Scenarios and, more recently, for the discussion on the Resilient Coastal Cities Smart and Connected Communities Project that seeks to develop a resiliency hub in Santurce. The network is now working on:

- Finalizing analysis and evaluation of scenarios through a second participatory workshop;
- Continuing work with communities, including the Caño Martín Peña, to establish hubs in Santurce;
- Preparing proposals for development of visualization and communication platforms to serve community hubs.

## **VII. Closing**

As the meeting came to an end, Ingrid Vila, encouraged participants to identify possible programs or funding opportunities that could help advance the various initiatives and projects that were discussed.

A follow up UW Partnership meeting will be coordinated for September 2018.

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**Attachment 1 – Sign-in sheet**

| URBAN WATER PARTNERSHIP MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| UW Location: Caño Martín Peña, San Juan, PR   |   | Meeting Date: July 11, 2017                            |  |
| Meeting time: 1:00pm                          |   | Place/Room: Rainforest Room, EPA Offices, Guaynabo, PR |  |
| Name  | Entity/Agency                           | Phone  | E-Mail   |
| Argenis Cabello                               | Estuario de la Bahía San Juan           | 787-922-2874   | argenis_cabello@gmail.com<br>acabello@estuario.org |
| Katia Avilés                                  | Estuario                                | 787-3789038  | KAviles@estuario.org                               |
| Jose C. Font                                  | EPA                                     | 787-977-5815   | font.jose@epa.gov                                  |
| José J. Rivera Samabris                       | AAA                                     | 787-717-8858<br>(413)                                  | Josa.Rivera3@queductopr.com                        |
| Luis Hernandez                                | USDA-NRCS                               | 537-8533   | luis.hernandez@ma.usda.gov                         |
| Luis Martir Diaz                              | USDA - NRCS                             | 870-208-3914   | luis.martir@ar.usda.gov                            |
| Damaris Medina                                | USDA - NRCS                             | 787-766-5715   | damaris.medina@pr.usda.gov                         |
| Lydia E. Collazo - De Jesús                   | USDA - N.R.C.S.                         | (787) 390-7302   | lydia.collazo@pr.usda.gov                          |
| Louise Legouis                                | USDA - NRCS                             | (413) 237-8716   | louise.legouis@ma.usda.gov                         |
| JOSE E AYALA                                  | FEMA                                    | 787-405-8658   | jose.ayala3@fema.dhs.gov                           |
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| ALEXANDER AYALA                               | MSJ                                     | 787.608.1275   | ayala@sanjuan.ciudadpatricio.com                   |
| ILIA Espada                                   | HUD                                     | 787-766-5400   | ilia.espada-goitie@hud.gov                         |
| Dagaminis Candelaui                           | Programa del Estuario de la Bahía de SJ | 787-944-7730   | dcandelaui@estuario.org                            |
| JORGE BAVZA                                   | STBE P                                  | 787-638-9471   | jbaeza@stbepr.org                                  |
| José A. Rivera                                | EPA                                     | (787) 977-5842   | rivera.jose@epa.gov                                |
| Eli Díaz                                      | PRASH                                   |  |  |
| Ignacio Vila                                  | U.W.                                    | 787-642-1230   | ignacio.vila@sanjuan.com                           |
| Carlos Muñoz                                  | Enlace                                  |  |  |

