



National Science Foundation
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Press Statement 17-008

Arecibo: Statement on NSF Record of Decision

Decision formalizes NSF's preferred path for maintaining science operations



The Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico.

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On Nov. 15, 2017, the National Science Foundation (NSF) signed its [Record of Decision <https://www.nsf.gov/mps/ast/env_impact_reviews/arecibo/arecibo_rod.jsp>](https://www.nsf.gov/mps/ast/env_impact_reviews/arecibo/arecibo_rod.jsp) for the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico. This important step concludes the agency's decision-making process with respect to the general path forward for facility operations in a budget-constrained environment and provides the basis for a future decision regarding a new collaborator.

NSF issued its Record of Decision following authorization from the National Science Board on Nov. 9, 2017. That followed an extensive environmental impact analysis and broad input from the public and the scientific community, including the [National Academies 6th Decadal Survey \(/cgi-bin/good-bye?https://www.nap.edu/catalog/12951/new-worlds-new-horizons-in-astronomy-and-astrophysics\)](https://www.nap.edu/catalog/12951/new-worlds-new-horizons-in-astronomy-and-astrophysics) released in 2010, the [NSF Division of Astronomical Sciences Portfolio Review Committee Report <https://www.nsf.gov/mps/ast/ast_portfolio_review.jsp>](https://www.nsf.gov/mps/ast/ast_portfolio_review.jsp) released in 2012 and the [NSF Geospace Sciences Portfolio Review Committee Report <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/adgeo/geospace-review/geospace-portfolio-review-final-rpt-2016.pdf>](https://www.nsf.gov/geo/adgeo/geospace-review/geospace-portfolio-review-final-rpt-2016.pdf) released in 2016.

The decision formalizes the selection of NSF's preferred alternative: to collaborate with interested parties to maintain science-focused operations at the observatory with reduced agency funding. This plan will allow important research to continue while accommodating the agency's budgetary constraints and its core mission to support cutting-edge science and education.

NSF remains deeply concerned about the impacts from recent hurricanes on Arecibo Observatory staff, the facility and all citizens of Puerto Rico. The Record of Decision arrives at a challenging time, but is necessary for the agency to secure a future for the observatory. It will allow negotiations to begin with potential collaborators who may take over management and operations as NSF funding for the observatory is reduced.

-NSF-

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