



Montserrat Volcano Observatory

5 November 2017
9:00 am

Significant Changes to Sinkhole at NW Bluff

There have been significant changes to the sinkhole in the North West Bluff region of Montserrat, probably related to heavy rainfall from Hurricane Maria.

During a helicopter observation flight on 3 November 2017, staff from MVO observed changes to the sinkhole since the previous observations on 27 September, nine days after the passage of Hurricane Maria. The width of the sinkhole at the surface had increased from approximately 10 metres to more than 20 metres and there is evidence that large quantities of material collapsed into the sinkhole. In addition, a small landslide measuring approximately 35 metres across and 50 metres long has occurred along the southern and eastern sides of the sinkhole. This landslide appears to be moving towards the northeast. The photographs show the sinkhole on 27 September and 3 November 2017.

Approximately half of the protective fence installed to prevent people and animals from falling into the sinkhole has itself fallen into the sinkhole. During the observation flight, MVO staff saw small collapses from the walls of the sinkhole indicating that the ground is still unstable and that further collapses and movement of the landslide are likely to take place.

The cause of these recent changes is probably related to the very heavy rainfall during the passage of Hurricane Maria when MVO recorded approximately seven inches (18 cm) of rainfall. Further heavy rainfall could increase the likelihood of more changes to the sinkhole.

The public is strongly urged to stay away from the area. MVO will continue to monitor the situation and will provide updates when necessary.

Roderick Stewart
Director

Photographs comparing the NW Bluff sinkhole on 27 September and 3 November 2017. The two photos are taken from slightly different directions but can be orientated using the ridge above the sinkhole and the outcrop of white rocks next to it. Photos : Adam Stinton, MVO.

