



# Briefing Notice

## Recovery & Resilience in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

June 2, 3, 4, 2020

3 pm – 4 pm EDT

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The **Environmental and Energy Study Institute** (EESI) invites you to join us for a series of one-hour online briefings about resilience initiatives in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and their ongoing recovery from back-to-back natural disasters over the last several years. Every U.S. coast is facing climate adaptation challenges due to rising sea levels and other coastal hazards, but island economies are especially vulnerable. The [Fourth National Climate Assessment](#) points to the small size and relative isolation of the U.S. Caribbean islands (including Puerto Rico, Vieques, Culebra, St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, and Water Island), which means their “social, economic, and ecological systems are likely to be more sensitive to changes in temperature and precipitation than similar systems in the mainland United States.” Each day’s panel will feature one to two experts on the topics below, with time for Q&A.

### Federal Support and Local Action

June 2 | 3:00 – 4:00 PM EDT

This panel will provide an overview of resilience initiatives in the U.S. Caribbean and discuss the status of federal support for disaster recovery and hazard mitigation. **Ernesto Diaz**, Director of the Coastal Management Program, Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, will illustrate the science behind the extreme climate events Puerto Rico has faced in the last six years and provide a policy update and vision for recovery. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, **Adrienne Williams**, Director of the Office of Disaster Recovery (invited), is leading a variety of projects supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) commitment to accelerate disaster recovery and implement new hazard mitigation strategies, from coral reef restoration to renewable-energy microgrids.

### Resilient Housing and Communities

June 3 | 3:00 – 4:00 PM EDT

After Hurricane Maria’s devastating impact on Puerto Rico in 2017, many communities looked within to build their own power (literally and figuratively) and a more sustainable future. In this panel, **Arturo A. Massol-Deyá**, Executive Director of Casa Pueblo de Adjuntas, and faculty member in the Department of Biology at the University of Puerto Rico, will discuss how the community-based group of Casa Pueblo is becoming a model of self-sufficiency with residential solar energy. **Laurie Schoeman**, National Director, Resilience and Disaster Recovery for Enterprise Community Partners, will discuss her work with local partners in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to design housing and community centers that can face the social, economic, and environmental challenges of a changing climate, including the “Resilient Community Center” guide and “Keep Safe, A Guide for Resilient Housing Design in Island Communities.”

### Sustainable, Democratic Energy and Public Health

June 4 | 3:00 – 4:00 PM EDT

Day Three will focus on local initiatives for energy democracy and public health, an ongoing effort. **Ruth Santiago**, community advocate and EarthJustice board member, will discuss the campaign to remediate coal-ash sites and other harmful legacies of the island’s fossil fuel-based energy system and current efforts to upgrade the outdated and storm-damaged energy infrastructure. She will also discuss the strength of Puerto Rico’s commitment to a renewable energy economy. Also on this panel: **Greg Guannel**, Director of the Caribbean Green Technology Center at the University of the Virgin Islands, will discuss his work to update the U.S. Virgin Islands’ hazard mitigation plan for FEMA, including strategies for resilient housing, infrastructure, natural systems for coastal protection, and a dedication to community involvement.

These events are free and open to the public.

For more information, contact Ellen Vaughan at [evaughan@eesi.org](mailto:evaughan@eesi.org) or (202) 662-1893.

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