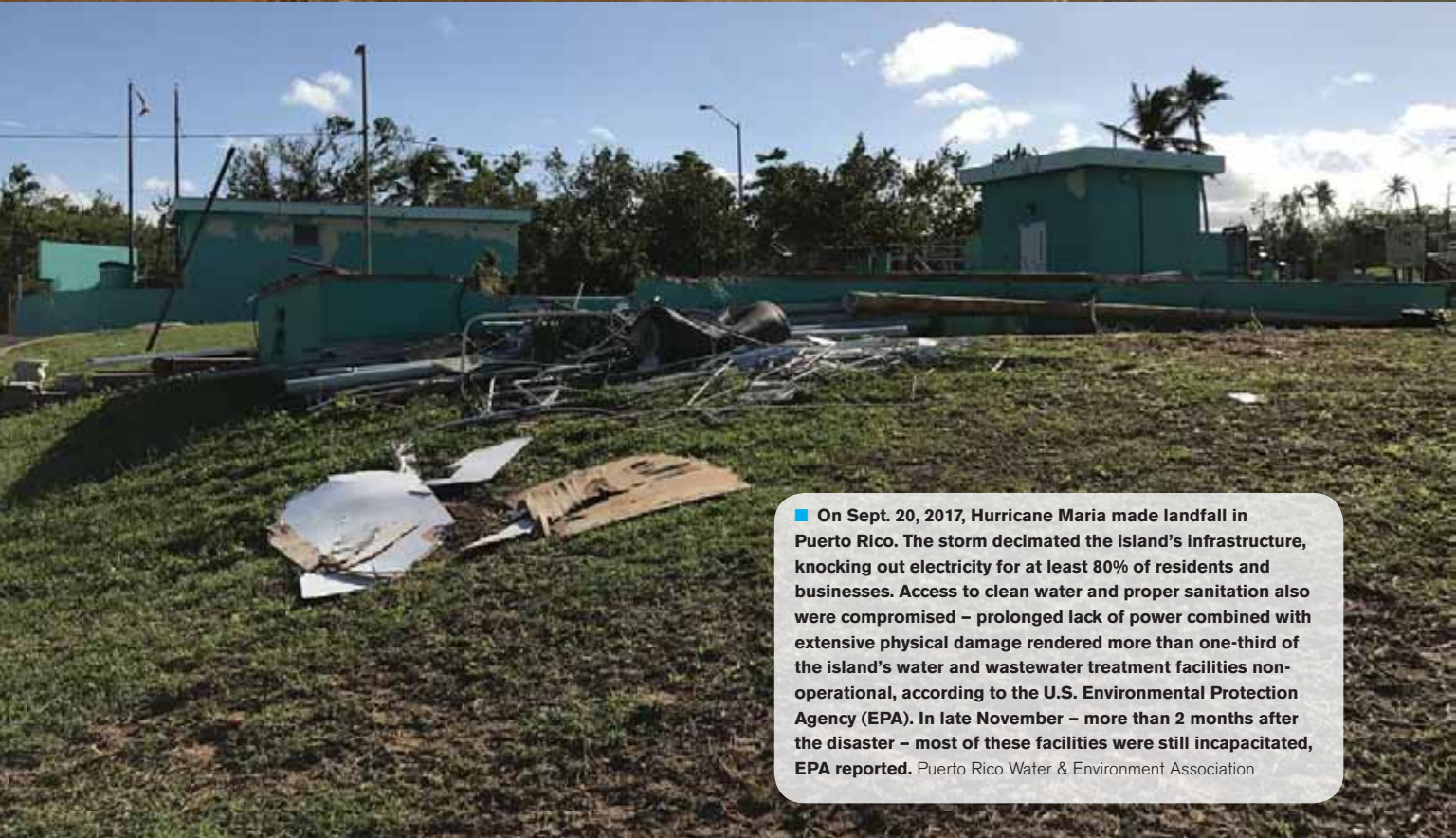


# SPLASH SHOT



■ On Sept. 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico. The storm decimated the island's infrastructure, knocking out electricity for at least 80% of residents and businesses. Access to clean water and proper sanitation also were compromised – prolonged lack of power combined with extensive physical damage rendered more than one-third of the island's water and wastewater treatment facilities non-operational, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In late November – more than 2 months after the disaster – most of these facilities were still incapacitated, EPA reported. Puerto Rico Water & Environment Association





The damage that Maria inflicted on the San Germán Wastewater Treatment Plant represented the state of most water and wastewater infrastructure in Puerto Rico during the weeks following the hurricane, said Roberto Ramos, president of the Puerto Rico Water & Environment Association (PRW&EA). As of December, San Germán staff members still were assessing damage to the facility and plotting a lengthy course toward rehabilitation.

Intake pipes and pump stations, sludge beds, equipment warehouses, and chlorine gas storage areas were among many parts of the facility that sustained damage. Puerto Rico Water & Environment Association





PRW&EA members have been a crucial source of professional expertise during the island's ongoing crisis. Ramos says that members have been working alongside aid agencies and relief workers to advise residents of severely affected communities how to recognize clean water and how to purify water to potable quality. Puerto Rico Water & Environment Association







The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has established a special task force to help restore Puerto Rican water and wastewater treatment facilities to pre-storm conditions. To provide relief for citizens, FEMA also is distributing water purification tablets to areas without clean drinking water, providing bottled water to municipalities, and strategically placing potable-water tanker trucks around the island. According to FEMA, the Puerto Rico relief effort is the largest sustained funding operation in the agency's history. The road to full recovery is expected to take months or even years. Puerto Rico Water & Environment Association