

**Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Assessment Grants  
Community-Wide Assessment Grants**

B. Application Information Sheet

(1) Applicant Identification:

Para la Naturaleza, Inc.,  
P.O. Box 9023554, San Juan, PR 00902-3554

(2) Website URL: [www.paralanaturaleza.org](http://www.paralanaturaleza.org)

(3) Funding Requested

- a. Assessment Grant Type: Community-wide Assessment Grant
- b. Federal Funds Requested: \$500,000

(4) Location:

- a. Puerto Rico
  - i. Municipality of Aguadilla
  - ii. Municipality of Caguas
  - iii. Municipality of San Lorenzo

(5) Target Area and Priority Site Information

- a. Target Areas
  - i. Caimital Bajo ward, Aguadilla
  - ii. Sector La Unión, Cañabón ward, Caguas
  - ii. Cayaguás, Quemados, and Cerro Gordo wards, San Lorenzo
- b. Priority Sites
  - i. Cordillera Jaicoa Natural Protected Area, PR-443 Km. 0.6 Int. Caimital Bajo Ward Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
  - ii. Quebrada Algarrobo Natural Protected Area, PR-156 Km. 53.4 Cañabon ward, Caguas, Puerto Rico
  - iii. Cayaguás Natural Protected Area, PR-183 Km 10.9, Quemados, Cayaguas and Cerro Gordo wards, San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico

c. San Lorenzo: 37,693 Total Population (P1 2020 Decennial Census, United States Census Bureau)

(8) Other Factors

<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Community population is 15,000 or less.	
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian Tribe or United States Territory.	
The priority site (s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	1, 5
The priority site (s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site (s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water, or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them).	2
The priority site (w) is in a federally designated flood plain.	2
The reuse of the priority site (s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	
The reuse of the priority site (s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	
The proposed project will improve local resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters.	
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in Section 3.A.(2) for priority site(s) within the target area	8
The target area (s) is impacted by a coal-fired power plant that has recently closed (2015 or later) or is closing.	

(9) Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority

a. Letter from the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources is attached.

(10) Releasing Copies of Applications

Para la Naturaleza, the Applicant, acknowledges this application may be made publicly available on EPA's Office on Brownfields and Land Revitalization website or another public website. The Applicant is not making any claims for confidential, privileged, or sensitive information, in this application or document.



Project Target Area Map

(6) Contacts

a. Project Director:

Carlos Torres, West Region Superintendent  
Para la Naturaleza, Inc.  
P.O. Box 9023554, San Juan, PR 00902-3554  
(787) 722-5834  
[carlos.t@pln.org](mailto:carlos.t@pln.org)

b. Chief Executive/Highest-Ranking Elected Official:

Fernando Lloveras San Miguel, Esq; President  
Para la Naturaleza, Inc.  
P.O. Box 9023554, San Juan, PR 00902-3554  
787-722-583  
[fernando@pln.org](mailto:fernando@pln.org)

(7) Population

- a. Aguadilla: 55,101 Total Population (P1 2020 Decennial Census, United States Census Bureau)
- b. Caguas: 127,444 Total Population (P1 2020 Decennial Census, United States Census Bureau)



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
RESOURCES

**DNER**

GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

January 20, 2026

Environmental Protection Agency  
Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment Grants FY 26

To Whom It May Concern,

The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources acknowledges that Para la Naturaleza, Inc. is submitting a proposal to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment Grants for FY25. This proposal seeks funding for the Environmental Assessment and Planning of Conservation Uses at three sites owned and managed by Para la Naturaleza, including: Jaicoa Natural Protected Area in Aguadilla, Cayaguas Natural Protected Area in Caguas, and Quebrada Algarrobo Natural Protected Area in San Lorenzo.

The project aims to secure vital financial resources to conduct a comprehensive environmental assessment of all three sites, which include former quarry mine, a former concrete factory, and a former gravel pit. The goal is to assess current site conditions, develop a site reuse plan, while engaging key stakeholders including local communities in the process. T

By conducting environmental assessments, the project will generate a clear understanding of the site's environmental conditions, which will be critical to shaping a sustainable site reuse plan. The plan will focus on the promotion of conservation and recreational uses, emphasizing opportunities for community involvement while preserving the site's natural resources. The reuse plan will outline future land uses, key environmental and conservation interventions, resource management strategies, and cost estimates, providing a strategic roadmap for the site's revitalization.

