

## SAN JUAN BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM MONTHLY UPDATE

**REPORT PERIOD: February 1 – 28, 2018**

Following is a summary of the activities which the San Juan Bay Estuary Program (SJBE) completed during the month of February. 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 SJBE conducted its weekly monitoring events in the Condado Lagoon and coastal areas on February 1, 8, 15 and 22. Results were made available to the public on social media. February was a special month for the Water Quality Volunteer Monitoring Program, as one of the biannual Citizen Science Training workshops was given on February 21. Fifteen new volunteers were trained in the water quality monitoring protocol, and were able to complete the field portion of their training during the week of February 26. This was also a special week for monitoring, as the biannual samples were taken which are sent to the United States for the analysis of additional parameters. See below for a photo of a volunteer with the samples to be sent for analysis:



Also in the area of water quality, on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Illicit Discharges Detection and Elimination Task Force met in the SJBEF Center to continue finding solutions to the discharges identified throughout the Estuary.

### Green Infrastructure

On February 10, between 40 and 50 volunteers conducted a cleanup of the area surrounding the Condado Lagoon and made space in the soil for the trees to be planted. Residents from nearby condominiums joined students and residents from across the watershed, removing three large bags of garbage from the borders of the Lagoon and preparing the site for the upcoming green infrastructure planting activity.



On February 13, the SJBEF held the green infrastructure reforestation event in the Condado Lagoon with the help of around a dozen volunteers, 22 students from the Julian Acosta School, and ex-Miss Universe Denise Quiñones. 75 red mangroves, 25 sea grapes, and 25 *emajagüilla* (*Thespesia populnea*) were planted. The SJBEF took advantage of the occasion to hold a press conference, announcing the #EstuarioRevive initiative Friends of the Condado Lagoon to the public. The reforestation event and press conference were attended by stakeholders representing the various sectors present in the area of the Lagoon, including residents, hotel managers, waterfront recreational business owners, and government sectors. See article links below and a photo on the following page.

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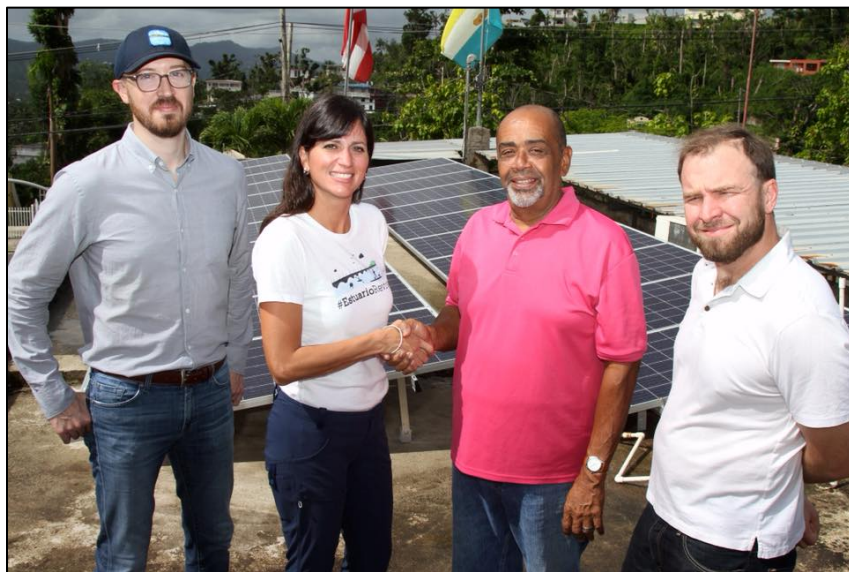
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### Public Education and Involvement

As part of the Urban Waters initiative and thanks to GivePower and Cypress Creek Renewables, on February 2, around twenty solar panels were installed at the Caimito Cultural Center, powering this center in a community which still has no power since hurricane Irma. Community activities, such as music classes, which the center had put on hold since the hurricanes due to the lack of power, have begun again.



The SJBEPM continued its engagement with the community of Caimito, taking advantage of the newly electrified Cultural Center to offer a CineEstuario movie screening on February 21. Eight children enjoyed a movie powered by solar power. The following Tuesday, on February 27, the SJBEPM Urban Waters program had its first meeting with the community to discuss relief efforts. Five community members were present, and engaged in a productive exchange of ideas regarding preparedness and resilience in the face of natural disasters. On February 28, the SJBEPM brought CineEstuario to Cataño, where 12 people came to watch a movie and were invited to an upcoming community meeting. See a picture of the movie screening in Caimito below:



On February 6, the SJBEPM was awarded \$113,000 from Unidos por Puerto Rico to run the proposal titled "Providing potable water and community empowerment." The SJBEPM will identify two communities and provide them each with a solar-powered water desalination plant which was donated to the SJBEPM. Local youth will be trained in the operation and maintenance of the plant, in partnership with a community-based organization. The SJBEPM hired Laura Arroyo as the Project Coordinator and Antonin Forestil as the Field Technician.

On February 26, the SJBEPM met with two professors and five students from the Universidad del Este (UNE) regarding the collaborative agreement between the Estuary and the University. The students will be developing a business plan for the SJBEPM to help it incorporate the tourist sector into its educational and citizen science offerings.

In the area of education, the SJBEPM continued its Children's Community Environmental Leadership Workshop series, offering workshops on February 5, 12 and 26. Around 13 elementary school children from the La Perla community in Old San Juan completed activities such as participative cartography, educational walks, water quality monitoring, art activities, and bird censuses.

The SJBEPM gave five educational talks during the month of February. On February 7, the SJBEPM gave a talk titled "Conserving Biodiversity through Education and Reforestation" to 24 middle and high school



students from the José Julián Acosta School in Old San Juan, to prepare the students to participate in the planting event that took place on February 13 in the Condado Lagoon, as described above under Green Infrastructure.

On February 8, the SJBEF gave a talk titled “By Conserving the Estuary we Protect Marine Life and Other Animals” to 35 second and third graders at the Eleanor Roosevelt School. On February 16, the SJBEF gave a talk entitled “The Estuary, Water Quality Monitoring, and Biodiversity” to 44 students at the Juan Ponce de León High School. On February 23, the SJBEF gave a talk entitled “Conserving Biodiversity in the San Juan Bay Estuary” to 22 students from the Interamerican University, Metro Campus.

Additionally, the SJBEF staff have two workshops as part of the Guardians of the Estuary school program to the schools CREATE and Manuel A. Pérez High School on February 15 and 20 respectively, where students were trained on how to monitoring the water quality of a nearby body of water using the materials provided in the kit. See the photo below taken during the workshop at CREATE.



The SJBEF gave a special educational boat trip on February 23, receiving members of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The visitors were taken from the San José Lagoon to the Torrecillas Lagoon, during which SJBEF staff talked about the state of the San Juan Bay Estuary and its infrastructure and communities after hurricanes Irma and Maria, and also facilitated bird-watching throughout the trip. See a photo of the boat trip below:



During February the SJBEF also advanced the creation of its Citizen Science curriculum. On February 7, SJBEF members met with Professor Jorge Ortiz from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, to discuss the SJBEF's citizen science program. The professor showed great interest in the UPR collaborating with the program, and it was decided that the SJBEF will give the seminar offered in the Natural Sciences Department, formalizing the Citizen Science Curriculum under an academic institution.

The SJBEF also had several meetings with urban forests to present and discuss the SJBEF's Urban Forest Network. The SJBEF met with the San Patricio Forest, Piñones State Forest, Doña Inés Park, and again with San Patricio on February 15, 21, 22 and 28 respectively. A common necessity that was identified was the need to clear vegetative debris from the trails to be able to open them to the public once again. See a photo of the first meeting with San Patricio Forest below.

