

**CONSULTATION ON THE OVERARCHING POLICY FOR
JAMAICA'S PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM
WITH NGOs, CIVIL SOCIETY & ACADEMIA
(GREEN PAPER)**

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Cinchona Gardens

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Acronyms

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
EFJ	Environmental Foundation of Jamaica
FD	Forestry Department
GOJ	Government of Jamaica
HDRC	Heritage Development Review Committee
IOJ	Institute of Jamaica
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JNHT	Jamaica National Heritage Trust
LFMC	Local Forest Management Committee
MDAs	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MEGJC	Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MRC	Ministry responsible for Culture
MRE	Ministry responsible for the Environment
MRF	Ministry responsible for Fisheries
MRLG	Ministry responsible for Local Government
NCTFJ	National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica
NEPA	National Environment and Planning Agency
NFA	National Fisheries Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRCA	Natural Resources Conservation Authority
PA	Protected Area
PAC	Protected Areas Committee
PAS	Protected Areas System
REDD +	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

Background

A protected area is a clearly defined geographical area of land and or water that is dedicated to and managed for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of its ecological systems, biodiversity and/or specific natural, cultural or aesthetic resources. A protected areas system may be defined as a “set of protected areas, comprising a combination of two or more protected area categories, whose activities are coordinated to achieve the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources”.

Protected areas are established to protect Jamaica's biodiversity and cultural values. Indeed, protected areas which are appropriately governed and effectively managed have benefits which include: safeguarding biodiversity, providing ecosystem services, providing genetic resources for food and agriculture; conserving water resources; mitigating the impacts of natural hazards as well as climate regulation acting as natural carbon sinks, contributing to poverty alleviation by providing employment opportunities and livelihoods to people living in and around them and providing opportunities for research.

Jamaica's protected areas are managed under law by four public entities, namely the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) formerly the Fisheries Division, the Forestry Department, the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT) and the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA)/National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA). Management of protected areas is also undertaken in collaboration with other government entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In 1997, the Policy for the National System of Protected Areas was approved by Parliament. The Policy envisaged the core of the System as being the areas established under the mandate of the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA), which would be the lead entity with responsibility for the protected areas system. The roles of the JNHT, the Fisheries Division, the Forestry Department, the Institute of Jamaica, the Water Resources Authority, local government agencies and NGOs were also addressed in the Policy. It was anticipated that the Policy would result in “enhanced cooperation and coordination of management activities among the many stakeholders in proposing, planning and managing protected areas across the country”. It is considered that this goal was not fully realized as there are still areas for improvement.

There have been fundamental changes in the institutional arrangements related to protected areas management since 1997 for example, the merger of the NRCA, Town Planning Department and the Land Development and Utilization Commission to form NEPA and the establishment of the Protected Areas Committee (PAC). Other developments include the establishment of the NFA under the Fisheries Act, 2018, NEPA and the Forestry Department becoming Executive Agencies (under the Executive Agencies Act) as well as the approval of the Forest Policy (2016), the National Forest Management and Conservation Plan and the Protected Areas Regulations under the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act. At the time the 1997 Policy was approved, many parts of the System were only in the early stages of formation, while others were still being planned. The Policy stated that in order to facilitate the further development of the System, a protected areas system plan would follow, outlining the steps and actions to be taken. Following

reviews of the Policy and its implementation, and a re-statement in 2019 of the need for a plan for the protected areas system, between 2004 and 2005 a project funded by the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ) prepared some elements of a system plan. In order to meet obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA), other elements including Jamaica's National Ecological Gap Assessment Report (NEGAR), Sustainable Financing Plan for Jamaica's System of Protected Areas (JPAS) 2010 – 2020 and the National Report on Management Effectiveness Assessment and Capacity Development Plan for Jamaica's System of Protected Areas were prepared starting in 2005, for a protected areas system master plan which was funded by the Forest Conservation Fund (FCF).