Sincerely,

Marisel Martínez Feliciano  
Auxiliary Secretary  
Auxiliary Secretariat of Conservation and Research

**Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Assessment Grants  
Community-Wide Assessment Grants  
C. Narrative Criteria**

**(1) PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION**

a. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area: Para la Naturaleza, Inc. (PLN), operational unit of the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust, founded in 1970, works throughout Puerto Rico to protect ecologically significant lands and strengthen community resilience in regions facing persistent environmental and socioeconomic challenges. The three municipal geographic boundaries for this project—Aguadilla (population ~55,000), San Lorenzo (population ~37,000), and Caguas (population ~127,000)—all exhibit median household incomes and poverty rates significantly below U.S. averages, with more than one-third of residents living in poverty and many communities experiencing limited access to healthcare, employment, and essential services. These conditions were exacerbated by Hurricanes María (2017) and Fiona (2022), which damaged homes and water systems and mobilized contaminants such as lead paint and petroleum residues from aging structures and former industrial lands. Within this context, the proposed brownfield sites—each shaped by quarrying, earth extraction, and stone-processing operations—represent not only environmental conservation concerns but also direct contributors to community health risks, economic stagnation, and climate vulnerability. Their degraded soils, dust emissions, and altered drainage patterns exacerbate respiratory illness, increase runoff and flooding hazards, depress surrounding property values, and limit opportunities for safe recreation, ecological restoration, and nature-based economic activity. Comprehensive brownfields assessment and community-guided reuse planning are therefore essential to characterize potential contaminants, reduce exposure pathways, restore damaged landscapes, and catalyze equitable revitalization that aligns environmental health with community well-being and long-term economic resilience.

b. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s)

The three sites recently became part of the Applicant’s portfolio of owned, managed, and maintained properties.

<b>Geographic Area, Target Area, and Priority Area</b>	<b>Historic/Current &amp; Condition/Planned Reuse</b>	<b>Potential Contaminants</b>
Municipality of Aguadilla, Caimital Bajo ward, Jaicoa Natural Protected Area, 215 acres <i>PR-443 Km. 0.6 Int. Caimital Bajo Ward Aguadilla, Puerto Rico</i>	Former limestone quarry and stone crushing mine	Elevated pH and alkalinity fine dust containing silica, metals associated with limestone host rock, explosives residues (nitrates and ammonium compounds)
Municipality of Caguas, Sector La Unión, Cañabón ward, Quebrada Algarrobo Natural Protected Area, 57 acres <i>PR-156 Km. 53.4 Cañabon ward, Caguas, Puerto Rico</i>	Former quarry and concrete plant	Metal fragments, lubricants and hydraulic fluids, PAHs and petroleum contaminants, residuals from aggregate washing
Municipality of San Lorenzo, Cayaguás, Quemados, and Cerro Gordo wards, Cayaguás Natural Protected Area,	Former earth crust extraction and processing plant	Heavy metals, VOCs and semi-volatile organics, acids or alkalis, solid waste piles, and PFAS

404 acres <i>PR-183 Km 10.9, Quemados,  Cayaguas and Cerro Gordo  wards, San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico</i>		
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i. Cordillera Jaicoa Natural Protected Area, Aguadilla is in the Caimital Bajo ward of the municipality of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, and consists of four contiguous legally registered parcels that together form a single project site. Parcel A (50.0001 cuerdas): Bounded to the north by lands of Jusor Corporation, a municipal road, and remaining lands of José Maldonado Acevedo; to the south by remaining lands of José Maldonado Acevedo; to the east by lands of Jusor Corporation and Reynaldo Ríos; and to the west by remaining lands of José Maldonado Acevedo. Parcel B (39.9484 cuerdas): Bounded to the north by a road separating it from lands of José Maldonado Acevedo; to the south by lands of Manuel A. García Méndez, Eloy Feliciano, and Cerro Núñez; to the east by lands of Carretera Aguadilla, Inc.; and to the west by lands of Alberto Esteves and a road separating it from lands of José Maldonado Acevedo. Parcel C (68.2885 cuerdas): Bounded to the north by a previously segregated parcel and a municipal road; to the south by lands of Santana Ruiz; and to the east by lands of Reynaldo Ríos, Jaime Oliver Marques, Ángel Arocho Vaquero, and Liborio R. Caro. Parcel D (56.8092 cuerdas): Bounded to the north by lands of José Maldonado Acevedo; to the south by lands of Manuel A. García Méndez, Tuto Franzual, and Santana Ruiz; to the east by lands of Comunidad Agrícola Bianchi, Inc.; and to the west by remaining lands of José Maldonado Acevedo.

The Aguadilla region exhibits documented abandoned industrial and commercial properties with potential contamination concerns, including former industrial facilities, vacant lots, and abandoned gas stations that have reported petroleum residues, hazardous materials, asbestos, and lead paint in soils and structures. These conditions are typical of brownfield inventories catalogued by the Puerto Rico Brownfields Program, which show multiple abandoned industrial sites and vacant commercial parcels with unknown hazards in the Aguadilla area. The municipality has also historically dealt with landfill closure and monitoring due to concerns over potential threats to groundwater and adjacent land, underscoring persistent environmental stress in the area. Recent EPA action to enforce Clean Water Act compliance highlights ongoing concerns with stormwater discharges and sediment transport into local watershed systems, indicating broader risks to surface water quality near community areas (Information gathered from the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources Webpage Brownfields Section, and United States Environmental Protection Agency Website).

ii. Cayaguas Natural Protected Area, San Lorenzo: located within the Quemados, Cayaguas, and Cerro Gordo wards of the municipality of San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico. Bounded to the north by lands of Nemesia López and Eleuterio Lebrón, the Río Grande de Loíza, and a parcel segregated from this property now belonging to Cruz Buxó; to the south by lands of María Anastasia Villafañe, Pablo Díaz, Roque Martínez, Julia Pedraza, the Río Cayaguas, the Río Grande de Loíza, lands of Antonio Torres, and a local road; to the east by the Río Cayaguas, the Río Grande de Loíza, and lands of Agapito Contreras; and to the west by the Río Grande de Loíza, a road, a stream, and lands of Eleuterio Lebrón, Martín Rodríguez, Antonio Cruz, Julio Gómez, Isidro Torres, María Anastasia Villafañe, Saturnino Rivera, the Estate of Nicomedes Rivera, and Ramón Santiago.

While specific formal brownfield inventories for San Lorenzo are limited, the broader region is characterized by rural land uses with a history of agricultural activity, which can leave legacy environmental stressors such as pesticide and fuel contamination in soils and sediments. Puerto Rico’s landscapes of mixed agriculture and conservation lands show that agricultural areas

often overlap with natural buffers and protected lands, requiring careful assessment of past practices when considering brownfield conditions near conservation targets. The underlying geology and moderate vegetation cover in San Lorenzo also suggest susceptibility to erosion and sediment transport during intense rainfall events, which can mobilize contaminants and affect nearby water resources if present. Additionally, rural communities often exhibit a lack of formal environmental assessments for older structures, storage sites, or unused equipment, making soils and groundwater quality uncertainties a concern for assessment (Caribbean Climate Hub, US Geological Survey).

iii. Quebrada Algarrobo Natural Protected Area: located in the Cañabón ward of the municipality of Caguas, Puerto Rico. Bounded to the north by lands of Sergio Dávila; to the south by lands of Carlos Díaz and José Pérez; to the east by lands of Cristina Ramírez, Isabel Torres, Regino Galarza, and Gregorio Lozada; and to the west by lands of Sergio Dávila.

The Municipality of Caguas has documented brownfield issues associated with urban and industrial legacy sites where soil, air, and water contamination have been observed or inferred. Studies of brownfields redevelopment in Caguas note the presence of contaminated soil, air, and water in neighborhoods adjacent to underutilized parcels, reflecting long-term environmental pressures from past industrial and commercial uses. Moreover, surface water quality assessments in the Caguas watershed have shown elevated fecal and total coliform counts in urban streams, indicating ongoing sanitary and runoff contamination challenges that intersect with environmental health objectives. These documented conditions support the need for assessment in areas like Sector La Unión where legacy land use and urban runoff may interact with protected natural resources (Municipality of Caguas).

c. Identifying Additional Sites: upon the availability of remaining grant funds, the Applicant will proceed to identify additional sites applying EPA target selection criteria, including documented or suspected contamination, community health risk factors, redevelopment readiness, and alignment with municipal plans.

