

USDA-NRCS Funds Emergency Watershed Protection in Puerto Rico

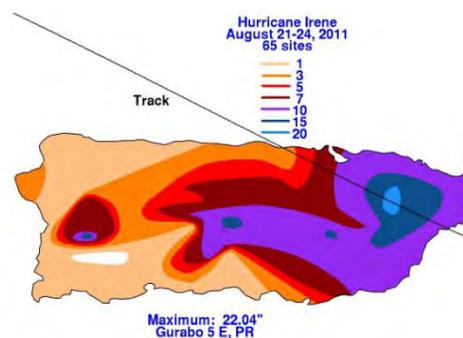
May 9, 2012 – San Juan, PR – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has allocated \$1,800,000 in Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds to help nine (9) communities in Puerto Rico recover from damages caused by Hurricane Irene in August 2011.

Hurricane Irene, the first hurricane of the 2011 Atlantic storm season, hit Puerto Rico on August 21, 2011 with 75 mile per hour winds, and pummeled the island with torrential rainfall up to 3 days after, causing widespread damage from flooding, severe erosion and landslides. The northeastern and central portions of the island were most severely hit, with a maximum 22.05 inches of rainfall recorded in Gurabo Abajo. President Barack Obama signed an emergency declaration for Puerto Rico after the storm that enabled federal agencies to provide disaster assistance to recover from the storm's widespread damage.

“Many areas in Puerto Rico experienced historical rain events after Hurricane Irene. Some drainage ways had a tremendous amount of debris blocking the flow,” said Edwin Almodovar, NRCS Caribbean Director. *“This debris, often from downed trees, can create more damage from subsequent rainfall events if not removed quickly.”*



Streambank damage on Los Mendez Creek in Yabucoa, PR.



Map of rainfall amounts across Puerto Rico from Hurricane Irene (NOAA National Weather Service).



Sediment & debris from Hurricane Irene clog La Santa Creek in Juncos, PR.

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In the storm's aftermath, NRCS worked to provide disaster assistance funds to communities that suffered damage to watershed areas. Applications were received to repair 50 sites across the island, with nine (9) sites qualifying for EWP funding. USDA processed these applications and awarded \$1.8 million to the Caribbean Area on January 23, 2012. NRCS will be working with the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources and the municipal governments of Caguas, Humacao, Juncos, Las Piedras, Maunabo, and



Severe erosion and landslides along Candelerio River in Humacao, PR caused by Hurricane Irene.

Yabucoa counties to install the following projects to reduce threats to life and property:

- **Los Muertos Creek, Caguas:** Installation of gabion mattress revetment on approximately 365 feet of the creek. Partner share: \$200,000, NRCS share: \$600,000, Total project: \$800,000.
- **La Ponderosa Creek, Caguas:** Installation of gabion wall on approximately 150 feet of the creek. Partner share: \$12,000, NRCS share: \$36,000, Total project: \$48,000.
- **Candelerio River, Humacao:** Clearing and shaping of approximately 1300 feet of the river. Partner share: \$6,250, NRCS share: \$18,750, Total project: \$25,000.
- **La Santa Creek, Juncos:** Clearing and shaping of approximately 350 feet of the creek and under a bridge. Partner share: \$2,125, NRCS share: \$6,375, Total project: \$8,500.
- **Ceiba Creek I, Juncos:** Installation of rock revetment on 50 meters of the creek. Partner share: \$29,500, NRCS share: \$88,500, Total project: \$118,000.
- **Quebrada Arenas Creek, Las Piedras:** Clearing and shaping of approximately 4000 meters of the creek. Partner share: \$15,000, NRCS share: \$45,000, Total project: \$60,000.
- **California Creek, Maunabo:** Installation of gabion wall on approximately 100 feet of the creek. Partner share: \$7,500, NRCS share: \$22,500, Total project: \$30,000.
- **Los Mendez Creek, Yabucoa:** Installation of gabion wall on approximately 1200 feet of the creek. Partner share: \$150,000, NRCS share: \$450,000, Total project: \$600,000.
- **Comuna Creek, Yabucoa:** Clearing and shaping of approximately 1600 feet of the creek. Partner share: \$7,500, NRCS share: \$22,500, Total project: \$30,000.

The NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program is designed to reduce threats to life and property from watershed impairment, such as erosion, debris, and sediment. These impairments can cause additional flooding, soil erosion, and damage to infrastructure. Most projects require a 25 percent local share of the costs and local sponsors must provide land rights and any needed permits. NRCS provides 75 percent of the cost, assesses the damage, and plans or designs the needed repairs.

For additional information about the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program or current EWP projects, please contact **Damaris Medina** at **787-766-5206 x125** or damarismedina@pr.usda.gov or visit www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov.