

# URBANWATERS

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

*Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities*

## Martín Peña Canal Watershed/ San Juan (Puerto Rico)



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## Overall Assessment of the Partnership Since the Beginning

The Caño Martín Peña Urban Waters Federal Partnership (hereafter, the partnership) began in 2013 as a set of periodic meetings between federal and state agencies to discuss issues related to the Caño Martín Peña (CMP). Later in 2013, these interactions merged with an intergovernmental committee initiative introduced by state government, striving to meet similar objectives for the Caño Martín Peña. In 2015, the partnership reengaged under a more formal structure, holding meetings twice a year, developing a work plan, and supporting on-going work coordinated through Corporación Enlace del Caño Martín Peña (hereafter, Enlace) and the San Juan Bay Estuary Program (SJBEP).

## Nature of the Partnership

There are many structures working together in the Caño Martín Peña with Enlace and the SJBEP acting as main coordinators. Initiatives have been developed based upon discussions and identification of needs. Partners with expertise or capacity to address these needs coalesce to define work plans.

## Organizations for Planning and Action

In 2015, the Caño Martín Peña Work Plan was developed through a process of interviews and discussions with individual partners, seeking to assess needs and priorities. The plan was discussed with partners in the July 2015 partnership meeting. Valuable comments were provided and then incorporated into a revised version that was adopted later that month.

Two subcommittees were also created within the Partnership: the Housing Subcommittee and the Green Infrastructure Subcommittee. These groups integrate a subset of partners with relevant expertise, which support decision-making and solutions focused on specific topics. While these subcommittees help support decision-making, many initiatives are also developed directly between partners.

## Members of the Partnership

The SJBEP, Enlace, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) serve as leading members of the partnership. Aside from these, other federal and local agencies fill key leadership roles, particularly in partnership meetings.

Below is the list of federal agencies, local agencies, local government, and non-governmental organizations, as well as private sector organizations, which have been identified as key partners for the Caño Martín Peña.

### *Federal Agencies*

- Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
- Department of Agriculture, National Resource Conservation Service
- Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Defense, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Department of Energy
- Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management

### *Agency*

- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Small Business Administration
- White House Task Force on Puerto Rico

### *Puerto Rico Agencies*

- Corporación del Proyecto Enlace del Caño Martín Peña
- Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority
- Puerto Rico Electric and Power Authority

- Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources
- Puerto Rico Department of Housing
- Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority
- Office of the Commissioner of Municipal Affairs
- Governor's Authorized Representative
- Government Development Bank

*Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/  
Private sector*

- G-8
- HealthProMed
- San Juan Bay Estuary Program
- University of Puerto Rico
- Ponce Health Science University
- Caño Martín Peña Community Land Trust
- Fundación Banco Popular
- Sacred Heart University
- McConell Valdes

*Local Government*

- Municipality of San Juan

## Major Actions Taken Since the Beginning of the Partnership

- Caño Martín Peña Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study Approval
- Memorandum of understanding committing USACE, EPA, Puerto Rico Government, and ENLACE to work collaboratively to address dredging and dredged material management needs for the canal
- Year 1 (2016) Appropriations (local and federal) for Planning, Engineering, and Design (PED) Phase of CMP Ecosystem Restoration
- Small Business Administration Cooperative Agreement with Enlace
- \$1 million appropriation from Municipality of San Juan for housing relocations
- Zika prevention strategy design and implementation
- Solid waste collection trucks provided by local government for community-based recycling entity
- Exhibition of the Caño Martín Peña at the Visitor Center of the SJBEP's office
- EPA's stable isotopes study of nitrogen in sediments, plants, and fish to understand how nitrogen from the CMP (found in stormwater runoff and sewage) incorporates into the food web
- EPA's soil characterization study to quantify variation in infiltration capacity, and lend a hybrid qualitative-quantitative understanding of soil capabilities and limitations
- EPA's study of bioavailability of metals (As and Pb) in Martín Peña urban gardens including Soil Shop for community members
- Rain garden development in elementary school through EPA's Regional Applied Research Effort (RARE) funds

- Youth engagement and environmental education project: Popular Education, Key to Environmental Justice, and Sustainable Development for Poor Communities, adjacent to Urban waters, completed through Urban Waters Small Grants program
- Urban Waters Small Grant for the conceptual design for a separate storm sewer system in the Buena Vista Community
- EPA Brownfields grant for Inventory site assessment (petroleum and hazardous); perform cleanup planning activities and develop a community engagement plan in the Martín Peña Channel
- Urban Water Ambassador in 2015 to coordinate CMP UW Federal Partnership activities, engage partners effectively. In 2016, EPA secured additional 2-year funding for this purpose
- EPA Smart Growth Implementation Assistance contract to help identify ways to develop the urban planning and infrastructure strategies outlined in the CMP Comprehensive Development Plan in sustainable and economically resilient ways
- EPA Temporal-Spatial Analysis of Mosquito Breeding Habitat, Arbovirus Health Risk, and Vector Mitigation – CMP included

"The Urban Waters Federal Partnership has managed to establish collaborative ties between various local and federal agencies, communities and other stakeholders to advance the environmental restoration of the Caño Martín Peña and revitalization of its surrounding communities. Along with the Caño Martín Peña ENLACE Project, the partnership has been an effective tool promoting environmental stewardship and empowerment among the residents of Caño communities."

- Estrella D. Santiago Pérez, Environmental Affairs Manager, Corporación del Proyecto ENLACE del Caño Martín Peña.

## Major Impacts of the Partnership

The main impacts of the Partnership have been improved coordination, communication, and networking to achieve more effectiveness and efficiency for Caño Martín Peña Partnership efforts. Partners learn of problems faced by communities, projects, and initiatives developed by other partners, and progress made in various fronts. Further achievements include: improved collaboration for approval of dredging related projects, resolution of issues, and identification of new strategies.

Furthermore, the Partnership has enabled the integration of entities that had not yet been engaged, such as the Small Business Administration, and the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez. This entity has also enabled more active engagement of other partners, such as the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority, among others.

## Major Actions Planned in the Future

- Ecosystem Restoration Project continuation of PED and subsequent phases
- Strategy development for expansion of private sector funding support
- Inclusion of green infrastructure as alternate in bidding documents for Caño Martín Peña walkways
- Development of Green Infrastructure projects for runoff management
- Efficiency, conservation, and renewable energy projects
- Support to community garden initiatives and evaluation of opportunities for development as sustainable economic enterprises
- Integration of solid waste management initiatives to improve and protect water bodies
- Amplification of partners to include organizations and entities in the rest of the United States interested in contributing in the Caño

## Major Challenges in the Future

Currently, the dire fiscal situation faced in Puerto Rico presents a major challenge for this Partnership – this situation poses a variety of limitations on local partners to meet planned activities. Key entities, such as the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority and the Municipality of San Juan, have had to revise project schedules several times due to funding limitations. Nonetheless, the partnership is continuously identifying opportunities and creative mechanisms to ensure program progress.