The Protected Areas System Master Plan: Jamaica 2013-2017 (PASMP) was prepared in 2013 and approved by Cabinet in 2015. A project entitled "Strengthening the Operational and Financial Sustainability of the National Protected Areas System" (NPAS) was approved and implemented over the period 2010-2017 with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project's goal which was to "safeguard Jamaica's globally significant biodiversity", also supported the implementation of the PASMP. Among the outputs of the NPAS Project were an enabling policy for the protected areas system (draft Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System), preliminary drafting instructions for Overarching Protected Areas legislation (Protected Areas Act for Jamaica) and the National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica (NCTFJ) which was established to provide financial support for the operation of the protected areas system.

The 1997 Policy for the National System of Protected Areas is being replaced by a new updated policy which will incorporate some of the provisions of the previous policy, include elements of the PASMP and guide new legislation related to the protected areas system. (Taken from the Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System – Green Paper).

Opening Remarks Gillian Guthrie, Technical Director, Development and Planning, Environment Policy and Management (MEGJC)

Ms Guthrie welcomed stakeholders in civil society and academia to the consultation on the draft of the Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas. She noted that she anticipated a robust discussion on the draft Policy and underscored the key role participants' comments would play in refining the document as the Ministry sought to ensure that the final Policy benefited from the expert advice of major stakeholders and was an accurate and comprehensive representation of the issues related to the country's protected areas. The amended draft, which would reflect the recommendations of stakeholders from all consultations, would be resubmitted to Cabinet for approval as a white paper.

Ms Guthrie reported that this was the third consultation on the draft Policy, advising that consultations had been held with relevant agencies and departments of government and the private sector, previously. The final consultation would be a virtual town hall meeting on Tuesday July 9, 2024. She invited stakeholders in the meeting to participate in the townhall session.

Ms Guthrie tendered apologies on behalf of Senator, the Honourable Matthew Samuda, Minister without portfolio in MEGJC and Permanent Secretary Arlene Williams, who were unable to attend due to work commitments. She advised that Minister Samuda's advisor on matters related to climate change, Mr Clehan Williams, would present the Minister's remarks.

Keynote Address, Senator the Honourable Matthew Samuda, Minister without Portfolio, MEGJC, presented by Clehan Williams

Senator, the Honourable Minister Samuda, extended a warm welcome to participants attending the MEGJC's consultation with stakeholders in civil society and academia on the Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Area Systems. He observed that it was critical for stakeholders, including the public, to proactively participate in the decision-making process in the formulation and implementation of national policies, programmes and legislation. This, he said, fostered greater ownership and collective commitment to achieving common goals and objectives. Consultations were important in soliciting the views and opinions of stakeholders on key national development imperatives. Senator Samuda congratulated the Environment and Risk Management Branch of MEGJC on the work done on the draft policy as well as the coordination of the series of consultations.

He reported that the Policy on Jamaica's Protected Area Systems had been approved by Cabinet and tabled in the Houses of Parliament as a green paper in March 2024. Senator Samuda explained that an integrated protected area system was essential in preserving Jamaica's

biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural heritage to ensure the conservation of vital resources for sustainability as well as addressing challenges in managing and conserving the protected areas.

He observed that the emphasis that the Policy placed on enhanced collaboration among the entities responsible for the regulation and management of protected areas encouraged a collaborative approach and fostered more effective management and protection of Jamaica's natural and cultural attributes. The main goal of the Green Paper, he underscored, was to provide the framework for the effective and equitable management, protection and conservation of the biodiversity of the island's cultural heritage as well as to maximise social and economic benefits. In pursuing this goal, the government would develop enabling policies and legislation to further strengthen the governance arrangements to responsibly inform the promulgation of the protective areas legislation to address, among other things, governance and the institutional arrangements for the protective areas systems. He reiterated the government's commitment to building and maintaining an interconnected and resilient protective areas system that supported ecological processes and human well-being.

Senator Samuda pointed out that Jamaica had increased its protective areas network over the last five years by declaring: the Cockpit Country, Pedro Cays and its surrounding waters and the Black River area protected areas. In the 2023/24 financial year, the government had enacted protected areas regulations under the Natural Resources Conservation Act. In the current fiscal year MEGJC, in collaboration with NEPA and the Forestry Department, would commence work in the declaration of four new protected areas under the NRCA Act – Canoe Valley which borders Clarendon and St. James; Montpelier, St. James; Long Mountain, St. Andrew; Industry Cove, Hanover; and Bengal St. Ann. He added that over 20 parcels of crown land would be declared as forest reserves and forest management areas under the Forest Act. The declaration of these areas would assist Jamaica to meet the new global target declaring 30 per cent of land and ocean as protected by 2030.

He also addressed the need for adequate and sustainable financing for protected areas management. The Ministry and its agencies – Forestry Department and NEPA – were working diligently to secure the technical and financial resources for the management of protected areas.

Once finalised, the Policy would be positioned to have a significant impact on the nation's biodiversity, cultural heritage and help in promoting economic growth and development and the social well-being of the community.

Senator Samuda underlined the importance of engaging and educating Jamaicans about the importance of the protected areas system. He said that by strengthening communication and public awareness, a culture of conservation would be fostered, and the involvement of local communities secured.

He said the insight, experience and recommendations of the stakeholders would be invaluable as the Ministry worked to refine the draft policy. He stressed that it was through collaboration and

active participation in consultations such as this that facilitated the development of a policy that truly reflected issues, concerns and needs of all stakeholders in the island's protected areas.

Mr Williams, on behalf of Senator Samuda, encouraged proactive engagement and cooperation between and among government ministries, agencies and departments, community-based and non-government organisations, academia and the private sector to effectively manage the country's protected areas. He reminded all present that protecting our cultural heritage was not merely a duty but a legacy for future generations.

Ms Guthrie thanked Mr Williams for presenting Senator Matthew Samuda's remarks in his absence.

Ms Guthrie expressed her pleasure at the level of attendance and said she looked forward to an interactive discussion on the draft Policy.

She advised that managers of three of the four agencies with responsibility for various aspects of Jamaica's protected areas – JNHT, the FD and NEPA – would be making presentations on the programmes they implemented in the management of the island's protected areas. She emphasised that the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) (the fourth agency) had presented at the first consultation with the public sector and would be presenting at the virtual townhall meeting on July 9. She observed that there were stakeholders at the meeting who worked closely with the NFA who might be able to field questions on the work of the agency. Additionally, an attempt would be made to arrange the attendance of an officer from the NFA. Any questions that could not be answered would be recorded and submitted to the NFA for a response.

She advised that the presentation on the draft Policy would highlight policy prescriptions that were being recommended for the management of the protected areas. She stressed that the management of the protected areas was not solely the remit of the government but required a whole of country approach. She remarked that the individuals participating in this consultation were critical to the efficient management of the protected areas network.

Ms Guthrie invited Ms Georgia Rookwood, Senior Research Officer in the Archaeology Division of the JNHT to present on behalf of the Trust.

Protected National Heritage, Georgia Rookwood, Senior Research Officer Archaeology Division, Jamaica National Heritage Trust

Ms Rookwood reported that the Jamaica National Heritage Trust was a statutory body established by the JNHT Act of 1985 and fell under the purview of the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport. It was the successor to the Jamaica National Trust Commission and was mandated, according to Section 4.1 of the JNHT Act, to oversee and:

- Promote the preservation of national monuments and anything designated as protected national heritage for the benefit of the island.
- Conduct such research as it thinks necessary or desirable for the purposes of the performance of its functions.
- Recommend or undertake development deemed necessary for the preservation of national monuments or heritage sites.
- Record any precious objects or works of art to be preserved and identify and record any species of botanical or animal life to be protected.

The functions of the JNHT included:

- Legally protecting heritage sites and buildings;
- Providing technical advice to owners of heritage sites;
- Guiding the development/restoration of heritage sites and buildings, through its Heritage Development Review Committee (HDRC), a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees;
- Conducting archaeological and historical research;
- Providing archaeological and heritage impact assessments; and
- Conserving archaeological objects.

Ms Rookwood noted that Blue and John Crow Mountains were inscribed on the World Heritage Site List in 2015 and protected by a suite of local legislation including the NRCA Act, the Forestry Act and the Jamaica National Heritage Trust Act.

Acquiring Legal Jurisdiction

Ms Rookwood advised that the Act identified a national monument as any building, structure, object or work of man whether above or below the surface of the land or on the floor of the sea within the territorial waters of the island or within an area declared in an order made under subsection (2) to be within the maritime resource jurisdiction of the island.

The definition of Protected National Heritage was said to be:

- (a) Any place name;
- (b) Any species of animal or plant life; or
- (c) Any place or object (not declared by the Trust to be a national monument), designated by the Trust to be a protected national heritage.

In cases where it was feared that a site was imperilled, a special mechanism, called a preservation order, existed for its temporary protection. The preservation order had a life of six months to allow time for research and investigation to determine whether the imperilled site should be declared protected national heritage or not. She noted that the JNHT was currently working on a preservation scheme for the Blue and John Crow Mountains.

Criteria for Declaration/ Designation

The JNHT identified significant cultural and historical sites across Jamaica based on Section 12 (1) of the JNHT Act values listed the JNHT Act – any structure the preservation of which is, in the opinion of the Trust, a matter of public interest by reason of the historic, architectural, traditional, aesthetic, scientific, archaeological – attached thereto.

Effects of Declaration

Ms Rookwood explained that once a site was declared a national monument or designated protected national heritage, if privately owned, the owner/occupant could not make any alterations without written approval from the JNHT.

Protected Sites under the JNHT Act

Ms Rookwood reported that as of June 2024, 319 sites had been protected under the JNHT Act – (292 national monuments and 27 protected national heritage sites). Of this number, approximately 16 were reported to be natural sites or had natural features.

Sites Protected Under The JNHT Act

JNHT Site	Year Designated
Milk River Spa, Clarendon	1990
Hope Botanical Gardens, St Andrew	1991
Fort Charles -Port Royal and Palisadoes Historic District	1999
Two Sisters Cave, St Catherine	2003
Bath Botanical Gardens St. Thomas	2003
Mason River Field Station, Clarendon,	2002
Blue Lagoon, Portland	2018
Mountain River Cave, St Catherine	2023

Expenditure

She reported that of the over 300 protected sites under the JNHT Act, the JNHT owned or leased 30 sites.

For the financial year 2023/2024, some \$72 million was spent on the general maintenance of these sites. She shared that the JNHT did not have a source of funding to assist privately owned properties or properties owned by other government agencies.

Education and Awareness

The JNHT also played an important role in raising awareness about Jamaica's heritage sites among the public. Through educational programmes, outreach initiatives, and promotional campaigns, the JNHT encouraged appreciation and respect for the country's cultural heritage to foster a sense of pride and ownership among Jamaicans.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Ms Rookwood pointed out that the JNHT did not attempt to carry out its functions on its own but collaborated with various stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, nonprofit organizations, and international partners to achieve its objectives. Through partnerships, these entities were able to leverage resources, expertise, and support to safeguard Jamaica's cultural and natural heritage.

Recap

Ms Guthrie thanked Ms Rookwood for her informative presentation on the work of the JNHT. She reiterated the criteria for declaration under the Act and indicated the investment made by JNHT in the administration of the protected areas declared under the Act.

Ms Guthrie then invited Mr Daniel Dunkley to inform participants on the role and responsibility of the Forest Department.

Jamaica's Protected Forests, Daniel Dunkley, Public Education Officer, Forestry Department

Mr Dunkley informed participants that the Forestry Department was the executive agency charged with managing Jamaica's forests and conserving Jamaica's forest resources, particularly those situated on state-owned/Crown lands. Among the island's main forests were the Blue and John Crow Mountains, located in the eastern region of the island – Portland, St Thomas, and parts of St Andrew, which featured, primarily, close broadleaf vegetation. In the west, there was the Cockpit Country. He noted that 47 per cent of Jamaica was forest and 24 per cent managed by the Forestry Department. The Forestry Department managed 248 forests across the island.

Mr Dunkley reported that the projections for the declaration of forest reserves and forest management areas of 1,440 hectares of land, comprising 20 areas, had been approved by MEGJC, of which five had been verified for submission to Cabinet for declaration.

The primary legislation, plans and policies for the protection of forests were identified as the:

- Forest Policy (2017);
- National Forest Management and Conservation Plan, (2016-2026);
- Forest Act (1996);
- Forest Regulations (2001); and
- National Mangrove and Swamp Forest Management Plan.

