



Highlights of March 2018

March 5: First meeting of the San Juan Bay Estuary Program's Citizen Action Committee since hurricane María



March 6: "Junte X Punta Santiago" community event attended by 400 people, with desalination plant training and offering of various relief services

March 7: Community meeting in Cataño to introduce Urban Waters program and conduct disaster resilience SWOT analysis.



March 8: Dune reforestation event in Ocean Park with 80 volunteers from the American Fisheries Society Southern Division

March 13-15: EPA National Estuary Program 2018 Training Workshop



March 20: Citizen Science Certification Seminar at the University of Puerto Rico begins

March 20: San Juan Bay Estuary Program trip to Vieques for desalination plant project.

March 21: "Exploring the Piñones Forest" Kayak and hiking educational tour with students from Boneville School



March 22: Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program Bacteriological Workshop

March 27: First monthly water quality sampling in 5 sites for Urban Waters Program



Activities of the San Juan Bay Estuary Program

Period: March 1 – 30, 2018

Following is a summary of the activities which the San Juan Bay Estuary Program (SJBEP) completed during the month of March. The activities are organized by the five CCMP areas: Water Quality and Sediment, Aquatic Waste, Green Infrastructure, Habitat Fish and Wildlife, and Public Education and Involvement.

Water Quality and Sediment

The SJBEP conducted its Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program monthly sampling the week of March 19th with the help of volunteers. On March 22nd, the SBEJP held its second workshop for the volunteers in the Program. The topic was on the analysis of the samples for the bacteriological monitoring which takes place weekly. 18 volunteers were trained in the analysis.

The SJBEP its weekly bacteriological monitoring events in the Condado Lagoon and coastal areas on conducted on March 1, 8, 15, 22, and 27. The last week's monitoring event was done on Tuesday rather than Thursday in order to post the information before Holy Week long weekend, during which people typically go to the beach. Results were made available to the public on social media. Below are the results for the monitoring event on March 27:



At the end of the month, the SJBEP Urban Waters Program began their monitoring in the project areas of El Ancón in Loíza, Caimito in San Juan, and Juana Matos and Puente Blanco in Caimito. On March 27th, the Urban Waters Coordinators conducted their first monitoring event, sampling for *Enterococcus* bacteria at two sites in Caimito and one site in each of the other locations. See a photo of the monitoring below. The monitoring will be completed on a monthly basis. On March 2, the SJBEP met with the Inés María Mendoza school in Caimito to include the school in the SJBEP's Guardians of the Estuary Program.



During the month on March, the SJBEP has been busy preparing for the Puerto Rico National Water Quality Monitoring Day, a yearly island-wide citizen science event which will take place on Saturday, April 14, 2018. This month the SJBEP held three group leader trainings, for volunteers which will be organizing groups of volunteers to monitor a local body of water on April 14. 2 volunteers were trained on March 23 in the Estuary Center (see picture below), 13 volunteers were trained on March 13 at the University of Puerto Rico – Humacao campus, and 24 volunteers were trained on March 27 at the University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras campus. The SJBEP was also present at the municipality of Caguas' "Earth Hour" event, during which the SJBEP recruited volunteers for the Puerto Rico National Water Quality Monitoring Day.



On March 2, the SBEJP held a meeting for those interested in submitting a proposal for the design of a mobile application for the public to use to report and document discharges into bodies of water. Three people went. They will be submitting their proposals at the beginning of April.

Green Infrastructure

Earlier in the year, the American Fisheries Society Southern Division reached out to the SJBEP to do a day of service on March 8th, during their annual conference which this year was held in Puerto Rico. The SJBEP chose to do a dune restoration and reforestation event. On March 1st, the SJBEP took a field visit to Piñones, Loíza to plan the dune restoration. However, on March 5th, 3 days before the event, a record-breaking storm surge severely affected coastal areas around Puerto Rico, including Piñones. Access to the area was closed as enormous amounts of sand washed up onto the roads and the area was inundated. The SJBEP quickly responded by changing the restoration event to Ocean Park, in collaboration with the 7 Quillas community environmental group. On March 8th, 80 volunteers from the American Fisheries Society planted 220 trees (110 sea grapes and 110 icacos), removed sand from the road back onto the beach, and did a thorough beach cleanup. After the storm surges, the importance of dunes and their restoration is in the public eye. The SJBEP will conduct the planned reforestation event in Piñones in April. On March 21, the SJBEP conducted a site visit to the Condado Lagoon to plan for another reforestation event which will also take place in April.