### **Revitalization of Target Area**

d. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans: The three priority sites will be protected, managed, and maintained as natural protected areas, with planned future uses that include reforestation initiatives, the creation of recreational trails, and the establishment of observation points to enhance public engagement with the landscape and local biodiversity (once assessment and reuse planning are completed). These planned developments will prioritize ecological restoration and conservation, providing opportunities eco-tourism, recreation, and education, while preserving the site's natural integrity. The proposed brownfields reuse strategy is fully aligned with existing municipal planning frameworks in Aguadilla, San Lorenzo, and Caguas, including land use, conservation, and hazard mitigation objectives. In Aguadilla, restoring the former limestone quarry and stone-crushing site supports ecosystem protection, safe recreational access, and local economic development through nature-based tourism. In San Lorenzo, reuse of the former earth-crust extraction site mitigates erosion, stabilizes soils, and provides space for green infrastructure, agroforestry, and environmental education consistent with the municipality's hazard mitigation and sustainable land use goals. In Caguas, redevelopment of the former quarry advances recreation, biodiversity conservation, and urban-rural connectivity, while fostering green jobs, eco-tourism, and sustainable agriculture in line with municipal territorial and land use plans.

Across all three municipalities, the project transforms legacy industrial lands into safe, ecologically restored, and economically productive community assets, simultaneously addressing environmental health risks, promoting public well-being, and supporting municipal priorities for

sustainable growth. Similar successful projects include Alafia River State Park, a former phosphate mine in Florida, and West Coyote Hills in California, a former oil refinery.

e. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy: The Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) for the priority brownfield sites in Aguadilla, San Lorenzo, and Caguas will generate short-term, targeted employment opportunities in environmental consulting, field investigation, and laboratory analysis. Across all three sites, the assessments are projected to create approximately 15–20 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions for environmental specialists, engineers, geologists, and field technicians over the course of the assessment period, with an additional 8–10 FTE-months of indirect employment in administrative support, sample logistics, and laboratory processing. These temporary positions will provide meaningful short-term economic benefits to local workers and contractors, while supporting the critical early-phase work needed to characterize site conditions, identify contaminants, and ensure safe and informed planning for subsequent remediation and redevelopment. By investing in these assessments, EPA funding will not only advance the environmental and public health objectives of the project but also stimulate local economic activity in communities that have historically faced limited employment.

Following the completion of environmental assessments and remediation, full redevelopment of the three priority sites is expected to generate substantial local economic and employment benefits. Based on regional redevelopment trends and the scale of the sites, future development activities supported by non-EPA funding, are expected to generate substantial construction-phase employment. Redevelopment and reuse of these sites are also anticipated to increase surrounding property values, modestly enhance local tax revenues, and stimulate approximately \$9–10 million in economic activity through spending, workforce participation, and secondary business growth in adjacent communities. By removing blight and repurposing underutilized lands, the project will reduce opportunities for illicit activity, improve neighborhood safety, and provide accessible, safe, and restored spaces for low-income and vulnerable residents. In combination with the short-term employment generated by Phase I and Phase II ESAs, these outcomes ensure that the project delivers measurable economic stimulus, community revitalization, and long-term environmental and public health benefits.

#### **Strategy for Leveraging Resources**

f. Resources Needed for Site Reuse: As a nonprofit corporation with more than 55 years in existence, Para la Naturaleza has been steadily successful in securing funds in support of its mission, strategic plan and projects. Having an established portfolio of major, corporate, foundation, and government funders, the organization has secured over \$30M in external sources during the past 15 years alone (US Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S Forest Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Arbor Day Foundation, Pfizer, among many others), and will use that portfolio of funders to seek funding for reuse activities implementation once Assessments and Plans are completed.

g. Use of Existing Infrastructure: The three priority sites have existing water, sewer and electricity sources, as well as access roads, which will support future services to the community with non-EPA funding once assessment and reuse planning are completed, in the form of centers with office and meeting spaces. Since the sites will be kept, managed, and maintained as natural protected areas, no further infrastructure updates will be needed, except for rehabilitation of existing structures to accommodate personnel needs, and the creation of recreational trails on site. Rehabilitation and redevelopment activities will commence once environmental assessments are completed, and reuse plans are developed and approved. Funds for future rehabilitation and redevelopment activities will be sought from USDA Rural Development Agency and applicable

programs, as well as the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources.

## **(2) COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Community Need**

a. The Community's Need for Funding: Across all three sites, communities experience cumulative environmental health risks associated with legacy industrial operations, including dust inhalation, potential soil and sediment contamination, and altered hydrology. Vulnerable populations — particularly those living near these underutilized or potentially contaminated properties — may be disproportionately impacted due to prevalent chronic health conditions, poverty, and limited access to healthcare services. Brownfields assessments, Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessments, Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives, and community-engaged reuse planning are critical to identify, quantify, and mitigate potential exposures, ensuring that redevelopment benefits both environmental quality and public health.

b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations: Community Health and Environmental Risk Summary — Target Brownfields Sites

