



CONGRESSWOMAN JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

PUERTO RICO - AT LARGE

Remarks

**Member Day Hearing. Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
House Committee on Appropriations
Monday, May 3. 12:00pm. WebEx
Caño Martín Peña- Ecosystem Restoration Project**

Thank you Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson for hosting this Member Day Hearing and for allowing me the opportunity to testify. While I have multiple requests submitted for your consideration as you prepare the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2022, I will focus my remarks on my request in support of the Caño Martín Peña- Ecosystem Restoration Project.

As you know, the eastern half of the Caño Martín Peña channel in San Juan is currently clogged with sediments, debris, trash and water polluted with human waste. The 2017 hurricane season exacerbated the poor environmental conditions and persistent flooding that are still experienced today.

The detrimental conditions of the Caño have been present for decades, currently challenging the health and wellbeing of approximately 26,000 residents across 8 communities, economic development of the area, and critical infrastructure, like the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport.

The Caño Martín Peña was authorized by Section 5127 of the 2007 Water Resources Development Act. Since then, the Government of Puerto Rico, the non-Federal Sponsor, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have collaborated to develop this project through the different phases leading to construction.

However, construction has not commenced, and neither has the dredging efforts that would provide relief and safety to the communities ,and reestablish the natural tide exchange between the San José Lagoon and the San Juan Bay, two bodies of water that are of great significance for native species and ecosystem function.

The construction phase must start to restore the Caño and its surrounding habitat, and improve the current conditions that affect my constituents. This is why I have selected the Caño Martín Peña project as my #1 request for Community Project Funding in for Fiscal Year 2022.

Specifically, my request consists of \$32 million in construction funds to initiate the construction phase, which is divided in 3 distinct contracts. Recieving funding for construction would allow the Corps to work with the non-Federal Sponsor, ENLACE, to initiate work on the first contract. Contract #1 prepares main disposal sites and includes dredging of the San José Lagoon up to Barbosa Bridge, which will excavate 140,000 cubic yards of material. This contract is shovel ready, and the non-federal sponsor has already met their real estate requirements.

The communities at the Caño are ready to see some real progress in what is one of the most densely populated areas on the Island.

Congress currently has a remarkable opportunity to support this project through the Community Project Funding process available for FY22. I respectfully request you fully consider this request and the benefits it would bring to our ecosystems, our communities, our flood mitigation and preparedness capabilities on the Island, and the health of these residents who have been waiting far too long.

Thank you and I yield back.