

# FEMA Approves \$16.6 Million for Water Distribution and Control Facilities

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*A portion of these funds will go towards projects in Culebra and Santa Isabel, while PRASA's Central Laboratory advances in its construction*

**GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico** — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded nearly \$5 million for construction work at three important water distribution and control facilities. This obligation will repair 12 land irrigation pumps in Santa Isabel and a flood control channel in Culebra.

“These projects address issues of vital importance related to the safety and quality of drinking water consumed in Puerto Rico, the protection of a vulnerable population in the island municipality of Culebra, as well as investing in machinery that will allow to intensify production in the agricultural sector,” said Puerto Rico Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator, José G. Baquero.

Among the water control projects already underway, one of the most significant is the Central Laboratory of the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA), which is responsible for analyzing the purity of drinking water and providing the proper treatment of wastewater in Puerto Rico.

The Agency allocated close to \$1 million to demolish the original structure that was devastated after Hurricane María, and to begin engineering studies and construct a new building, work that began earlier this year. Meanwhile, an additional \$2.6 million was assigned to habilitate a temporary facility in the premises of the building in Caguas, so that the laboratory would remain operational.

“The proposed project consists of the design and construction of a new 47,500 square foot building, in compliance with Puerto Rico's new building codes. This laboratory will benefit all the Authority's customers, both residential and commercial. The Central Laboratory analyzes compliance parameters required by state and federal regulations,” said PRASA Executive President Doriel Pagán



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On the other hand, nearly \$2.9 million was allocated to the Puerto Rico Land Authority (PRLA) to repair 12 irrigation systems that sustain the productive quality of agricultural land in the Santa Isabel valley. The ATPR is the guardian and administrator of over 85,000 acres of agricultural land in Puerto Rico.

One of the agricultural businesses benefiting from this allocation is a 1,200-acre farm that produces about 6,300 tons of mangos annually for the local market and for export to the United States and Europe. These funds will be used to replace the system's pumps and filters, repair its electrical infrastructure and rehabilitate the building that houses the pumps. In addition, to avoid the effect of future damage, the obligation includes nearly \$26,000 for mitigation upgrades, which will reinforce the building with stronger construction materials.

"Improving the Land Authority's irrigation system is going to have a great impact on our productions and is going to be of great benefit to the stability of the crops. For a farmer it is fundamental to improve the irrigation system," said agronomist Petra Rivera of MS Mango Farm.

Likewise, in Culebra, an obligation of over \$2.1 million will help repair and improve the Resaca Channel, an intermittent creek that was created to protect the airport and roads from flash floods. Built in 1950, the water channel is over a kilometer long and protects over 500 residents of the Villa Muñeco community of Barrio Flamenco.

"Being a small island, the airport is extremely important to sustain our economy, as well as to transport us quickly between islands, especially in emergency situations", explained Ariel Vázquez, a businessowner and resident of the Villa Muñeco sector.

In addition to repairing and building the water channel – work that includes replacing part of the embankment and building concrete sidewalks – over \$312,000 will be used to reinforce the structure with steel and increase the thickness of the retaining walls.

Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), said that these projects will



address situations that for years have affected thousands of citizens. “At COR3 we will offer the necessary assistance in matters related to the development of these projects,” Laboy Rivera added.

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, visit [fema.gov/disaster/4339](https://fema.gov/disaster/4339) and [recuperacion.pr](https://recuperacion.pr). Follow us on our social networks at [Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico](https://Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico), [Facebook.com/COR3pr](https://Facebook.com/COR3pr) and [Twitter @COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr).



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