The proposed Brownfields priority sites in Aguadilla, San Lorenzo, and Caguas each have histories of extractive industrial activity that present potential environmental and public health concerns.

i. Aguadilla (Caimital Bajo ward) – Former Limestone Quarry and Stone Crushing Facility: This site's history of limestone quarrying and stone crushing may have left residual particulate matter, silica dust, and noise impacts, which can exacerbate respiratory conditions among residents. Soil erosion and altered hydrology from quarry operations may contribute to sediment and dust dispersion, potentially affecting nearby surface water resources. Residents in Caimital Bajo are already vulnerable to elevated rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory illness, compounded by limited access to healthcare.

ii. San Lorenzo (Cayaguas, Quemados, Cerro Gordo wards) – Former Earth Crust Extraction and Processing Plant: The former processing facility in San Lorenzo may have left heavy metals, soil contaminants, and dust, creating potential exposure pathways via soil contact, inhalation of dust, noise impact, and surface water runoff. These risks are particularly concerning for residents with pre-existing health vulnerabilities and limited access to healthcare services. Environmental assessment and cleanup planning are critical to identify and mitigate potential exposures, protect public health, and facilitate safe reuse.

iii. Caguas (Quebrada Algarrobo / Sector La Unión, Cañabón ward) – Former Quarry and Crushed Stone Mine: Like Aguadilla, this site's quarry and stone crushing history may contribute to silica and dust exposure, soil instability, and sediment runoff, which can affect both ecological receptors and nearby residents. Populations adjacent to the site face chronic health burdens and socioeconomic challenges that increase their sensitivity to environmental hazards. Assessment, cleanup alternatives analysis, and reuse planning are essential to minimize risk and promote safety.

c. Greater than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions

i. Aguadilla: The areas encompassing Census Tracts 4014.02 and 4013.01 in Aguadilla are situated within a municipality that demonstrates elevated burdens of chronic disease and environmental health vulnerability relative to broader territorial norms. At the municipal level, Aguadilla exhibits a high age-adjusted cancer incidence rate of approximately 298 per 100,000, which aligns with elevated cancer rates seen in industrially impacted regions of Puerto Rico and reflects a substantial chronic disease burden in the community. Chronic conditions such as diabetes are also of concern across the region; Aguadilla's diabetes prevalence is in line with some of the higher municipal rates reported in statewide analyses of small area variation in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, existing

public health assessments identify the Aguadilla health region as having some of the highest asthma emergency department visit rates on the island, underscoring substantial respiratory disease burden consistent with known environmental triggers. Socioeconomic characteristics of these tracts, including poverty rates and household composition, can further amplify vulnerability to disease and adverse health outcomes.

ii. Caguas: Census Tract 2022 in Caguas lies within a municipality that consistently exhibits elevated burdens of chronic and environmentally linked disease relative to Puerto Rico as a whole. Public health analyses identify Caguas as having higher-than-average rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, and cancer, reflecting both environmental and socioeconomic stressors that disproportionately affect residents. The municipality includes areas with increased modeled cancer risk from air toxics and heightened respiratory hazard indices, driven by traffic emissions, industrial activity, and legacy contamination sources—patterns frequently reflected in EJScreen profiles for this tract. The area is also characterized by older housing stock and associated indicators of lead paint exposure risk, compounding vulnerability among children and older adults.

iii. San Lorenzo: The priority-area census tracts in San Lorenzo (2206; 2205.01 and 2205.02; 2204.01 and 2204.02; and 2201) exhibit a consistent pattern of chronic disease and environmental health vulnerability that exceeds conditions observed across Puerto Rico. Public health data for the San Lorenzo region show elevated prevalence of asthma, hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, conditions that are closely associated with both environmental exposures and socioeconomic stressors. Studies of chronic disease variation in Puerto Rico place San Lorenzo among the municipalities with higher burdens of diabetes and hypertension, contributing to heightened risks of stroke and heart disease. The region has also been identified as experiencing above-average asthma emergency-department utilization, reflecting both respiratory vulnerability and exposure triggers commonly associated with older housing stock, mold/moisture intrusion, and proximity to mobile emission sources. EJScreen indicators for these tracts typically show elevated levels of respiratory hazard, traffic-related pollutants, and lead paint potential, all of which correlate with the chronic conditions documented in the community. Taken together, the health profile of these census tracts demonstrates that residents living near the priority site experience a greater-than-normal incidence of disease and adverse health conditions relative to both municipal and territorial benchmarks.

d. Economically Impoverished/Disproportionately Impacted Populations: The project targets communities that are economically disadvantaged and disproportionately impacted by historical industrial operations. Many residents have low incomes, limited access to healthcare, and are concentrated near abandoned quarries and extraction sites where contamination risks persist. These populations bear a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards, including exposure to contaminated soil, dust, and illegal dumping. This grant will allow for assessment, remediation, and redevelopment of priority brownfield sites, creating opportunities for local employment, workforce development, and community services, while transforming previously hazardous lands into safe, functional, and economically productive spaces. By addressing both environmental and social inequities, the project advances environmental justice goals and ensures that disadvantaged populations benefit directly from EPA-funded interventions.

