



ESTUARIO

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

December 30, 2023

Ms. Evelyn Huertas
US EPA Project Officer
Caribbean Environmental and Protection Division
United States Environmental Protection Agency

RE: Performance Report Grant Agreement Number 4T-96213322

Dear Ms. Huertas:

The SJBEP submits a performance report covering activities under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Work Plan for Year 1 and 2 under Grant Agreement Number 4T-96213322-1. This report is provided in compliance with the grant's requirements.

The period for this plan is from March 1, 2023, to February 28, 2025. An amendment to the original grant was approved on December 20, 2023.

Please feel free to contact me with further questions.

Cordially,

Brenda Torres Barreto
Executive Director

ESTUARIO.ORG
P.O. BOX 9509,
SAN JUAN, PR 00908-9509

ACTIVITY 1: COLLABORATIVE WATER QUALITY MONITORING IN THE SJBE SYSTEM

CCMP Actions

WS-09: Minimize sediment loadings into the San Juan Bay Estuary System

WS-17: Determine the areas of highest sewage discharge in the SJBE Watershed.

WS-18: Continue and strengthen the SJBE's monitoring program, including its public- science component, paying particular attention to the Río Piedras, Juan Méndez Creek, San Antón Creek, and their tributaries.

PI- 12: Keep elected officials and heads of agencies informed as to progress on the restoration of the estuary, its challenges, and accomplishments.

Objective

- Enhance water quality monitoring to strengthen the baseline and monitor the effectiveness of infrastructure investments.

Hiring Process Update

We are currently in the process of hiring for the following positions:

Technical Support Consultant-The contract announcement was published on the Estuario Career webpage: <https://estuario.org/empleos/entry/10473/>. The due date for resumes was December 15, 2023 and the resumes received are currently being evaluated and selected for candidate interviews. The tentative start date for this contractor is expected for Q2 FY24.

Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator- This contract announcement was published on the Estuario career page for three positions. We received 37 resumes, of which 6 were selected for interviews. These interviews were carried out the week of November 27. The team evaluated the candidates for this position. [\[CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT\] Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator - Estuario](#). An offer was extended to and accepted by one candidate, with a start date in January 2023. We extended the contract announcement to fill the other Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator contracts in the work plan.

Due to the high number of open contract positions available during Q1, the Executive Director, together with the Grants and Compliance Manager, developed two strategies to inform the public about these positions. First, in the webpage, Estuario.org, a new page for Careers was developed, [Careers - Estuario](#). This is a new platform to announce open positions and contractual opportunities. Secondly, the Estuario held a Job Fair on December 13, 2023. The event was held in two formats, an on site Job Fair held at the Estuario office and a virtual meeting in which participants could log into a Zoom meeting and ask questions and Estuario staff member would respond via the chat functionality. There were two sessions the same day, one in the morning (from 9 am-12pm) and one in the afternoon (3:30pm-6:30pm) to accommodate different schedules. A total of 76 people registered for the morning session, and 52 people registered for the afternoon. We had a total of 39 people connected virtually via Zoom, 22 in the morning and 17 in the afternoon section. At the Estuario office, we received a total of 49 people: 28 in the morning and 21 in the afternoon. All participants had the opportunity to review the contract announcements, ask questions, chat with Estuario staff, and leave their resume for the position they were interested in. We currently are in the process of evaluating resumes and coordinating interviews. We extended the date to submit applications for positions for which we did not receive candidates with the basic qualifications.

Outputs / Deliverables

1.1 Carry out the EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for Water Quality Volunteer Monitoring Program (under this work plan at least 20 sampling events will be carried out) - **In progress**
The Estuario Project Coordinator- Monitoring contractor is leading the water quality monitoring. The Quality Assurance Project Plan for the Water Quality Volunteer Monitoring was approved in March 2023.
[SIGNED SJBE QAPP March 23 2023.pdf](#). The lab analysis for a total of 8 monitoring events was carried out.

1.2 Quarterly reports documenting the Collaborative Water Quality Monitoring Efforts- **Not yet begun**.
Currently, the Collaborative Water Quality Monitoring group is made up of 12 organizations and has held one meeting in May 2023. An MOU is being drafted for the group to present at the next meeting, which will be held tentatively in Q2 FY2024. The Technical Support Consultant will be responsible for developing these reports. These efforts are being completed with 320 funding.

1.3 Publish a compilation of work done by experts in the fields of hydrology, geography, ecology, engineering, and community development, among other fields related to the sustainability of urban cities, that attend to the environmental and social situation of the SJBE and host a summit to bring together those contributors to present and discuss their work. **Not yet begun**.
This activity is tentatively planned for Q1 for FY 2025. The Scientific Director and the President of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee will begin the coordination of this event by holding a meeting to present the publication outline and themes with potential contributors tentatively in January 2024.

1.4 Host workshops to develop a blueprint for future State of the Bay reports and a “resilience index” that allows us to measure progress of water quality and the conditions of the SJBE system over time. **Not yet begun**.
This activity is tentatively planned for Q2 for FY 2024. These workshops will be carried out in follow up to the Summit, where the State of the Bay will be presented. The Summit and State of the Bay will set the foundations for these workshops and the knowledge developed for the blueprint and resilience index.

Partners

Regional Water Quality Monitoring Network participants: Caribbean Coastal & Ocean Observing System (CARICOOS), Office of Research & Development (ORD)/USEPA, US Geological Service (USGS), Department of Environmental Health, Campus, Medical Sciences Campus, University of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico Department of Natural & Environmental Resources (PR DNER), Escuela de Salud y Ciencias, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, SurfRider Foundation-Rincón Chapter, Arrecifes Pro Ciudad, US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), JOBOS Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Centro de Conservación de Manatíes del Caribe

ACTIVITY 2: JUAN MENDEZ CREEK RESTORATION PLAN

CCMP Actions

GI-2: Create a pilot project for reversing the channelization by concrete of a segment of a river, creek or freshwater tributary within the SJBE.

WS-19: Document the location and length of the freshwater tributaries in the watershed of the San Juan Bay Estuary, with special attention to the Río Piedras, Juan Méndez Creek, and San Antón Creek and their tributaries.

Objectives

- Design and implement necessary infrastructure solutions to restore water quality in the Juan Méndez Creek
- Facilitate inter-stakeholder collaboration in the design and implementation of the restoration plan

Hiring Process Update

The Estuario is currently in the recruiting process for 3 contractors that will work under this activity:

- Estuario Project Coordinator- Juan Mendez Creek
- Technical Facilitator
- Green Infrastructure Specialist

These contract announcements were published on the Estuario Career webpage: <https://estuario.org/empleos/entry/10473/>. The due date for resumes was December 15, 2023, and the resumes received are currently being evaluated and selected for candidate interviews. The tentative start date for these contractors is expected for Q2.

Outputs / Deliverables

2.1 MOU that formally establishes Juan Méndez Creek Infrastructure Committee. **In progress.**

The first meeting is expected to occur tentatively in Q2. The Estuario is currently in the process of coordinating the meeting and evaluating the stakeholders that should be part of this committee. An MOU to establish an agreement regarding the role of its members and the objectives of the committee will be signed as part of the initial stages of convening this committee.

Partners:

This Juan Méndez Creek Infrastructure Committee will tentatively consist of the following members:

<u>Members</u>	<u>Role</u>
DNER	Support in the identification of potential areas for restoration
Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA)	Support in the identification of potential areas for restoration

PR Department of Transportation and Public Work (PR DTPW)	Support in the identification of potential areas for restoration
San Juan Municipality	Support in the identification of potential areas for restoration
Centro de Acción Urbana, Comunitaria y Empresarial (CAUCE)	Will provide technical Information and expertise in communicating with communities
San Juan ULTRA	Will provide technical Information and expertise in communicating with communities
University of Puerto Rico (UPR) faculty and students.	Will provide technical Information and expertise
USACE	Will provide technical Information

We discussed the expectations with professors of the UPR regarding next semester's course that is being offered at the UPR held related to Juan Mendez Creek and we developed a promotion strategy to expand the student participation to other schools and departments. We are in the process of identifying members from other departments and schools that can incorporate this course to make it broader and accessible to students from other UPRcampuses.

