



SAN JUAN BAY ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP
1315 PONCE DE LEÓN AVE,
SAN JUAN, PR 00907
787-725-8165

APPROVED MINUTES
Meeting of the Implementation Committee of the Management Conference
for the Revision of Estuario’s Plan
Work Plan Activity 16
Grant CE99206929-2

Meeting Details

Type: Ordinary meeting
Date: Friday, August 23, 2024
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Modality: Hybrid
Location: Estuario Office — 1315 Ponce De León Avenue, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Microsoft Teams
Convener: María Gabriela Huertas Díaz — Senior Program Manager, Estuario
Facilitator: Noelia Y. Rosa-Jaime — Estuario’s Plan Revision Team, Tetra Tech
Recorder: Pilar Gómez-Lobo — Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator in the Revision of Estuario’s Plan, Estuario

Estuario’s Mission

Restore and conserve the water quality in the San Juan Bay Estuary ecosystem as a sustainable hub of social and economic development.

Estuario’s Programmatic Vision

Estuario de la Bahía de San Juan serves as a reliable, science-based regional entity supported by engaged and active stakeholders to catalyze and facilitate the restoration and maintenance of clean waters that support thriving tropical ecosystems, healthy communities, and a vibrant economy in the San Juan Bay estuary and its urbanized watershed.

Present

Implementation Committee Members

1. Guaynabo, Municipality of — Ada Bones Berríos — Director of the Planning and Land Use Office
2. San Juan, Municipality of — Tamara González Rivera — Director of the Planning and Land Use Office
3. San Juan, Municipality of — Adriana C. Pérez Gómez
4. Toa Baja, Municipality of — Alexis Ramos — Planner, Planning and Land Use Office of Toa Baja
5. Trujillo Alto, Municipality of — Luis Rivera Camacho — Director of the Planning and Land Use Office
6. PR Department of Education — Annia Calcaño Nieves — Director of the Science Program
7. PR Department of Housing — Shirley Birriel Osorio — Director for Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure Division, CDBG-DR/MIT Programs
8. PR Department of Natural and Environmental Resources — Javier Verardi Matos — Chief of the Infrastructure Project Division, Water Quality Area
9. PR Department of Transportation and Public Works — Ana Feliciano
10. PR Aqueduct and Sewer Authority — Antonio Torres Torres — Deputy Director for the Metro Region
11. PR Department of Economic Development and Commerce — Félix Rivera — Assistant Secretary of the Permits Office
12. PR Planning Board — Ivette Colón Meléndez — Assistant Director of the Mitigation Plans Project
13. PR Ports Authority — Joel A. Pizá Bátiz —
14. US Army Corps of Engineers — Charles Decker — Commander - Caribbean District
15. US Coast Guard — Ray J. López
16. US Environmental Protection Agency — Evelyn Huertas —
17. USGS United States Geological Survey — Julieta M. Gómez-Fragoso — Civil Engineer, Caribbean-Florida Water Science Center (CFWSC)

Guests

1. Noelia Y. Rosa Jaime — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
2. Ernesto Díaz — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
3. Natalia Marrero Rosado — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
4. Roselyn Vázquez — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
5. Regan Armstrong — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
6. Matt Shelton — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
7. Noemí Mercado — Oceans, Wetlands and Communities Division, EPA
8. Brenda Torres Barreto — Executive Director, Estuario
9. María Gabriela Huertas Díaz — Senior Program Manager, Estuario
10. Sahid L. Rosado Lausell — Education and Citizen Science Manager, Estuario
11. Cristina Ramírez — Aquatic Debris Manager, Estuario
12. Maricela Perryman — Compliance and Grants Manager, Estuario
13. Cathy Ortíz — Operations Officer, Estuario
14. Delia Jiménez — SRF Projects Officer (State Revolving Funds), Estuario
15. Sofía Burgos — BIL Projects Officer (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law), Estuario
16. Lourdes M. Pérez Medina — Senior Project Lead - Juan Méndez Creek, Estuario
17. Pilar Gómez-Lobo — Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator in Estuario's Plan Revision, Estuario

Excused

1. Marcy Frick — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, Tetra Tech
2. Jorge Bauzá — Scientific Director, Estuario