Provisions of the Act

Mr Dunkley outlined Sections 5 – 7 of the Forest Act which lists provisions relating to reserves and forest management areas:

- The conservation of existing natural forests;
- The provision of land for the development of forest resources, including the establishment of forest plantations;
- The generation of forest products;
- The conservation of soil and water resources;
- The provision of parks and other recreational amenities; and
- The protection and conservation of endemic flora and fauna.

The aim of the Forest Act, Mr Dunkley explained, was to protect forests so as to enrich the lives of Jamaicans by protecting its primary resources. He noted that the ecosystem services, provided by forests, contributed to the social well-being of the population and the beauty of the forests gave Jamaica a unique ambience contributing to its popularity as a tourist destination.

There were provisions in the Act that allowed the leasing of lands for the establishment of forest reserves, but which required compliance with specifications listed in Section 6(2):

- The land may only be used for purposes listed under sub-section 1; and
- If the land included any Crown lands the Commission of Lands should not grant a lease without the approval in writing of the Conservator.

Distinguishing features of protected forest areas

Mr Dunkley described the distinguishing features of forest reserves and protected forest areas.

Forest reserves, he said, were comprised predominantly of broadleaf forest or other specialised types of vegetation. There was minimal evidence of agricultural activities in these areas. Where agricultural activities existed in forest reserves, measures were being implemented to limit or exclude them. He noted that the extraction of timber in forest reserves was prohibited.

The vegetation in forest management areas was comprised mostly of secondary and plantation forests. Additionally, these areas showed signs of human disturbance including more pronounced agricultural activity. He acknowledged that limiting such activities was socially and politically challenging. The harvesting of timber was allowed, on a sustainable basis, in protected forest areas.

Financing for Maintenance and Conservation

The Agency's maintenance and conservation efforts were financed by:

- Sponsorships, projects and programmes for specific activities

- Agency's budget which provides recurrent funding for reforestation efforts, enhancement of recreational activities and maintenance of forest plantations.

Ms Guthrie thanked Mr Dunkley for his presentation on forest reserves and forest management areas. She reminded stakeholders that the Forest Act was in the process of being repealed and replaced. She shared that the term protected area in the 1996 Act would not be used in the new Forest Act as there would be an Overarching Protected Areas legislation when this Policy was finalised. She explained that the idea was to coordinate the administration of all the different types of protected areas under that omnibus piece of legislation.

She reminded stakeholders that the presentation highlighted the different types of forests explaining the differences between forest reserves and forest management areas and also shared how the Forestry Department supported the financing of these areas. She emphasized that financing protected areas was a critical issue that would be deliberated in the discussion section of the meeting.

Ms Guthrie mentioned that there was a new Forest Policy that informed the legislation. She encouraged participants to read the policy that was available online.

Ms Guthrie next invited Ms Hugarcia Green to make the presentation on the role of the National Environment and Planning Agency in relation to the island's protected areas.

National Environment and Planning Agency and Protected Areas, Hugarcia Green, Coordinator, Protected Areas Branch, NEPA

Ms Green described NEPA's function as the effective management of Jamaica's physical environment to ensure the conservation, protection and proper use of its natural resources and to manage protected areas.

She identified relevant legislation, governed by NEPA, with responsibility for protected areas including the:

- Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act (national parks, marine parks & "protected areas") had declared 12 protected areas, with other areas to be declared from ecologically sensitive areas
- Beach Control Act ("protected areas") with two areas
- Wild Life Protection Act (game reserves/sanctuaries) with 20 areas
- Additional protected areas will be declared (Canoe Valley, Montpelier)

Management plan

Protected Areas under the NRCA Act

- 1) Black River Protected Area
- 2) Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park
- 3) Cockpit Country Protected Area
- 4) Coral Spring- Mountain Spring Protected Area
- 5) Mason River Protected Area
- 6) Montego Bay Marine Park
- 7) Negril Environmental Protection Area
- 8) Negril Marine Park
- 9) Ocho Rios Marine Park Protected Area
- 10) Palisadoes- Port Royal Protected Area
- 11) Pedro Cays Protected Area
- 12) Portland Bight Protected Area

Protected areas are guided by a management plan that describes and sets out the vision, objectives, strategies, management programmes and actions to be implemented over a given period.

