

An aerial photograph of a sprawling urban area, likely in the Caribbean, showing dense residential and commercial buildings, roads, and green spaces. The city extends to a coastline with a large body of water in the background. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

# Making a Visible Difference in the Communities of Martín Peña Channel

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Region 2

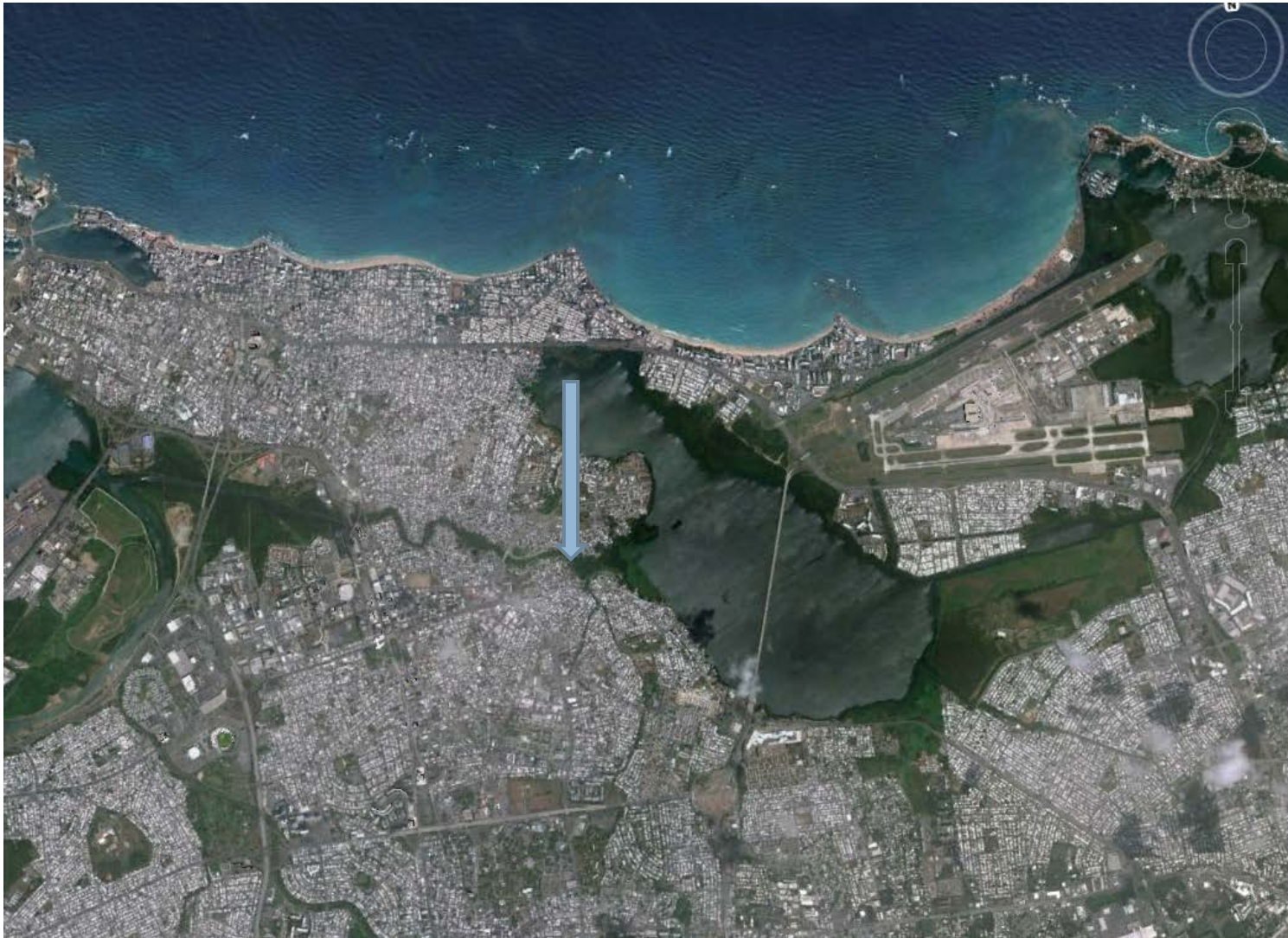
Caribbean Environmental Protection Division  
Multimedia Permits and Compliance Branch

# Background



- Martín Peña Channel is located within the San Juan Bay watershed which is one of the 28 EPA National Estuary Programs.
- It is a 3.75 miles long tidal channel connecting San Juan Bay and San José Lagoon in San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- The channel was a major waterway, and was used for commerce and the transport of goods up to the 1920's.

# Martín Peña Channel



# Northeast to the area / LMM International Airport receives 9.2 million travelers per year

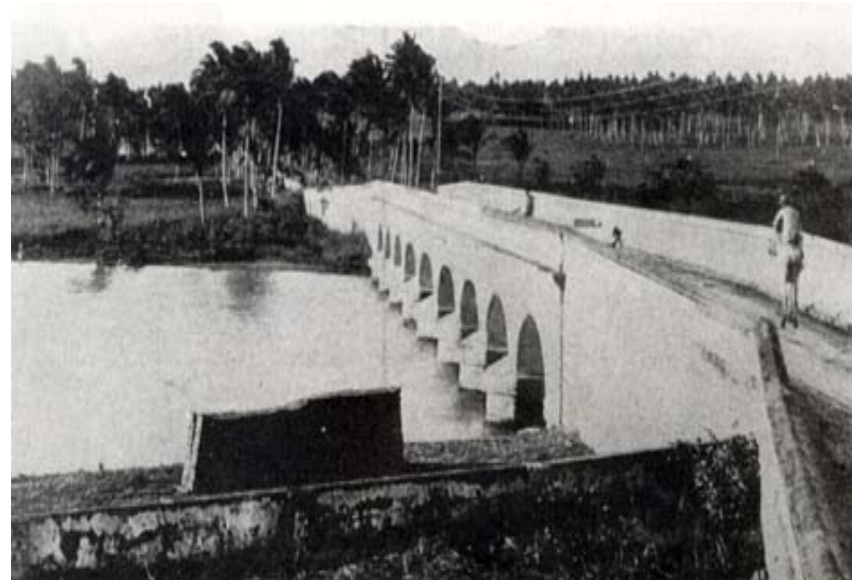


**San Juan Bay is located to the west of the area. 1.2 million tourists through 700 annual cruise ships**



# Degradation of Martín Peña Channel

- As a result of the great depression, many islanders moved to San Juan in the 1930s searching for a better quality of life.
- During this period of mass migration, squatters began colonizing the wetlands associated with Martín Peña Channel with no planning or government intervention.
- Using refuse and other debris, the squatters filled the channel in order to gain land to establish their homes. Non-residents also used the area as a dumpsite.



