Beaches Prepare with FEMA Funds for this Summer's Wave of Visitors

Release Date: May 24, 2023

Over $9 million from federal agency support the reconstruction of these recreational areas

San Juan, Puerto Rico – The seaside towns of Aguadilla, Carolina and Manatí recently received nearly $1.6 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to restore its beaches. This obligation is part of over $9 million that the agency has earmarked for recreative areas in these and other beaches of the island.

Alanys Liranza González is one of the 8,000 people who frequently visits the Carolina Public Beach and she is glad to be back. "The atmosphere is always pleasant and practical, and the restoration of the area motivates one to return. The facilities have been great to bring friends and celebrate activities here."

Due to its proximity to the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport, the Carolina Public Beach — which will receive nearly $591,000 from the agency — is one of the beaches on the northeast coast with the largest number of visitors.

"With repairs completed and others in progress, the projects are already underway so that all Puerto Ricans can enjoy the variety of beaches on the island. Furthermore, the works are part of the 87 percent of Public Assistance projects that include mitigation measures to protect these spaces from future disasters," said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

Miguel Hernández is a beach tennis instructor who will soon celebrate his tenth year of operations at this public beach, serving students from age five and over 60. "The sport brings the family together, [and] helps people of different ages to come and participate. The beach has always been very active and the fact that FEMA granted these funds to recover the facilities has kept people from all over the island visiting," said the businessman.

Moreover, the recreational area of Los Tubos Beach in the Municipality of Manatí is already in its reconstruction phase, according to Mayor José Sánchez González. Known for its surfing competitions, Los Tubos will benefit from over $623,000 to repair gazebos, lighting and retaining walls, among others. The mayor emphasized that this is a tourism project that will take place without disturbing the Tortuguero Lake Natural Reserve, an ecological phenomenon in which the region’s salty marine waters and the fresh subterranean waters combine.

Ernesto Vélez Gandía, reef restorer and frequent visitor to the beach, mentioned that communication and community participation was key in the final design of the project, in which all sectors participated. “The community will have lots of benefits, firstly because there will never be a charge for anything, nor will spaces be restricted to individuals: it is a space for everyone and belongs to everyone, and that is invaluable. It is a precedent that will last for all generations, that my grandchildren will enjoy the beach as I did, that they will enjoy something as beautiful as this and make it last.”

National events such as bicycle rides and festivals have been held in Los Tubos. The area is also used for family activities, fishing, snorkeling and scuba diving. For Caritino Rivera, professional diver and owner of a scuba diving store in Manatí, his specialty is service to the tourists and the reconstruction of these facilities is important because Los Tubos beach “is one of the faces of the town of Manatí.” He explained that he also gets locals for diving lessons, as well as surfers from other towns and countries who come for surfing competitions.

Likewise, for the benefit of the more than 1,000 weekly visitors that enjoy the Crash Boat Beach, its recreational area will feature new lighting elements, gazebos, picnic tables and even sand.

Aguadilla Mayor Julio Roldán Concepción said that once the repairs are completed, for which nearly $340,000 has been earmarked, his goal is to resume weddings, birthdays, school events and summer festivals, among others. “We currently have several mobile businesses dedicated to gastronomy and cocktails. There're also short-term apartments and a beach restaurant,” he said.

One of those merchants is Alberto Cordero who explained that his guesthouse and beach business are focused on providing his clients with a “healthy, calm and beautiful” environment. His business has been operating since 2017 and as of that

same year, he said, “Crash Boat suffered major damage. Since then, we’ve been working to improve the beach infrastructure.”

To date, FEMA has awarded over $30,400 million in Public Assistance funds for about 10,700 projects that will contribute to the reconstruction of a more resilient Puerto Rico.

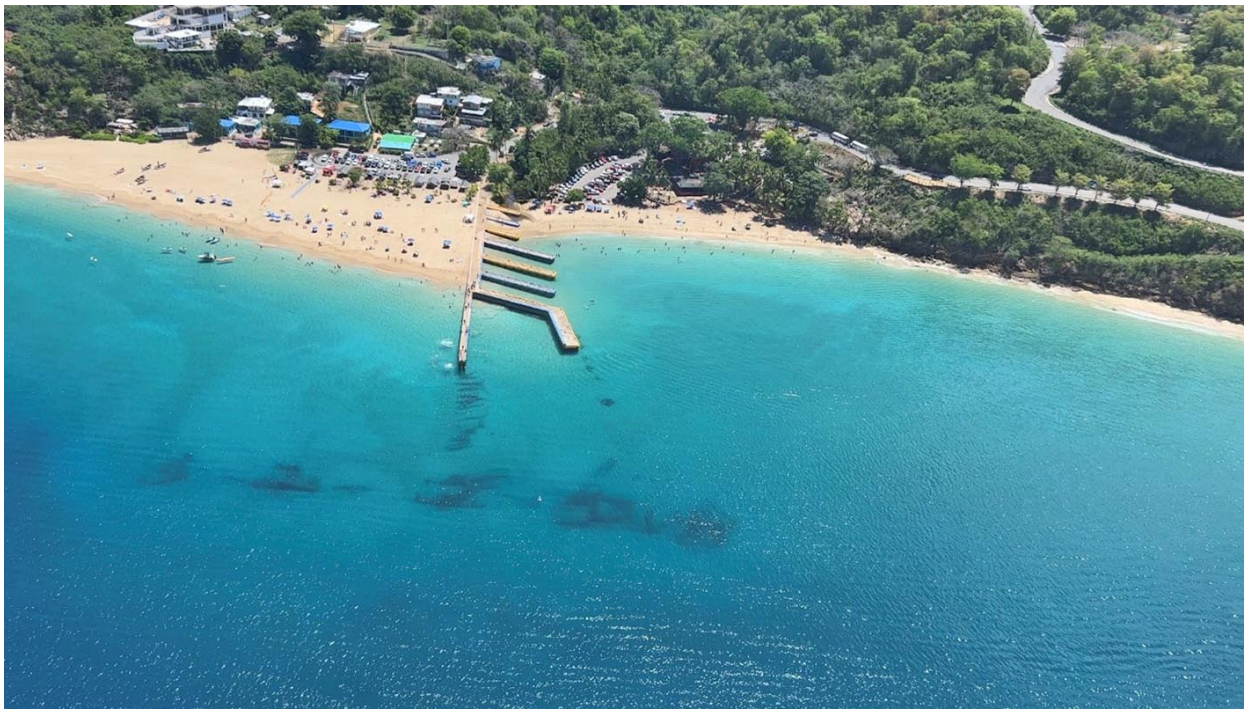
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Carolina, PUERTO RICO (May 18, 2023) – The Carolina Beach, along with other beaches in Aguadilla and Manatí, is part of the projects with over $9 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the restoration of recreational areas on Puerto Rico's beaches. This beach has around 8,000 weekly visitors during its peak season. Photo FEMA/Eduardo Martínez



Manatí, PUERTO RICO (May 19, 2023) – The recreational area of Los Tubos Beach in the Municipality of Manatí is already in its reconstruction phase. Known for its surfing competitions, Los Tubos will benefit from over $623,000 to repair gazebos, lighting and retaining walls, among others. Photo FEMA/Eliezer Hernández



Aguadilla, PUERTO RICO (May 19, 2023) – Crash Boat Beach will be equipped with replacement lighting elements, gazebos, picnic tables and even sand, for the benefit of the more than 1,000 weekly visitors who enjoy the coasts and sunsets in Aguadilla during the summer. Photo FEMA/Eliezer Hernández