



RECLAIMING AND RENEWING A TROPICAL WATERSHED



With a watershed area of 242 square kilometers, or 93.44 miles, San Juan Bay Estuary stands as the only tropical estuary in the National Estuary Program—and the only one to sit outside the continental United States. The estuary program works to steady economic necessities and resource stewardship with environmentally responsible tourism.

Since 1992, the program has worked to protect major habitats such as coral reefs, mangroves, wetlands, and freshwater marshes. Its primary charge is to save a long list of Federal endangered or threatened species such as least terns, brown pelicans, roseate terns, and yellow-shouldered blackbirds from extinction.

THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM IN ACTION

San Juan Bay Estuary Program

The San Juan Bay Estuary makes up 33 percent of the remaining mangrove population of Puerto Rico, and one of the main concerns of the organization's restoration efforts is to rebuild, enhance, and secure the mangrove acreage in the Bay's watershed. Between 2006 and 2008, the program and its partners, including the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resource, planted several species of trees on more than 50 acres of wetlands, riparian corridors, and coastal and urban areas and forests.

Currently, the San Juan Bay Estuary Program (SJBEP) is at



work on a comprehensive community-based Red Mangrove Restoration Project to restore the fringes of the 102-acre Condado Lagoon by planting 800 red mangrove seedlings. The project has received tremendous support and participation from local schools, business associations, local universities, Federal and local agencies, and resident associations. The work even earned an Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Quality Award. The program has also been working to have 1,000 acres of wetland of Cucharillas Marsh declared as a nature reserve. In coming months, the creation of the first underwater

EFFECTIVE



EFFICIENT



ADAPTIVE



COLLABORATIVE



interpretative trail of the northern coast of Puerto Rico will be completed. Development of the trail involves distributing 30 artificial reef modules, which will provide habitat for aquatic organisms. The trail will also give visitors opportunities to learn about tropical marine environments. Restoration efforts received contributions from the private sector, media corporations, Federal agencies, and local governments and municipalities, all of which have supported the Program's success. Private corporations L' Oreal and WalMart joined forces to launch a special fundraising campaign to help fund restoration projects. As the only estuary program in the Caribbean, and other tropical estuaries are afforded a unique opportunity to learn from its challenges and methods of approach.

Visit www.estuario.org to learn more about this and other SJBEP efforts.

EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP) is a unique and successful coastal watershed-based program established in 1987 under the Clean Water Act Amendments. The NEP involves the public and collaborates with partners to protect, restore, and maintain the water quality and ecological integrity of 28 estuaries of national significance located in 18 coastal states and Puerto Rico.

For more information about the NEP go to www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries.