

New Opportunity for the Caja de Muertos Reserve

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Guaynabo, Puerto Rico – Residents and visitors to the southern area of Puerto Rico will have a new opportunity to enjoy the iconic Caja de Muertos Island Nature Reserve. This, thanks to an allocation of over \$1.2 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that will make repairs possible at the facilities of the small island.

Among the attractions of this protected natural area are the Pelicano beach and various educational offerings, such as talks or sea turtle nesting watches. Isla Caja de Muertos, located south of Ponce, received about 20,000 visitors the year before Hurricane María in 2017. However, after the hurricane the reserve was closed to the public and visitors are only allowed on the beaches.

“This million-dollar approval will serve to repair the area where service is provided to visitors, which will facilitate the arrival to the island and the tour. We remain committed to a holistic recovery where recreational spaces are revitalized for our island’s families,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator, José G. Baquero.

The barracks that house the guards and personnel from the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER), who stay there for one-week shifts to monitor the reserve's care, will also be repaired. In addition, part of the funds will be used to replace a photovoltaic system that will power the facilities.

Other works to be carried out include the replacement of a wooden fence, the reconstruction of the eco-friendly pavilions (gazebos) and restrooms, as well as the reconstruction of a platform that will facilitate access to the beach.

“The current facilities were built in the 1990s, with an architecture and design that did not consider resilience and sustainability. The obligation of funds gives us the opportunity to build facilities that take into consideration our drinking water limitations, exposure to weather conditions, earthquakes and load capacity,” said DNER reserve manager María Chardón.



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Chardón added that the reconstruction will have an impact on the service to tourists, offering them security and a good environmental experience. She also acknowledged the importance of providing a renovated camping area for boy and girl scouts and how the repairs will allow visiting college students to continue their research projects and internships.

Furthermore, Jeanette Cruz Beltrán, the Caribe Girl Scouts Council representative, expressed that camping is an experience that provides a creative and educational opportunity about living outdoors for the group of girls. “Using the resources from the Girl Scouts program, its trained leadership and the natural resources of our dear Island of Enchantment, we contribute to the mental, physical, social and spiritual growth of each girl and young participant. As stated in our Law: we always make an effort to use prudently use resources and make the world a better place,” Said Cruz Beltrán.

Meanwhile, the executive director of the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience of Puerto Rico (COR3), engineer Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, said that the reconstruction project of this space with great value for nature lovers will give greater resilience to the infrastructure reducing the possibility of significant damage to the onslaught of a new atmospheric phenomenon. “At COR3 we will offer the necessary technical assistance to the DNER in the development of this project that adds value to the southern part of the island,” Laboy Rivera added.

To access more information on the recovery of Puerto Rico from Hurricane María, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339 and recuperacion.pr. Follow us on social media at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and [Twitter @COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr).





PONCE, Puerto Rico (Sept. 9, 2021) – Residents and visitors to the southern area of Puerto Rico will have a new opportunity to enjoy the iconic Caja de Muertos Island Nature Reserve thanks to an allocation of over \$1.2 million from FEMA. Photo FEMA/Eliezer Hernández



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PONCE, Puerto Rico (Sept. 9, 2021) – The barracks that house the guards and personnel from the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER), who stay there for one-week shifts to monitor the reserve's care, will also be repaired. Photo FEMA/Juan Andrés Muñoz Torres



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