Lessons learned from Hurricane Maria
September 20th, 2017

Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Puerto Rico

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-Tuesday 19th and Wednesday 20th of September, 2017 Hurricane Maria pass over Puerto Rico one week after Hurricane Irma affected mainly the NE side of the island.

-Hurricane Maria entered by Yabucoa – Naguabo municipalities in the SE part of the island with winds of category 4 (149 mph) and exits by the NW Isabela – Quebradillas.
Preparation...

- secure doors and windows of buildings
- fill gas tanks of official vehicles and containers
- establish a surveillance plan after the passage of the hurricane
- accommodate important equipment and materials away from doors and windows (secure important files)
- pick up any trash or material that represents any danger
- cut or prune those trees near the facilities or that represent some danger
- take photos of all the facilities and equipment insured
- keep a diary of events
- store drinking water and food for at least 10 days
- talk to your staff and visit your neighbors, and ask if they are prepare
While waiting the hurricane...

- Be calm
- Be alert to the news (radio)
- Be on a safe place away from doors and windows
- Share a good meal (make sure you have gas stove)
Physical damages to the facilities...

September 26th, 2017 – 6 days after, NOAA Imagery
Pieces of the dock...

September 26th, 2017 – 6 days after
NOAA Imagery
Over 60 sunken sail boats in Jobos Bay
Key lessons learned ...

- Be prepared to receive people from the community requesting assistance immediately after a catastrophic event.

- Discuss with your work team an action plan for after a catastrophic event.

- Have a contact outside the island. This way, if analog telephone lines work, you can communicate through people abroad.
Key lessons learned ...

- Plan to use the radio as a means of communication to inform other team members of your status.

- Have a good inventory of chainsaws and pruning equipment. DO NOT forget to have spare chains, oils and gasoline.

- Keep communication with friends of the reserve, NGOs and volunteers. They can be a great assistance!
Key lessons learned ...

- Maintain constant communication with personnel of emergency management offices, municipalities and community service centers.

- Prepare a plan to offer transportation and lunches to staff during the first weeks of recovery.

- With lack of electrical power and communications, administrative work is suspended. Make a weekly plan with your staff considering their abilities and health conditions.
Key lessons learned ...

- Keep a diary and keep track of work hours of equipment use.

- Remember that you, your staff and members of the community experienced very difficult events, dedicate space and time for them to express themselves, and facilitated psychological support.
Recovery efforts with volunteers!
Clearing trails and roads

September 26th, 2017 – 6 days after, NOAA Imagery
JBNERR staff worked cutting and removing about 60 coconut palm trees at the PR-705, main entrance to the Aguirre Community (October 27th, 2017).