Management programmes implemented include:

- Biodiversity Conservation
- Public Awareness, Education and Outreach
- Monitoring and Enforcement and
- Governance and Administration.

Biodiversity Conservation included:

- Mangrove planting
- Clean-up activities – beaches and mangroves
- Waste Management Programme competitions
- Sea turtle monitoring

Patrolling and Enforcement – involved conducting terrestrial and marine patrols to ensure compliance with regulations governing the protected areas.

Public education and Awareness comprised programmes such as:

- Competitions in schools and community groups;
- Environmental signature day activities;
- Sensitization/training sessions with stakeholders; and
- Social media posts/websites (story maps) which aim to create greater awareness of groups and activities in the PAS.

Zoning

Ms Green explained that zoning was used as a tool to protect resources from overuse and to separate and minimise conflicting human activities in protected areas. It governed the allowable activities in specific areas of the PAS. She noted that two had been published in the Jamaica Gazette.

Governance and administration

Partnerships represented a significant aspect of NEPA's management strategy as the Agency could not achieve the stated goals without the cooperation and collaboration of other government agencies, civil society and community groups. Ms Green highlighted several areas in which partnerships were key.

- Management of protected areas (e.g. Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust, Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation and Montego Bay Marine Park Trust)

- Project implementation support (Institute of Jamaica)
- Property management in protected areas (Urban Development Corporation)
- Multi-stakeholder Management Committees (in cases where there are no partnership agreements) strengthen collaborative efforts towards the implementation of management activities within the protected areas
- Funding – the Government of Jamaica and Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA), projects and fees Approved budget (2024-2025) and NRCA – approximately \$80 million

Recap

Ms Guthrie noted that Ms Green had provided an overview of NEPA's work in the island's protected areas system including the declaration of protected areas by the Agency as per various pieces of legislation – The Wild Life Protection Act, Beach Control Act and the NRCA Act. She also reported on the management and zoning plans the Agency utilized in the administration of the PAS. She had reported, also, on the expenditure on the PAS at a value of \$80 million in the previous financial year and also the co-management agreements pursued by NEPA with civil society and other agencies.

Ms Guthrie advised that all consultations were recorded in addition to having the services of a rapporteur who would prepare reports which would be posted on the Ministry's website as well as partner agencies' websites. Additionally, copies of the draft Policy were available at parish libraries across the island as well as at offices of all municipal corporations. She asked that anyone who did not have a copy of the document to advise the team and every effort would be made to get one to them.

Ms Guthrie asked if any participants had any questions regarding the three presentations that had been made.

Ms Guthrie next invited Ms Toni-Ann Miller, Director of Natural Resources, Environment and Risk Management Branch (Acting) of MEGJC to present on the draft Policy.

Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System, Toni-Ann Miller, Director, Natural Resources, Environment and Risk Management Branch, MEGJC

Ms Miller informed participants that the objective of the consultation was to elicit the views of stakeholders to finalise the draft document.

Ms Miller noted that the primary goal of the Policy for the Protective Areas is to “effectively and equitably manage protected areas for the protection and conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage as well as for social and economic benefits”.

Background

Ms Miller advised that the development of the Policy was guided by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. Section 13(3)(l) specified the rights of all Jamaicans to enjoy a healthy and productive environment free from threat and injury.

International Commitments/Country-led Initiatives

The Policy also sought to consider several international commitments/country-led initiatives including:

- Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) which requires Jamaica to protect 30 per cent of its terrestrial and marine/coastal areas by 2030.
- Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People – Jamaica is a member and has committed to protecting 30% of its land and marine/coastal areas by 2030 (30x30 target)
- Global Ocean Alliance
- Leaders Pledge for Nature

She pointed out that it was also aligned with, Jamaica’s National Development Plan, Vision 2030, with a focus on Outcome 13 which focussed on sustainable management of the island’s natural resources and Outcome 14 which addressed hazard risk reduction and adaptation to climate change.

Definition of a Protected Area

The definition of a protected area was presented as a “clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”. Examples of protected areas included: Palisadoes/ Port Royal and the Black River protected areas. The objective of designating these areas is to ensure long-term conservation of biodiversity with the associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Values & Benefits of Protected Areas were identified as follows.