2.2 Develop reconnaissance study of the Juan Méndez Creek to assess current conditions that is informed by the IDDE project. **In progress**

Currently, the Estuario is in the process of developing a Blue/Green Infrastructure Master Plan for Stormwater Management that will present recommendations for green infrastructure strategies. The Master Plan maps issues, risk, vulnerabilities, and generates site analysis for critical areas of the San Juan Bay Estuary watershed. As part of this analysis, strategic interventions and toolkits are recommended for these specific sites. The Juan Mendez Creek was selected to be one of the initial sites to analyze and the chapter was drafted in May 2023. After the completion of the first draft of the Master Plan, this document will be reviewed and validated by the Estuario Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). The first draft of the document was completed by December 15, 2023. This document will be shared with the STAC for review by Q2 of FY24. The data and information presented in the Juan Mendez chapter of the Green Infrastructure Master Plan provides an initial analysis and understanding of the current conditions and will be helpful to carry out the reconnaissance study of the Juan Mendez. The planning phase of the reconnaissance study is tentatively scheduled to begin in Q2 FY24, once the contractor who will carry out this study, the Senior Project Lead, (Juan Méndez Creek Restoration) is hired and begins work.

2.3 Develop QAPP for water quality monitoring protocols at the Juan Méndez Creek. **Not yet begun.**
The Estuario Scientific Director is responsible for this QAPP and will be coordinating a meeting with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) for selection of the water quality parameters and all

other details related to water quality monitoring in the Juan Mendez Creek. Once this feedback is received, the Scientific Director will begin the development of the the QAPP to submit to the US EPA tentatively in Q2 FY24.

2.4 Develop and submit a request for assistance from USACE through the Planning Assistance to States (PAS) program. **In progress**

An informative meeting was held with USACE about the process and requirements to apply to the Planning Assistance to the States (PAS) on April 25, 2023, at the Puerto Rico Integrated Program Office, USACE in San Juan, PR and the participants included [name (organization)]: Kiomy Lamb (USACE), Brenda Torres (Estuario), Maria Gabriela Huertas (Estuario), Maricela Perryman (Estuario), Carolina Burneth (USACE), Cristina Montenegro (USACE), Alberto Gonzalez (USACE), Brenda Calvente (USACE). USACE staff provided different documents including a sample letter on how to request the PAS and an informative brochure that describes the services that USACE can provide. They also shared a Detailed Project Report for the Juan Mendez Project.

Documentation of this meeting is located in the following drive:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Y_k9b84oUmWrxLit79HaWi52crVrBUn8?usp=drive_link

Estuario drafted the letter using these resources and will be submit to USACE tentatively in Q2 FY24.



ACTIVITY 3: STAKEHOLDER FACILITATION AND COMMUNICATION

CCMP Actions

GI-2: Create a pilot project for reversing the channelization by concrete of a segment of a river, creek, or freshwater tributary within the SJBE.

Objectives

- Communicate progress to stakeholders throughout the watershed
- Targeted communication to increase education and awareness among decision-makers to generate support for projects to restore bodies of water within the SJBE watershed

Hiring Process Update

The Estuario is currently in the recruiting process for contractors under this activity.

These contract announcements were published on the Estuario Career webpage: <https://estuario.org/empleos/entry/10473/>. The due date for resumes was December 15, 2023. We are currently evaluating candidates for interviews. The tentative start date for these contractors is expected for Q2.