1898 – Martín Peña Bridge, facing north



1930



1948





1950



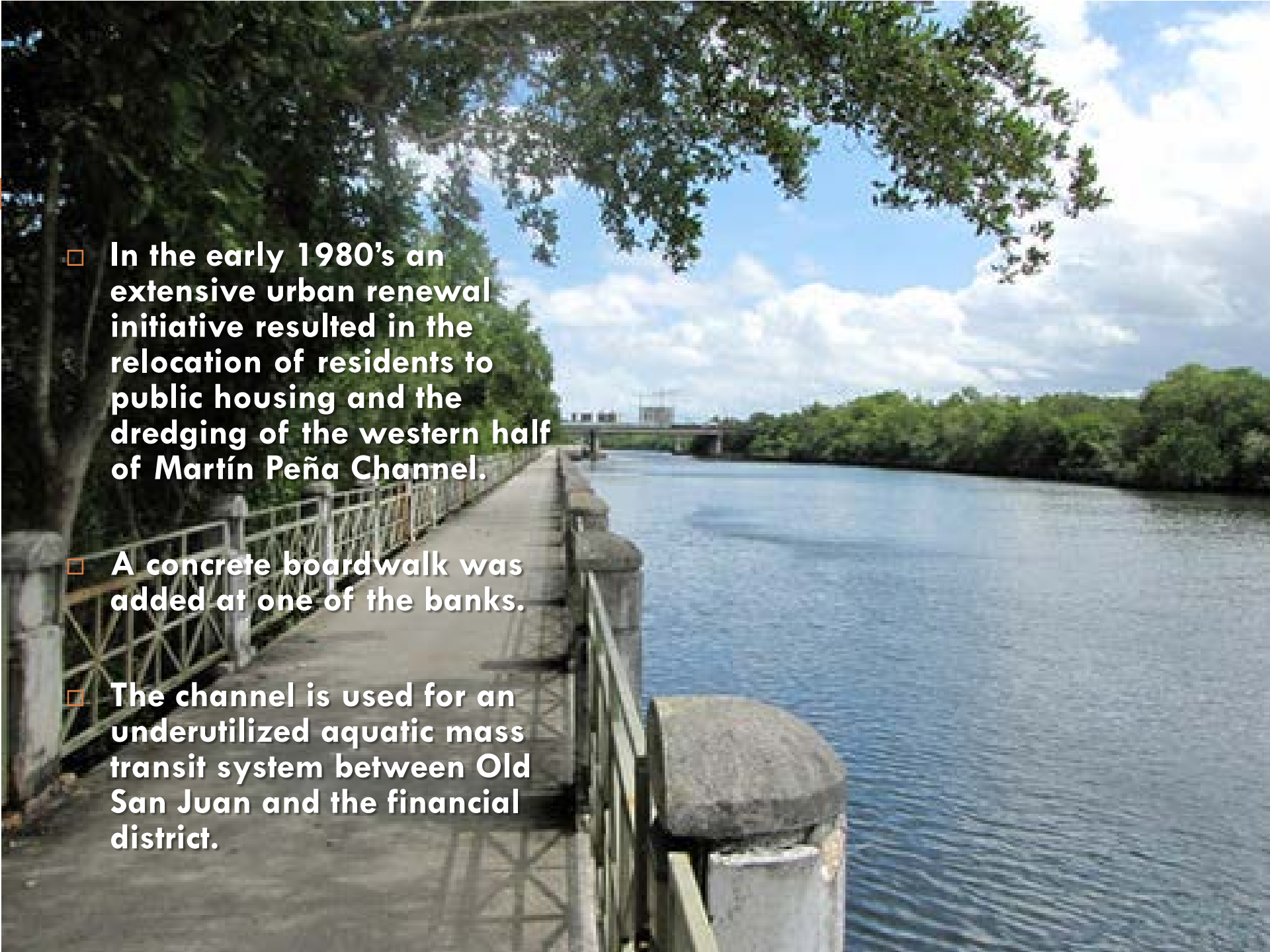
1967



1973



2015

- 
- In the early 1980's an extensive urban renewal initiative resulted in the relocation of residents to public housing and the dredging of the western half of Martín Peña Channel.
  - A concrete boardwalk was added at one of the banks.
  - The channel is used for an underutilized aquatic mass transit system between Old San Juan and the financial district.

# At present...

- ❑ The eastern portion of Martín Peña has been reduced to a width of 2-3 feet and a depth of a few inches at some sections.
- ❑ 8 disadvantaged communities surround Martín Peña Channel.
- ❑ 28,300 persons/square mile.
- ❑ 48% of residents reached ninth grade.
- ❑ 65% of households live under the poverty level.
- ❑ 25% unemployment rate.
- ❑ 39% of households report 1-20 occurrences of flooding within a one year period.

# Current situation



# Challenges

- The blockage of Martín Peña Channel is a severe disruption to the natural water flow within the San Juan Bay Estuary ecosystem.
- An estimated 3,000 structures discharge raw sewage into the channel through direct pipes or through the combined storm sewer system.
- High coliform bacteria levels, PCB's, mercury, lead and other contaminants have been detected in the area.
- Frequent flooding exposes residents of the area to the contaminated waters and sediments.





An aerial photograph of a densely populated urban area, likely in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The image shows a complex network of streets and buildings, with a prominent canal system winding through the city. The canal is the focus of the text overlay. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a map or a satellite image, which provides context for the urban layout.

# Martín Peña Channel Making as part Visible Difference in Communities Effort

- EPA has been actively involved in the study and restoration of Martín Peña since the designation of San Juan Bay as an NEP in 1992.
- The dredging of the Canal is one of the actions of the San Juan Bay Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)- Action WS-5

# Martín Peña Dredging & Redevelopment Plan

According to  
Proyecto  
ENLACE's plan.





**Questions?**

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