- Protection and conservation of biodiversity
- Provision of food, water, raw materials, medicinal and genetic resources
- maintenance of ecosystem processes: soil formation, nutrient cycling
- Regulation of climate change

- Opportunities for recreation and support to key economic sectors such as health and tourism
- Enhancement of mental wellbeing
- Cultural identity
- Habitats for plants and animals
- Safeguarding biodiversity and culture.
- Enhancing food security
- Protecting coastal communities
- Creating job opportunities for Jamaicans.

Status of Protected Areas

An account of the status of protected areas in Jamaica saw approximately 22.71 per cent of Jamaica's land and 15.47 per cent of the country's archipelagic waters are protected. In recent years, the following areas have received designation as protected areas under the NRCA Act: Pedro Cays and Surrounding Waters Protected Area – 2023; Cockpit Country Protected Area – 2022, and Black River Landscape and Seascape Protected Area – 2021.

Threats to protected areas were identified as: clearing of vegetation/forests for agriculture; unsustainable hunting and harvesting; mining and quarrying; habitat conversion; timber harvesting; encroachment; destructive fishing and farming practices; climate change; pollution; illegal fires; invasive alien species; and mining and quarrying.

Policies and Plans

Ms Miller advised that several policies and plans had direct relevance to the protected areas.

- National Land Policy of Jamaica, 1997 –
Currently being updated
- The Forest Policy for Jamaica, 2017
- Biosafety Policy for Jamaica, 2021
- The National Minerals Policy, 2017–2030
- The Climate Change Policy Framework, 2023
- Watersheds Policy for Jamaica, 2024
- National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE), 2011
- Protected Areas System Master Plan (PASMP)
- The National Forest Management and Conservation Plan, 2016–2026
- Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development
- National Swamp and Mangrove Management Plan, 2023-2033 (draft)
- Ecosystem Restoration Plan (draft)

Main Legislation

Several legislation also directly impacted the PAS.

- Fisheries Act, 2018
- Forest Act, 1996
- Forest Regulations, 2001
- Jamaica National Heritage Trust Act, 1985
- Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act, 1991
- Natural Resources Conservation (Protected Areas) Regulations, 2023
- Natural Resources (National Parks) Regulations, 1993
- Natural Resources (Marine Parks) Regulations, 1992

Key Stakeholders

- National Fisheries Authority
 - Fishermen Cooperatives

Forestry Department

- Local Forest Management Committees
- National Environment and Planning Agency working with:
 - Jamaica National Heritage Trust
 - Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation
 - Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust
 - Montego Bay Marine Park Trust
- Jamaica National Heritage Trust
- Urban Development Corporation

VISION: Jamaica's protected areas system is ecologically representative and sustainably managed, preserving its ecological functions and services and conserving its rich biological diversity and cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

Types of Protected Areas

Types of Protected Areas	Legislation	Equivalent IUCN Categories	
Strict Nature Reserve (new)	NRCA Act	Ia	Strict Nature Reserve
Forest Reserves	Forest Act	Ia	Strict Nature Reserve
National Parks	NRCA Act	II	National Park
Marine Parks	NRCA Act	II	National Park
National Monuments	JNHT Act		
National Monument (natural site)	JNHT Act	III	Natural Monument
Protected National Heritage	JNHT Act		
Protected National Heritage (natural site)	JNHT Act	III	Natural Monument
Fish Sanctuaries	Fisheries Act	IV	Habitat/Species Management Area

Game Reserves	Wildlife Protection Act	IV	Habitat/Species Management Area
Protected landscaping/ Seascape (new)	NRCA Act	V	Protected landscape/seascape
Managed Resource Area (new)	NRCA Act	VI	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources
Forest Management Area	Forest Act	VI	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources
	Fisheries Act	IV	Habitat/Species Management Area

Institutional Arrangements- Protected Areas System

The Protected Areas Committee (PAC) will be the main body for institutional coordination of the PAS and ensuring the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy and plans in collaboration with the agencies with management responsibility for protected areas, including the JNHT, NFA, NEPA and the Forestry Department. Cabinet was identified as the ultimate decision maker.