Outputs / Deliverables

3.1 MOU for Juan Méndez Restoration Steering Committee. In progress

The Estuario is currently in the process of coordinating the meeting and evaluating the stakeholders that should be part of this committee. An MOU to establish an agreement regarding the role of its members and the objectives of the committee will be signed as part of the initial stages of convening this committee. The first meeting will be tentatively scheduled for Q2 FY24.

Partners

The Juan Méndez Restoration Steering Committee will consist of the following members:

<u>Members</u>	<u>Role</u>
DNER	Assist in strategy for the education and awareness campaign, assist in the creation of the rapid needs study
San Juan Municipality	Assist in strategy for the education and awareness campaign, assist in the creation of the rapid needs study
ENLACE	Assist in strategy for the education and awareness campaign, assist in the creation of the rapid needs study

CAUCE	Assist in strategy for the education and awareness campaign, assist in the creation of the rapid needs study
Conservation Trust	Assist in strategy for the education and awareness campaign, assist in the creation of the rapid needs study
USACE	Assist in the creation of the rapid needs study

3.2 Juan Méndez Restoration Steering Committee quarterly meetings (once established) and documentation of minutes. **Not yet begun.**

This task will begin once the Steering Committee begins meeting. This committee will be supported by the Stakeholder and Engagement coordinator, who will be responsible for minutes, and any other relevant documentation of these meetings. This contractor expected to start in January 2024.

3.3 Rapid needs assessment in communities surrounding the Juan Méndez Creek and final report. **Not yet begun.**

This task will begin once the contractor is hired to carry out the study (Field Technician)

3.4 Carry out and coordinate a CIAM Course for research students (doctoral + master's level) at UPR. **In progress.**

One semester of this course was completed and carried out during the fall semester of this year. The Estuario envisions this as a multi-year course in which the students continue in the course and contribute to the knowledge and understanding of Juan Mendez Creek throughout the project. Currently, the second semester of the course is being planned and coordinated with professors in the UPR.

The Estuario began meeting with professors from the UPR to develop and plan the course within the Department of Environmental Science to begin in the fall semester 2023. Meetings with professors were held on March 10, March 24, October 6, 2023. The course was designed so that students would continue throughout various semesters. During the first semester of the course, the students would gather the competencies necessary to develop research projects focused on the Juan Mendez Creek. In the second semester, the students are expected to design their research project. The course was announced and promoted in the Department of Environmental Science at the University of Puerto Rico.

Course CIAM 8990 started with 9 students enrolled and 4 dropped out during the semester due to other compromises (ex. full time job) that competed with the time required to achieve the work. The professors requested a report presenting a synthesis of findings throughout the semester as the final work. Students presented their final reports on December 1, 2023 at the Estuario Office. They performed a synthesis work on three main themes related to the Juan Mendez Creek: social, environmental, and technical.

A total of 14 guest speakers presented to the students a broad range of topics related to rivers and streams, including rivers and streams management, ecosystem services and natural infrastructure, nature-based solutions, eco-hydrology, floods management, resilience indicators, Puerto Nuevo rivers, knowledge networks, among others, (see for additional details) as established in the syllabus.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/198PqjgWRyo_0qyEPbDHnGfrJUCILT35t/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=106291450914244738321&rtpof=true&sd=true

The recorded presentations given by all the invited lecturers were provided to Estuario:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bWrefuhKYiLJl-w7q5Nrx4lYwnAKGWEj?usp=drive_link

The Estuario had a meeting with the environmental science professors of the UPR on November 29, 2023 to discuss feedback from the course that was given during the first semester of the school year 2023-2024. Professors presented their main concerns about the progress of the students and the information obtained during their synthesis work. We should receive the information obtained by the students during December 2023/January 2024.

3.5 Carry out workshops and activities with stakeholders to develop branding/identity specific to the project and an associated logo. **Not yet begun.**

The Estuario is in the process of recruiting the contractor who will provide these services.

