

FEMA Addresses Flood Risks in 25 Municipalities

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This will benefit over 1.4 million residents across the island

Guaynabo, PUERTO RICO — According to the Puerto Rico Planning Board, floods on the island represent billions in losses and put at risk some 200,000 residences located in flood-prone areas. To reduce the effects of these natural events, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is working on 35 projects with an investment of \$122 million.

"Some of these projects also address equity and climate change, since they aim to ensure that all people have the same protections regardless of the area in which they reside, as well as incorporate new regulations for the future, taking into account what the trends in climate change reveal," said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

Climate change has been linked to erosion, landslides, floods and other catastrophes. This was emphasized by Dr. Raúl Santiago Bartolomei, Assistant Professor of the Graduate School of Planning of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, who encourages mitigation as a measure to prevent the hydrological damage affecting the island, particularly those associated with the impacts of hurricanes María and Fiona.

For residents and retailers in the Piel Canela Boulevard area in Coamo, measures to address flood risks include a larger capacity stormwater drainage system. The first phase of the project represents more than \$340,000 for engineering services and topographic and geotechnical studies to strengthen this area.

According to Coamo Mayor Juan Carlos García Padilla, this area is the most vital in the city in terms of visitors and is the industrial, commercial and sports hub of the municipality, with a large concentration of factories, restaurants, recreational facilities and medical offices, among others.



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“This project serves to correct the management of storm water runoff that comes down from different parts of the town and falls in this lower sector, which is Piel Canela Boulevard. These funds give us the opportunity to solve the problem and avoid flooding in the future that will affect the economy, sports and the lives of those who pass through the area,” added the mayor.

Likewise, nearly \$279,000 was allocated to install piping in the Santa María community in San Germán, of which \$28,000 was approved for the initial phase. This project seeks to prevent erosion and reduce the risk of property loss in the event of rain from natural disasters by installing 869 feet of corrugated metal pipe inside an existing ditch.

"The impact of FEMA funds on channel repair in this community is extremely positive. For years they have suffered from channel erosion and have had safety, life and property put at risk. Through the project, this problem will be solved, and the community will finally be able to live in peace and feel safe in their homes. In addition, the residents of the area will feel much calmer every time hurricane season begins in Puerto Rico," said San Germán Mayor Virgilio Olivera Olivera.

The Executive Director of the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, said that considering the importance of the development of these projects and the need for funds from the applicants, COR3 extended the Working Capital Advance (WCA) pilot program for the works under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

“I call on those government, municipal and non-profit entities that do not have the money to initiate these mitigation projects to apply for the advance available through the WCA and get these developments that are vital to building greater resilience to future disasters on track,” he said.

To date, FEMA has allocated over \$29 billion in Public Assistance funds and nearly \$3 billion through the Hazard Mitigation Program to increase the island's resilience with mitigation measures.

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





Guaynabo, PUERTO RICO (March 14, 2023) – For residents and retailers in the Piel Canela Boulevard area in Coamo, measures to address flood risks include a larger capacity stormwater drainage system. The first phase of the project represents more than \$340,000 obligated by FEMA for engineering services and topographic and geotechnical studies to strengthen this area. Photo FEMA/Francisco Rodríguez Burns

