

A REVIEW OF THE PUERTO RICO SUSTAINABLE COASTAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO REACH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

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Conservation and sustainable use of the coastal and marine resources through an educational approach based in research, outreach and capacity building is the mission of the University of Puerto Rico Sea Grant College Program. The program began in 2001 the implementation of the Sustainable Coastal Community Development Project to meet the goal of sustainable socioeconomic development of our coastal communities. Collaboration efforts, effective partnerships with local and federal agencies, and local NGO's are the key strategies for success. Another strategy and effort to promote sustainability and socioeconomic development of the islands coastal communities is capacity building which is the building block of effective and appropriate coastal resource management and conservation practices.

Through these strategies capacity building activities in the areas of land use planning, population growth, watershed development, community and economic development, biodiversity conservation and stormwater management has been provided. Over 500 coastal stakeholders participated in 30 different activities during the time. Outreach efforts also had impacted several coastal communities with an investment of over a million dollars in projects for the socioeconomic development of communities in the municipalities of Lajas, Rincón, Vieques, Culebra, and Salinas. These projects included the utilization of sustainable practices in their development process.

Capacity building activities yielded results for our program, and important lessons that may be transferred to other Caribbean countries. The involvement of the private sector in the development of the Sustainable Coastal Community Development Project strategies represents a challenge to be addressed in our next strategy.

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