### **Community Engagement**

#### e. Project Involvement & Roles

Name of organization/entity/ Group	Entity's mission	Point of contact	Specific Involvement in the project or assistance provided
Para la Naturaleza (PLN)	Applicant	Carlos Torres, Superintendent Kathleen Rodríguez, Grants Coordinator	Applicant, Project Implementation
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources	State Agency – public service, stakeholder	Marisel Martínez, Sub-Secretary	Input, permits, clearances, potential funding for reuse activities

**g. Incorporating Community Input:** Effective community engagement is critical to ensuring that the redevelopment of the priority brownfield sites in Aguadilla, San Lorenzo, and Caguas meets the needs, values, and priorities of residents. PLN, with support from its regional team, contracted Project Coordinator, and consultants, will implement a multi-format engagement strategy to provide updates, share findings, and gather meaningful input throughout all phases of the project.

The strategy will include in-person community meetings and interactive workshops in accessible local venues, enabling residents to explore assessment results and contribute ideas for site reuse. Virtual engagement tools, such as webinars, online surveys, and social media updates using PLN's current sources (Smartsheet, facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, as well as Zoom and Teams, will ensure participation from those unable to attend in-person events. Printed materials, visual displays, and newsletters at the regional centers will communicate complex technical findings in clear, accessible formats, with content available in both Spanish and English. Participatory activities, including mapping exercises, suggestion portals, and design charrettes, will allow residents to actively contribute to reuse concepts. All feedback will be systematically documented in Smartsheet, analyzed, and integrated into project planning and reuse strategies, ensuring transparency and accountability.

### **(3) TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS**

Upon award confirmation and execution of related documents, PLN will commence project activities. Since PLN owns and manages the priority sites, access issues are not foreseen during implementation. No subawards or participant support costs are planned for this project. No cleanup or construction activities are proposed under this Assessment Grant. The following are the main three tasks delineating the work plan for the project:

#### **a. Task 1: Program Field and Outreach Coordination**

*i. Project Implementation:* Project Coordinator will be retained through a competitive following 2CFR200 process as a contracted service provider. This position will be responsible for coordination of site visits, follow up to hired professionals, community outreach, and support for the coordination of charettes.

*ii. Schedule:* Years 1 through 3

*iii. Task/Activity Lead:* PLN Key Project Staff, with the support of PLN's HR and Legal units

*iv. Output:* Selection for Project Coordinator, travel to two Brownfield conferences, 12 quarterly reports, ACRES entries, annual and performance reports (frequency established by EPA), calls, emails, and meetings between hired QEPs, Planners, stakeholders, PLN team, and EPA

#### **b. Task 2: Environmental Investigation**

*i. Project Implementation:* Hiring of a qualified environmental professional through procurement process to conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments for each of the three

priority sites. Phase I assessments will follow ASTM E1527 standards, ASTM E2247-16 (for large priority sites), and RECs if needed.

ii. *Anticipated Project Schedule:* Years 1 and 2

iii. *Task/Activity Lead:* PLN project team with the support of Legal Unit & Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP)

iv. *Output:* 3 Phases I and 3 Phase II Environmental Assessments

**c. Task 3: Cleanup/Reuse Planning**

i. *Project Implementation:* Hiring of a qualified environmental planning professional through procurement process will occur once environmental assessments are completed; hired professional will be responsible for producing a reuse plan for each priority site. Plan will include an analysis of cleanup alternatives, remediation plans, funding development, and reuse visioning, as applicable to each priority site.

ii. *Anticipated Project Schedule:* Year 2

iii. *Task/Activity Lead:* PLN project team with the support of Legal Unit & Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP)

iv. *Output:* 3 Cleanup/Reuse Plans (including Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives and reuse concepts for each priority site)