Absent

1. Bayamón, Municipality of — Héctor Torres Ruiz — Director of the Reforestation, Ornamentation and Beautification Department
2. Carolina, Municipality of — Deborah Rivera Velázquez — Director of the Solid Waste Management, Recycling, and Environmental Affairs Department
3. Cataño, Municipality of — Bijan Ashrafi, Ph.D. — Director of the Planning Office
4. Loíza, Municipality of — Luis Jiménez Class — Administrative Official at the Planning and Land Use Office

Objectives

1. Identify modifications to the Introduction section of Estuario's Plan draft review and to the Organizational Structure, Financing, and Implementation section.
2. Work on the action plans.
3. Provide information on data, literature, research or other available information supporting Estuario's Plan's actions.

Call to Order / Welcome and Introduction

Noelia Rosa-Jaime called the meeting to order. At 2:20 p.m. all present—both in person and virtually—completed their introductions, and quorum was established.

Next Meeting of the Implementation Committee of Estuario's Management Conference

February 2025

Discussion Items

Review of Estuario's Plan document structure

Noelia Rosa-Jaime discussed the structure of the plan under review, including five action plans and the upcoming steps. Estuario's Plan is being reviewed in sections rather than as a whole to ensure a more thorough evaluation. The first draft of the section or chapters being reviewed undergoes community and scientific validation before reaching the Implementation Committee. The Policy Committee then reviews the documents to ensure alignment with overall strategies.

Key highlights:

- The Plan is a “living document” that will be updated frequently.
- Tetra Tech has reviewed changes and updates since 2016, focusing on climate adaptation and resilience

Validation process and next steps

The timeline for reviewing and preparing the action plans was presented. In summary, following the guidelines from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the review process will be by sections or

chapters, and starts with the Estuario team, followed by the review of the general public, the scientific community, the Citizen Advisory Committee, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, the Management Conference, and the Board of Directors. After all chapters or sections (action plans) have gone through this review process, USEPA reviews the final document in its entirety for approval. The USEPA must receive the final document by September 2026. Following this, Tetra Tech and Estuario will follow the same review process for the supporting documents on the Monitoring Plan, Finance Strategy, Habitat Strategy, and Communications and Outreach Strategy. It is emphasized that receiving input and validation from both scientific experts and local communities at each of the stages summarized above is crucial to the success of the revision process.

Expansion of the study area

During their meeting in July, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee proposed expanding the study area to include more municipalities, improving the coverage of areas influencing water quality. To add to this, there was a discussion on the Río Grande de Loíza basin and including it in the study area, due to the impact its tributaries have on the water quality of the San Juan Bay estuary. Explaining further the justification for the proposed expansion, it is stated that the interconnected nature of water systems requires a broader management approach. Matt Shelton shares expansion will enhance pollution monitoring and provide municipalities with valuable environmental data for federal funding opportunities.

Concerns raised include:

- Coordination challenges with newly included municipalities.
- Ensuring that actions are achievable giving past challenges in fulfilling previous commitments.
- The need to analyze similar national programs to determine best practices for managing an expanded study area.

Public launch of the Estuario's Plan Revision project

Brenda Torres shares that the public launch of the project is scheduled for October (2024), with Paseo de la Princesa being considered as the venue due to its iconic location and view of Castillo San Felipe del Morro. Efforts will be made to attract media and press attention and ensure Estuario's Board of Directors is present.

Action Plans

Noelia Rosa-Jaime continues with the presentation now going over the five action plans:

1. Infrastructure improvements
2. Support for water and sediment quality
3. Promotion of habitat diversity
4. Pollutant or contaminant elimination
5. Climate change adaptation

These plans will include specific measures to mitigate coastal erosion and enhance community resilience to natural disasters.

Comments and Questions

Noelia Rosa-Jaime opens the discussion to the committee members, emphasizing the need to align the plan with state-level risk mitigation efforts. Committee members agreed on the importance of collaboration between all municipalities, especially if municipalities were being added due to the expansion of the study area. The role

of the Policy Committee in approving defined actions is of equal importance. Estuario will expand water quality monitoring, benefiting municipalities in their compliance with federal regulations.

