

Reconstruction Projects in Municipalities: A Cornerstone of the Recovery

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Six years after Hurricane María, the 78 towns have reconstruction projects obligated

Guaynabo, Puerto Rico – There are already close to \$4 billion that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has earmarked for over 6,400 projects that are supporting the recovery of all the municipalities of Puerto Rico.

In 2023, the agency allocated over \$296.8 million for 434 projects to this sector, which represents more opportunities to promote the local economy.

“Six years after Hurricane María, more and more projects have already completed their reconstruction or will soon begin construction. We are excited to witness how these works already have a positive impact in the communities and how the municipal development contributes to Puerto Rico’s recovery,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José Baquero.

One of the completed projects that is already contributing to the socioeconomic development of the municipalities is the Cueva María de la Cruz Historic Park in Loíza. In addition to enjoying the archaeological findings in the cave, visitors can participate in *bomba*, beekeeping and turban-making workshops. In fact, the cave is home to one of the largest bee sanctuaries in the Caribbean.

Loíza resident Raúl Ayala is one of the local artisans who benefits from this reconstruction. For years, Ayala has created masks from dried coconut, which are part of the celebration of the traditional Santiago Apóstol festivities in the municipality.

Following an allocation of over \$349,000, the municipality was able to work on repairs to the María de la Cruz Cave facilities, as well as the kiosks and the cave museum.



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Moving into the central part of the island, the residents of Naranjito benefit from reconstructed roads, such as the Los Martínez Road. Nearly \$848,000 were allocated for a retaining wall, gutters and other mitigation measures that help control erosion and improve the transportation of around 40 families.

The mayor of the municipality, Orlando Ortiz Chevres, explained that Hurricane María caused great damage to the Los Martínez Road, “to the point that there was a big landslide that endangered the safety of the residents. This project is important because it connects the Los Martínez sector with road PR-5.

Meanwhile, for the west of the island, one of the works that was recently completed is the Abrahonda bridge in the municipality of San Sebastián. The bridge connects highways PR-451 and PR-4451 and provides a more direct route between the Guacio neighborhood and downtown San Sebastián.

Elson Alemán, a resident of the community, explained how the neighbors witnessed the reconstruction process. He also explained that the previous bridge — washed away by the Guajataca River during Hurricane María — was a fairly low one, about four feet above the water. “The difference is like from heaven to earth. The residents take about 45 to 50 minutes to go down to San Sebastián and around here it takes 10 or 15 minutes.”.

Following the allocation of about over \$5.1 million, the road was reconstructed by raising it with a single-span bridge that remains above flood levels. The new bridge was built in accordance with new building codes and is expected to last 100 years.

Other municipalities that stand out for the agency’s allocations are Añasco, which has \$280 million for 139 projects; Yabucoa, with over \$103 million for 70 projects; Utuado, with \$107 million for 350 projects; and Barranquitas with over \$88 million for 185 projects.

Meanwhile, the executive director of the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, said: “Fulfilling our commitment to speed the reconstruction of projects led by the municipalities, COR3 implemented various initiatives to guide the execution of currently over 4,150 permanent works whose obligations near \$1.9 billion. An example of the initiatives directed towards making the execution of projects possible is the



development of the Working Capital Advance pilot program, which advances up to 50 percent of the amount awarded by FEMA for the municipalities to begin their reconstruction activities.”

To date, FEMA has awarded over \$31 billion for nearly 10,800 Public Assistance projects directed towards the reconstruction of a more resilient Puerto Rico.

For more information about Puerto Rico’s recovery, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339, fema.gov/disaster/4473 and recovery.pr. Follow us on our social media at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and Twitter @COR3pr.



Naranjito, PUERTO RICO (November 21, 2021) – The residents of Naranjito benefit from reconstructed roads, such as the Los Martínez Road. Nearly \$848,000 were allocated for a retaining wall, gutters and other mitigation measures that help control erosion and improve the transportation of around 40 families. Photo Fema / Eduardo Martínez Rivera



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San Sebastián, PUERTO RICO (August 18, 2023) – One of the works that was recently completed is the Abrahonda bridge in the municipality of San Sebastián. Following the allocation of about over \$5.1 million, the road was reconstructed by raising it with a single-span bridge that remains above flood levels. Photo FEMA/ Francisco Rodríguez Burns

