

What hit us – Notes on the Physical Geography of Hurricanes Irma and María

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The 2017 hurricane season has been described by the news media as catastrophic and cataclysmic in part due to the devastating legacies of Hurricanes Irma and María throughout the Insular Caribbean. This presentation relied on an exploration of the hydro-geomorphic effects of these two Hurricanes with an emphasis on Hurricane María in Puerto Rico. Commonly used metrics used by physical geographers to describe extreme weather phenomena concur with the media depiction of these events as being unique and most likely record-breaking. When compared to past events throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, Hurricane María displays metrics that had not been previously described by earth scientists in the Caribbean and elsewhere. These findings pose the question as to whether the 2017 Hurricane Season represents the new meteorological realities of the Caribbean Region under human-induced climate change.