Public Education and Involvement

In the area of educational workshops and environmental talks, on March 5th the SJBEP held its last Children's Community Environmental Leadership Workshop of the series with children from the La Perla community in Old San Juan. On March 7, the SJBEP gave a workshop titled "Cangrejo Violinista" (fiddler

crab) to 65 third grade students at St. John's School. On March 8th, the SJBEP gave an educational talk entitled "The environment and the media" to 12 high school students from CREARTE.

The SJBEP also gave several educational tours. On March 15, the SJBEP received 9 students from Rutgers University and took them on a boat tour beginning in Cantera to discuss the Estuary and the Martín Peña Channel. On March 16th, the SJBEP received 39 second and third graders from the Eleanor Roosevelt school, giving them an educational talk and tour in Old San Juan. Lastly, on March 21, the SJBEP received 25 high school students from Boneville School in an activity titled "Exploring the Piñones Forest," during which they kayaked and toured the Piñones State Forest. See a photo of the educational tour below:



March was a special month for the SBEJP's educational program, as the SJBEP began its Citizen Science Certification seminar at the University of Puerto Rico on March 20th. The seminar is held every Tuesday, during which a different theme regarding the Estuary and the Citizen Science Certification is covered. The seminar provides students with the theory portion, which they may choose to complement with the fieldwork portion in order to receive their certification from the SJBEP as Citizen Scientists in one or more areas. On March 9th, the SJBEP gave a workshop to 24 students from the CECIA environmental center at the Interamerican University entitled "Participatory Bird Censuses," during which students learned about how they could become certified by the SBJEP as Citizen Scientists in the area of Bird Censuses.

In the area of community engagement, the SBJEP held its first Citizen's Action Committee (CAC) after hurricane María on March 5th in the Estuary Center. The CAC's new president, Marisol Jiménez, was presented to the group. The SJBEP also presented a summary of the various #EstuarioRevive post-hurricane relief activities to the CAC members, and made plans to conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths) analysis with the communities represented by each member.

The SJBEP Urban Waters program also conducted a SWOT assessment with the communities of Juana Matos and Puente Blanco in Cataño during a meeting organized on March 7th in which the Urban Waters coordinators introduced the project to the community. See a photo of the meeting below. On March 21, the municipality of Cataño invited the coordinators to participate in their "International Forest Day"

event as an educational resource. The coordinators gave an educational talk and lead a reforestation event with municipal employees.



Continuing with the project “Providing potable water and community empowerment,” during the month of March the SJBEP identified the two communities which will be receiving the water desalinization plants: Punta Santiago in the municipality of Humacao, and the island municipality of Vieques. The SJBEP organized the community event “Junte X Punta Santiago” which combined training on the water desalinization plant with the provision of relief supplies, food, psychological services, and barber and salon services. The event was held on March 6 at the facilities of P.E.C.E.S, the alternative high school which will be managing the plant. See photos of this event below. On March 20th, the SJBEP went to Vieques to meet with the various community organizations and stakeholders which will be collaborating in the management of the desalinization plant.



Other:

From March 13 to 15, executive director Brenda Torres, scientific director Jorge Bauzá, and stakeholders and community coordinator Michelle López attended the EPA National Estuary Program 2018 Training Workshop. One of the panel topics was Disaster Planning, Prevention, Response and Recovery, during which Brenda Torres gave a presentation on #EstuarioRevive and the SJBEP's post-hurricane relief efforts.