

FEMA Supports the Restoration of Puerto Rico's Historic Reserves

Release Date: April 4, 2024

The agency awarded over \$1 million to the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico

Guaynabo, Puerto Rico – The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico, dedicated to ensuring the conservation of ecologically valuable land on the island, received an obligation of over \$1 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to repair its headquarters and other facilities affected by Hurricane María, including the San Cristóbal Canyon, Hacienda Buena Vista and the Ramón Power y Giralt House.

“The Trust’s work to preserve these lands is an integral part of Puerto Rico’s recovery and it is a mission that transcends future generations. Our national heritage is irreplaceable and we at FEMA are very pleased to be able to collaborate with the work the Trust is doing for the well-being of our island,” said FEMA Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

With funds from this obligation, repairs were made to the former Lions Club located in the San Cristóbal Canyon. The structure serves as a work center for the staff that manages the reserve, to store equipment and also to hold community activities. Some of the repairs included the roof, electricity, security doors, walls and windows, among others. Another obligation of nearly \$4,500 was allocated to repair the power cables, pipes and shut-off valves for the irrigation system, and for the electrical switch for the pumping system in the nurseries and Casa Los Llanos.

Para La Naturaleza’s environmental interpreter, Roberto J. Celpa Rondón, mentioned that the nurseries are used for the reproduction of endangered species and include some such as the *Cornutia obovata*, an endemic plant of Puerto Rico, and others such as palo de ramón and palo de jazmín.

“The protection that the nature reserve is giving to the bodies of water that run inside the canyon is also important. We have three bodies of water nearby, the Barranquitas River or Piñona River and the Aibonito River that join the Usabón



FEMA

Page 1 of 5

River, which in turn is a tributary of the La Plata River, so we are protecting a very important watershed that provides water to many people in the island's metropolitan area," he added.

Another protected area of high ecological value is Hacienda Buena Vista in Ponce, an important coffee and fruit plantation built in 1845. It is a historic space with structures that are more than a century old and a hydraulic turbine that is unique in the world and is still operational.

At the Hacienda, nearly \$248,000 will be used to repair the old garage, which dates back to the 1900s and is currently used as a store. An additional \$64,000 allowed the Trust to complete other repairs to the store, as well as to the main house, the warehouse, the offices and the former slave quarters and coffee dryer, where wood and masonry walls, corrugated metal and wood ceilings and interior walls, among others, were repaired.

The superintendent of the Trust's Southern Region, Mariana Rivera Figueroa, explained that from the Hacienda's visitor center they manage about 23 protected natural areas from Guayama to Cabo Rojo. "Here, we also work on many projects that have to do with environmental education, historical education and reforestation. We also have a native tree nursery, an agroecological garden, a medicinal garden, an agroforestry cacao and a coffee field," she added.

Likewise, the Ramón Power y Giralt House in Old San Juan, headquarters of the Trust, also received funds to repair the historic structure. This house is an example of 18th and 19th century Spanish colonial architecture and was the home of Ramón Power y Giralt, the first Puerto Rican deputy in the Cádiz Courts in Spain. The two-story building, with masonry walls and brick panels over ausubo beams and windowsills, was acquired by the Trust in 1989 and was restored in accordance with the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture's historic rehabilitation guidelines for Old San Juan. Part of the repairs included replacing the wood doors and balconies, cleaning humidity stains and replacing the waterproofing treatment on the roof.

For the Trust, the ability to restore historic sites and rehabilitate our natural areas allows them to advance their conservation mission. "Through Para La Naturaleza, founded 54 years ago, we integrate society in the conservation of natural ecosystems and the restoration of historic sites in Puerto Rico through educational



FEMA

Page 2 of 5

programs, volunteerism, citizen science, agroecology, reforestation and community partnerships,” they said in an official statement. The entity has about 65,000 annual participations, including tours for communities and schools, volunteering initiatives and crowdsourcing.

On the other hand, the executive director of the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, said that “the reconstruction of these spaces with a high historical value gives resilience to these structures reducing the possibility of greater damage in the event of another natural disaster. At COR3 we support the execution of these permanent works that have a positive impact on the socioeconomic development of the areas where they are located.”

To date, FEMA has obligated over \$32.5 billion for over 10,900 recovery projects in Puerto Rico following the passage of Hurricane María. Of these funds, over \$7.3 million are earmarked for repairing different facilities of The Conservation Trust of 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.

SAN CRISTÓBAL CANYON, BARRANQUITAS, PUERTO RICO



FEMA

Page 3 of 5



BARRANQUITAS, Puerto Rico (June 6, 2023)– The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico, dedicated to ensuring the conservation of ecologically valuable land on the island, received an obligation of over \$1 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to repair its headquarters and other facilities affected by Hurricane María, including the San Cristóbal Canyon in Barranquitas. Photo FEMA/Eduardo Martínez

HACIENDA BUENA VISTA, PONCE, PUERTO RICO



FEMA

Page 4 of 5



PONCE, Puerto Rico (March 8, 2024) – FEMA allocated nearly \$248,000 to the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico to repair buildings at Hacienda Buena Vista, including the old garage, which dates back to the 1900s and is currently used as a store. An additional \$64,000 allowed the Trust to complete other repairs to the store, as well as to the main house, the warehouse, the offices and the former slave quarters and coffee dryer, where wood and masonry walls, corrugated metal and wood ceilings and interior walls, among others, were repaired. Photo FEMA/Eliezer Hernández



FEMA

Page 5 of 5