



CONGRESSWOMAN JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN
Puerto Rico - At Large

Energy and Water FY 2019 Member Day Hearing
Wednesday, April 18, 2018
2362-B Rayburn. 1:00 pm
5 minutes

Thank you, Chairman Simpson. I appreciate the opportunity to be here this afternoon and discuss US Army Corps of Engineer projects in Puerto Rico. The Army Corps oversees multiple projects in several municipalities and their work is critical to infrastructure and economic stability on the island.

Mr. Chairman as you are aware, late last year Puerto Rico was gravely impacted by two consecutive hurricanes of historical magnitude and left historical damages. Today, 8 months later, there 43,000 families without power or experience frequent service interruptions. In fact, we are at this moment experiencing an island-wide power outage.

As Puerto Rico's sole representative in Congress and someone who was on the ground when the hurricane hit, I can tell you there was no way to prepare or expect such catastrophe. But we continue to move forward. The people of Puerto Rico are resilient and hardworking, and we will

overcome this difficult period with lessons learned and a greater sense of community.

Today, I would like to use my time to talk about a particular community and project, the Caño Martín Peña Ecosystem Restoration Project, located in San Juan. The Caño Martín Peña community is located in a 3.75-mile tidal channel within the San Juan Bay National Estuary and is home to over 26,000 of my constituents. The community has struggled for decades with debris and waste accumulation in the channel, resulting in public health and sanitary complications. Even the slightest rainfall causes the channel to flood and it affects the homes in the Caño, neighboring communities in San Juan and the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport. The hurricanes exacerbated this predicament by augmenting the amount of debris that already clogs the channel and with such high levels of pollution, houses are often flooded with organic waste and trash. Keep in mind we are talking about thousands of families with children and elders that have no other option but to deal with this unfortunate reality and live day after day with poor sanitation conditions. Also keep in mind that this year's hurricane season is rapidly approaching and we need to do anything we can to revitalize this community as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chairman as you are aware, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 includes an allotment of over \$15 billion dollars for US Army Corps of Engineers to construct and repair areas damaged by natural disasters such as Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Additionally, projects covered under this description and include work related to repair, rehabilitation, study, design and construction in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands will be conducted at full federal expense.

This is the time to act. The provisions and funding included on the bill provide a remarkable opportunity for the Army Corps to continue working on the Caño Project considering the incidental flooding benefits it represents and the impact it would have in the San Juan area overall.

Restoring the Caño will greatly enhance the quality of life for residents of this area and will result in greater economic opportunity for its residents and the San Juan area in general. I urge the Army Corps to consider this project as a priority for the flooding restoration assistance it provides and I would like to enlist the help of the Subcommittee to do so according to Committee rules and regulations.

I would also like to submit a list of other Army Corps projects still being developed in some municipalities for the record.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the presence of State Senator Miguel Romero and State Representative José Enrique Meléndez, who also support the further development of this project.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the balance of my time.