**d. Task 4: Community Outreach and Involvement**

i. *Project Implementation:* 3 charettes will be designed and delivered in each one of the municipalities where the priority sites are located. Charettes will provide the opportunity for the QEP and Planning Professionals to present and discuss results, as well as review the cleanup/reuse plan for all stakeholders' benefit. During the project implementation period, the coordinator will communicate regularly with stakeholders (calls, emails, social media, and flyers) about project progress and gather input as needed throughout the process, especially during the cleanup/reuse plan development process.

ii. *Anticipated Project Schedule:* Outreach throughout years 1 and 2; charettes during year 3

iii. *Task/Activity Lead:* PLN, Project Coordinator, Planning Professionals

iv. *Output:* 3 charettes

**e. Cost Estimates**

Budget Categories	Project Tasks (\$)					Total
	(Task 1)	(Task 2)	(Task 3)	(Task 4)	Administrative Costs	
Personnel						
Fringe Benefits						
Travel	\$5,120					\$5,120
Equipment						
Supplies						
Contractual		\$338,000	\$95,000	\$44,000	\$0	\$477,000
Construction						
Other					\$900	\$900
Total Direct Costs	\$5,120	\$338,000	\$95,000	\$44,000	900	\$483,020
Indirect Costs					\$16,980	\$16,980
Total Budget						\$500,000

1. Task 1: Program Management & Training Support \$6,020

– *Travel*: Attend two National Brownfield Conferences: airfare @ \$1,500 per flight = \$3,000, 2 stays, 4 nights lodging @ \$640 each = \$1,280, meals @ \$300 each travel = \$600, ground transportation @ \$120 per travel = \$240, total \$5,120

– *Other*: registration for 2 conferences @\$450 each = \$900.

**2. Task 2: Environmental Investigation and Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs): \$338,000**

– *Contractual*: 3 Phase I ESAs at an average cost of \$6,000 each = \$18,000, and 3 Phase II ESAs at an estimated cost of \$100,000 each = \$300,000; Project Site Activities Coordinator @\$20,000.

**3. Task 3: Clean-up & Reuse Planning: \$95,000**

– *Contractual*: 3 ABCAs/clean-up plans, \$25,000 each = \$75,000; Project Sites Activities Coordinator @ \$20,000.

**4. Task 4: Design Charettes: \$44,000**

– *Contractual*: 3 Design Charette expected to cost \$8,000 each = \$24,000; Project Coordinator @\$20,000.

**f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results**

Project Coordinator and Director, with the support of the Grants Coordinator, will fill out and submit quarterly reports on the ACRES system for the duration of the project and award agreement.

**(4) PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE**

**Programmatic Capability**

**a. Organizational Capacity:** Para la Naturaleza, Inc., the operational arm of the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust (PRCT), are private, non-profit organizations. Operating for more than five decades, their mission is to conserve natural and cultural resources in Puerto Rico through land protection, environmental education and interpretation, habitat and historic restorations, and sustainable community development.

**b. Organizational Structure:** PLN is accredited by the Land Trust Alliance Commission, certifying its operations meet the rigorous standards and practices in conservation; it is also the first organization in Puerto Rico to be admitted to The International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Operating in the archipelago of Puerto Rico, with more than 200 employees, its structure is divided into five regions and one central office where Accounting, HR, Legal, Development, Executive Office and Communications units are housed.

**c. Description of Key Staff**

*Project Director, Carlos Torres*, West Regional Superintendent, has over 20 years of experience in the management of protected areas, community-based conservation, and ecological restoration across federal, state, and nonprofit sectors. Since 2013, he has led Para la Naturaleza’s conservation initiatives, and community engagement efforts in the western region. Mr. Torres Báez is a member of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and holds a B.S. in General Agriculture and Tropical Forestry from the University of Hawaii and an M.S. in Biology with a specialization in ecological restoration from California Polytechnic State University–San Luis Obispo.

*Comptroller, Yoannie Escalera, CPA*, Yoannie Escalera, CPA, is the Controller for Para la Naturaleza, with over twenty years of experience in corporate and private accounting. She is a Certified Public Accountant and holds a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting from the University of Puerto Rico. Her areas of expertise include financial accounting, cash reconciliations, auditing, tax services, and fiscal compliance across the construction, government, and nonprofit sectors. She has experience supporting capital projects financed through New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) structures and works closely with management, external advisors, and financial institutions to monitor project expenditures and ensure compliance with applicable funding and reporting requirements.