3.6 Quarterly reporting and documentation to present and evaluate project progress utilizing various communications strategies (media, written reports, articles, etc). **Not yet begun.**

The Estuario is in the process of recruiting the contractor who will provide these services.



ACTIVITY 4: ESTUARIO INTERNAL CAPACITY

CCMP Actions

All

Objectives

- Build internal capacity to ensure successful execution and sustainable financial management and operations of the project

Hiring Process Update

The Estuario is currently in the recruiting process for 3 contractors that will work under this activity:

- Technology Consultant
- Webpage development
- Webpage design (UI)

These contract announcements were published on the Estuario Career webpage: <https://estuario.org/empleos/entry/10473/>. The due date for resumes is December 15, 2023. The tentative start date for these contractors is expected for Q2.

Outputs / Deliverables

4.1 Staff capacity that supports increase in programmatic areas. **Completed**

Hiring 3 additional full time staff positions; the Grants and Compliance Manager, Senior Program Manager, and BIL Project Officer positions, is part of the strategy implemented by the Estuario to support the strategic priorities for effective grant management. The Grants and Compliance Manager is responsible for work plan and budget development, and submitting necessary documentation for grant requirements, while the Senior Program Manager works closely with the Executive Director to oversee operations and the implementation of the CCMP and is responsible for the operational success of the San Juan Bay Estuary. The Grants and Compliance Manager joined Estuario October 1, 2022.

The Senior Program Manager joined Estuario Staff in August 2023. The BIL Project Officer joined the Estuario in October 2023 and completed the onboarding process in November 2023, and is responsible for overall project management and operations of the BIL funds. The work plan under BIL funding was presented by Estuario Executive Director in the kickoff meeting to Estuario staff and contractors on October 30, 2023.

The Estuario held a Job Fair event to prompt the hiring process for all the positions that will be hired under this grant. All the positions were announced on the Estuario landing page and promoted through various media strategies, including television, newspaper, social media, etc. The Job Fair was held on December 13, 2023, from 9-12 pm and from 3:30-6:30 pm.

4.2 Design a technology platform that addresses Estuario's technology needs. **In progress.**

Estuario is moving towards the integration of technologies to more efficiently carry out daily operations. The Estuario is currently utilizing AirTable, a project management tool to track the progress of day-to-day

operations and automate reporting. The action plan for BIL has been added to Airtable to facilitate the coordination and BIL project oversight.

4.3 Develop a dashboard that will track the progress of key priority projects to stakeholders. **Not yet begun**



ACTIVITY 5: GRANT MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE ONGOING

CCMP Actions

All

Objectives

- Guarantee proper implementation of BIL funds through effective grants management practices.
- Incorporate compliance, reporting, and actions' tracking in all Work Plans and proposed activities.
- Continue to improve the Estuario's grants management program to successfully support environmental goals and manage resources in a fiscally responsible manner

Hiring Process Update

The Estuario is currently in the recruiting process for the Operations Auditor under this activity.

The contract announcements were published on the Estuario Career webpage: <https://estuario.org/empleos/entry/10473/>. The due date for resumes was December 15, 2023, and currently we are evaluating resumes to select candidates for interviews. The tentative start date for this position is expected for Q2.

Outputs / Deliverables

5.1 Annual BIL work plan and long-term strategy submitted by deadlines as established by BIL Implementation Memo.

The BIL long-term strategy was completed and approved by EPA. The work plan to integrate a second year into the supplemental grant was submitted on June 1, 2023, and approved on December 20, 2023. The Estuario will continue to submit workplans according to the deadlines.

5.2 Annual reports to EPA as established in the assistance agreement of grant

The first annual report for BIL funding (this document) will be submitted by the December 30 deadline.

5.3 Equity strategy submitted as established by BIL Implementation Memo

Equity Strategy. **Completed.**

This document was completed in collaboration with the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to define disadvantages communities. The official document is located in the following drive:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Y_k9b84oUmWrXljt79HaWi52crVrBUn8?usp=drive_link