Action Items / Next Steps

1. Implementation Committee members — Submit written comments by August 28, 2024.
2. Tetra Tech and Estuario teams — Continue with the established timeline to review each action plan chapter
3. Implementation Committee members and all other people present — Remember the date of the Estuario's Plan Revision project public launch on October 9, 2024

Adjournment

Noelia Rosa-Jaime adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By



Pilar Gómez-Lobo Santiago
Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator in Estuario's Plan Revision
Estuario
February 28, 2025



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APPROVED MINUTES
Meeting of the Policy Committee of the Management Conference
for the Revision of Estuario's Plan
Work Plan Activity 16
Grant CE99206929-2

Meeting Details

Type: Ordinary meeting
Date: Thursday, August 29, 2024
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Modality: Hybrid
Location: Estuario Office — 1315 Ponce De León Avenue, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Microsoft Teams
Convener: María Gabriela Huertas Díaz — Senior Program Manager, Estuario
Facilitator: Noelia Y. Rosa-Jaime — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, Tetra Tech
Recorder: Pilar Gómez-Lobo — Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator in the Revision of Estuario's Plan, Estuario

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Estuario de la Bahía de San Juan serves as a reliable, science-based regional entity supported by engaged and active stakeholders to catalyze and facilitate the restoration and maintenance of clean waters that support thriving tropical ecosystems, healthy communities, and a vibrant economy in the San Juan Bay estuary and its urbanized watershed.

Present

Policy Committee Members

1. Anais Rodríguez Vega — Interim Secretary, Department of Environmental and Natural Resources
2. Antonio Torres Torres — Deputy Director for the Metro Region, PR Aqueduct and Sewer Authority
3. Carmen R. Guerrero Pérez — Director, Federal Environmental Protection Agency for the Caribbean
4. María de Lourdes Jiménez — President, Corporation for the Conservation of the San Juan Bay Estuary
5. Marisol Jiménez — President, Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), Estuario
6. Ramón Lloveras San Miguel — Representative of the Banking and Finance Sector

Guests

1. Noelia Y. Rosa Jaime — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
2. Ernesto Díaz — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
3. Natalia Marrero Rosado — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
4. Roselyn Vázquez — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
5. Regan Armstrong — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
6. Matt Shelton — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, TetraTech
7. Noemí Mercado — Oceans, Wetlands and Communities Division, EPA
8. Evelyn Huertas — Project Officer, San Juan Bay Estuary Partnership,
9. Brenda Torres Barreto — Executive Director, Estuario
10. María Gabriela Huertas Díaz — Senior Program Manager, Estuario
11. Pilar Gómez-Lobo — Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator in Estuario's Plan Revision, Estuario

Excused

1. Marcy Frick — Estuario's Plan Revision Team, Tetra Tech
2. Jorge San Miguel — President, Management Conference, Estuario
3. Ariel E. Lugo — President, Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), Estuario

Absent

1. Plan. Julio Lassús Ruiz — President, PR Planning Board

Objectives

1. Validate the expansion of the study area as proposed by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee.
2. Identify modifications to the Introduction section of Estuario's Plan draft review and to the Organizational Structure, Financing, and Implementation section.
3. Validate the proposed document structure, the proposed five (5) action plans, and the priority issues to address.
4. Work on the action plans.
5. Capture input on the introduction and the implementation chapter.
6. Provide information on data, literature, research or other available information supporting Estuario's Plan's actions.

Call to Order / Welcome and Introduction

Brenda Torres requested a roll-call at 10:14 a.m. Noelia Rosa-Jaime welcomed all attendees and presented the agenda for the meeting, emphasizing the importance of the discussion on the expansion of the study area and the subsequent inclusion of new municipalities into the program.