*Grants Coordinator, Kathleen Rodríguez*, brings more than 25 years of experience in the administration of federal grants, encompassing both pre-award development and post-award compliance. Throughout her career, she has secured over \$40 million in federal funding and has maintained a record of zero findings during grant closeouts. Ms. Rodríguez holds a B.S. in Urban and Regional Studies from Cornell University, a Master’s in Nonprofit Management, and is currently completing her thesis as part of a Master’s in Caribbean Archaeology.

**d. Acquiring Additional Resources**

*A contracted Program Coordinator* will support direct implementation of Brownfields assessment and community engagement activities across the three priority sites. Responsibilities include coordinating site access and field visits; compiling historical, environmental, and land-use information required by environmental contractors for Phase I and Phase II ESAs; assisting with community meeting logistics and Spanish and English materials; coordinating communications with PLN, municipal partners, and consultants; and tracking project deliverables.

*Qualified Environmental Professionals:* will conduct the Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments for all three priority sites.

*Qualified Environmental Planning Consultants:* will conduct the ABCAs for all three priority sites

*Qualified Planning Consultants* will deliver design charettes for all three priority sites/target areas.

**Past Performance and Accomplishments**

**f. Has Not Received an EPA Brownfields Grant but has Received Other Federal or Non-Federal Financial Assistance Agreements**

**1. Purpose and Accomplishments**

Having secured over \$25M in the past 15 years, PLN understands the responsibility of securing and managing federal funds. Its Development, Accounting, Legal and Project Management Units collaborate from the concept development to post award management and closeout, ensuring compliance with applicable federal, state and nonprofit regulations and applicability to each award. The Government Grants Coordinator dedicates full time to the identification, proposal development, and post award management of these funds, with the support of the critical units.

<b>Awarding Agency</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Natural Resources Conservation Service	\$2,541,985	Watershed restoration in private farms, 50,000 native trees, biodiversity monitoring, listed species conservation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	\$8,824,679	Reconstruction and Hardening of the PR Parrot (listed species) Facilities in Rio Abajo and Maricao
U.S. Forest Service	\$286,000	Biodiversity monitoring with volunteer farmers in private farms – east region of Puerto Rico

**2. Compliance with Grant Requirements:** PLN’s team has a strong record of compliance with the workplan, schedule, and terms of federal financial assistance agreements, consistently submitting timely and accurate progress, financial, and closeout reports. We have met all milestones and deliverables as required, maintaining thorough documentation to support financial and programmatic accountability, using the designated systems (Grants.gov, ezFedGrants, GrantSolutions) as well as internal platforms (Asana and Smartsheet for task and project management). On the rare occasions when minor deviations occurred, corrective measures—including task timeline adjustments, resource reallocation, and strengthened internal tracking—were implemented promptly, documented internally, and communicated to the awarding agency. These actions ensured alignment toward expected results, and successful project completion with no findings during federal audits and project closeouts.

**Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Assessment Grants  
Community-Wide Assessment Grants**

**Threshold Criteria Responses**

**(1) Applicant Eligibility**

- a. Para la Naturaleza, Inc. is a nonprofit organization. Included is the corporation's tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS.
- b. Para la Naturaleza, Inc. is not exempt from Federal taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the IRS.

**(2) Community Involvement**

Para la Naturaleza (PLN) will implement a structured, bilingual community involvement program to ensure that residents and stakeholders in Aguadilla, San Lorenzo, and Caguas are fully informed and meaningfully engaged throughout all phases of the Brownfields assessment process. PLN will provide regular project updates, share assessment findings, and gather input through a combination of in-person community meetings, design charrettes, and interactive workshops held in accessible local venues. These activities will be complemented by virtual engagement tools—including webinars, online surveys, and social media communications—as well as printed materials and visual displays in regional centers to communicate technical information in clear, accessible formats. A Project Coordinator, retained through competitive procurement, will support ongoing outreach by maintaining communication with municipal partners, community leaders, and stakeholders; coordinating notices and informational materials; and ensuring that all feedback is documented and integrated into assessment and reuse planning activities. This multi-format engagement strategy ensures transparency, facilitates two-way communication, and enables residents—particularly those in disproportionately impacted communities adjacent to the priority sites—to actively participate in shaping the cleanup alternatives, reuse concepts, and long-term vision for the restored sites.

**(3) Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds**

Para la Naturaleza does not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant or Multipurpose Grant.

**(4) Contractors and Named Subrecipients**

Para la Naturaleza, Inc. does not have any selected contractors under this NOFO. Procurement procedures will be followed to hire all contractors as stated in the narrative.

Para la Naturaleza, Inc. does not have any named subrecipients under this NOFO.