

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 21, 2023

Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon
Chief of Engineers
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Lieutenant General Spellmon,

We write with concern about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) plan to dredge San Juan Bay in Puerto Rico to accommodate larger liquefied natural gas (LNG) and oil tankers. Puerto Ricans bear the brunt of super-charged hurricanes and extreme heat resulting from continued fossil fuel use.¹ The project poses significant direct threats to overburdened communities and marine ecosystems and prolongs reliance on fossil fuel imports. We ask that you cancel the contract to deepen and widen Army Terminal Channel, which is solely for larger tankers. Alternatively, a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed prior to dredging to consider the long-term impact of this federal investment in diesel and LNG.

First, the dredging project undermines the Biden administration's commitment to pursue environmental justice. The frontline communities of Guaynabo and Cataño, already overburdened by pollution and environmental injustice, will suffer from the adverse consequences of the proposed project. The pollution from fossil fuel imports and vessel traffic poses severe health risks, exacerbating respiratory issues among residents. The communities neighboring the oil dock and LNG terminal will be exposed to air pollution from refineries and power plants in the vicinity. Because USACE's public comment period coincided with Hurricane Maria, the most affected communities were unable to participate adequately.

In addition, the dredging project also threatens marine ecosystems, including sensitive coral reefs. Similar dredging projects have smothered and killed corals. The destruction of coral reefs not only erodes coastal storm protection, but also jeopardizes the tourism and fishing economy.

Lastly, the project appears to undermine Puerto Rico's commitment to transition to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050 and 40 percent by 2025.² The project could prolong Puerto Rico's reliance on fossil fuel imports by facilitating larger LNG and oil tankers, impeding the shift to renewable energy sources and a resilient grid.

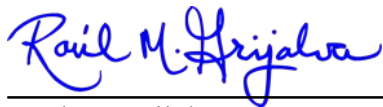
¹ NPR, *Climate Change Was The Engine That Powered Hurricane Maria's Devastating Rains*, Apr. 17, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/17/714098828/climate-change-was-the-engine-that-powered-hurricane-marias-devastating-rains>; NBC, *125-degree heat index: Puerto Rico faces 'dangerous situation' due to record-breaking conditions*, June 7, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/puerto-rico-faces-dangerous-situation-record-breaking-heat-rcna88168>.

² SB 1121, Puerto Rico Energy Public Policy Act. <https://bvirtualogp.pr.gov/ogp/Bvirtual/leyesreferencia/PDF/2-ingles/17-2019.pdf>

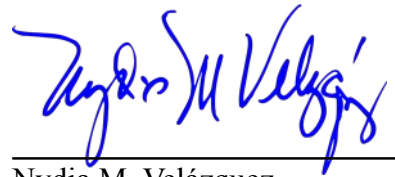
To ensure a thorough evaluation aligning with environmental justice and informed decision-making principles, we respectfully request that USACE immediately renegotiate its contract to exclude dredging Army Terminal Channel, or in the alternative initiate a full EIS that allows for broad public participation on the question of Puerto Rico's energy future and impacts to communities. We are aware of the court decision that upheld the 2018 environmental assessment but in light of the scientific evidence on the contribution of climate to monster storms and lethal heat, plus the Biden Administration's commitments to environmental justice, we ask you to reconsider your decision.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We anticipate your prompt response by Monday, August 28, 2023, and we appreciate your engagement on these critical issues.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



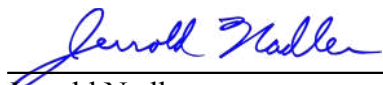
Nydia M. Velázquez
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