Next meeting of the Policy Committee of the Management Conference January 2025

Discussion Items

Expansion of the study area

Ernesto Díaz presented an analysis detailing the necessity of expanding the study area to include additional municipalities. He provided data on how upstream activities were affecting the estuarine ecosystem, citing increased nutrient loads, sedimentation, and unregulated wastewater discharge as major threats to water quality. The committee members examined the implications of this expansion, emphasizing the importance of regulatory alignment at both federal and local levels. Concerns were raised regarding potential coordination challenges with new municipalities, the feasibility of implementation, funding, and the need to analyze similar programs nationwide for guidance. Matt Shelton shared about the experience in the expansion of the study area with the Indian River Lagoon in Florida. He mentioned that by expanding the study area, the added jurisdictions benefitted from the new opportunities to be involved in programs or be eligible for more grants or funding. A detailed breakdown of potential environmental, social, and economic impacts was presented, reinforcing the urgency of expanding the study area. The committee also considered strategies for mitigating any potential resistance from new municipalities. The consensus about the expansion of the study area was that, upon the approval from the Board of Directors, outreach efforts to the new municipalities would swiftly begin to have the municipalities be represented in the Implementation Committee. A strategy will need to be developed for presenting the benefits and added value of municipalities and jurisdictions being added to the study area of Estuario, both to the Board of Directors and the local administrations.

Validation process and next steps

Noelia Rosa-Jaime outlined the validation process for the proposed changes, explaining that reviews would be conducted in phases, beginning with the scientific community and the general public via the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee and the Citizen Advisory Committee, respectively. This is followed by the review of the Management Conference, then the Board of Directors, before progressing to final approval stages by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Each committee and group has fifteen (15) business days to review the documents and submit their written comments. The committee discussed how to effectively integrate local community perspectives into the review process, ensuring that proposed measures align with their needs and concerns. The final document is expected to be submitted to the EPA by September 30, 2026. It was agreed that municipal and community engagement should remain a top priority throughout this process, with additional resources allocated for public outreach efforts. Training sessions for municipal leaders and stakeholders were proposed to facilitate better understanding and participation in the plan.

Public launch of the Estuario's Plan Revision project

Brenda Torres provided an update on the upcoming public launch event scheduled for October 9, 2024, at *Paseo de la Princesa*. The event is intended to increase public awareness and participation, featuring key stakeholder engagement and media coverage. Strategies to maximize public involvement were discussed, including interactive exhibits, expert panel discussions, and community-driven workshops. A social media campaign will be launched leading up to the event to ensure maximum attendance and engagement.

Action plans and committee recommendations

The committee reviewed and discussed the five primary action plans in further depth, identifying specific funding sources and implementation strategies.

1. Infrastructure improvements: Strengthening stormwater management, upgrading wastewater treatment facilities, and addressing deficiencies in drainage networks.
2. Water and sediment quality: Implementing pollutant reduction programs, enforcing environmental regulations, and adopting best management practices (BMPs).
3. Habitat diversity and conservation: Restoring wetlands, increasing reforestation efforts, and ensuring the protection of critical biodiversity areas.
4. Pollutant and contaminant elimination: Enhancing monitoring systems for industrial discharges, controlling stormwater runoff, and investing in green infrastructure solutions.
5. Climate change adaptation: Incorporating flood risk assessments, nature-based solutions, and community resilience initiatives into urban planning.

Emphasis was placed on securing additional resources through federal grants and private sector investments. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks were proposed to ensure accountability and track progress over time.

Additional comments from committee members

Committee members emphasized the need for a structured and clear communication strategy to engage newly included municipalities. Concerns were raised about potential resistance from municipal governments unfamiliar with Estuario's programs. Members discussed the necessity of educational workshops and direct engagement to foster trust and understanding.

Further discussion focused on legal considerations surrounding the expansion of jurisdiction under the national estuary program. Members questioned the legal framework governing this expansion and requested further clarification from legal advisors. Additionally, the committee debated the financial feasibility of expansion, raising questions about long-term funding stability.

Some members also voiced the importance of ensuring inclusivity in public engagement, particularly by incorporating marginalized communities in discussions regarding conservation efforts. It was agreed that additional outreach strategies would be explored to ensure broader public representation.

Action Items / Next Steps

1. Tetra Tech and Estuario teams — Continue with the established timeline to review each action plan chapter based on the feedback received.
2. Policy Committee members and all other people present — Remember the date of the Estuario's Plan Revision project public launch on October 9, 2024

Adjournment

Noelia Rosa-Jaime adjourned the meeting at approximately 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By



Pilar Gómez-Lobo Santiago
Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator in Estuario's Plan Revision
Estuario
February 28, 2025