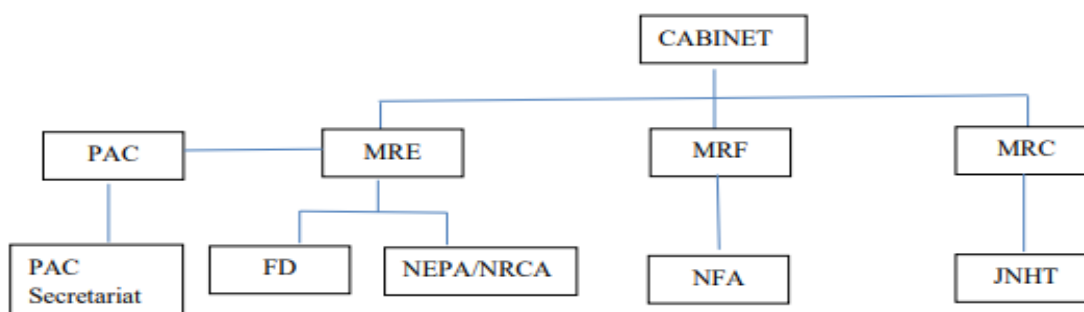


Figure 3: Institutional Arrangements-Protected Areas System

JNHT-Jamaica National Heritage Trust;
MRC-Ministry responsible for Culture; MRE-Ministry responsible for the Environment
MRF-Ministry responsible for Fisheries; NFA-National Fisheries Authority
NEPA/NRCA - National Environment and Planning Agency/ Natural Resources Conservation Authority
(Secretariat to the PAC)

Implementation Plan

In her overview of the implementation plan, Ms Miller provided a synopsis of the six objectives of the policy with a selection of their attendant implementation strategies and activities. She noted that the draft policy included indicators, suggested timelines, responsible entities and indicative costs. Stakeholders were implored to read these in full for a comprehensive understanding of the Policy and to be able to recommend appropriate amendments.

OBJECTIVE 1: Develop enabling policies and legislation and strengthen the governance arrangements for the effective management of PAS.

Implementation Strategies and Activities

1.1 Implement mechanisms for improved governance

- Amend Natural Resources (National Parks) Regulations, 1993
- Amend Marine Parks Regulations 1992
- Increase the number of Local Forest Management Committee (LFMCs) and enhance their capacity
- Share current/accurate data and information about new and existing PAS declared/designated
 - Enshrine the PAC in the Overarching Protected Areas legislation
- Increase active involvement of NGOs and CBOs in the planning and management of PAS
 - Responsible entities: MRE, MRLG, PAC, NEPA/NRCA, JNHT, NFA, FD

1.2 Develop review and strengthen existing legislation and policies related to PAS management

Promulgation - Overarching Protected Areas legislation.

- Mainstream biodiversity conservation and PA management into sector plans and programmes
 - Responsible entities: MRE in collaboration with other relevant Ministries

OBJECTIVE 2: Build and maintain a representative, inter-connected, resilient PAS that maintains ecological processes and systems, promotes human well-being and conserves, protects and preserves the country's natural and cultural heritage.

Implementation Strategies and Activities

2.1 Declare/ designate PAs to address under-represented coastal and marine, inland waters and terrestrial ecosystems

- Incorporate PAs in development orders, local sustainable development plans and strategies
- Establish and maintain ecological connectivity between PAs
- Where lands contain cultural assets the Commissioner of Lands will include an endorsement on the title indicating same
- Identification and inclusion of national biodiversity conservation targets for PAs in the NBSAP
- Implement the National Mangrove and Swamp Forest Management Plan

2.2 Integrate nature-based solutions into disaster risk reduction efforts, strengthening disaster resilience at the local and community levels

- Review parish Disaster Risk Management Plans to ensure nature-based solutions (NbS) and/or ecosystem-based approaches (EbA) are taken into account

- Develop and execute capacity building programmes
- Mainstream disaster risk reduction strategies in PAs

OBJECTIVE 3: Improve protected area management effectiveness

Implementation Strategies and Activities

3.1 Improve PA site-based planning and management

- Prepare, revise and implement management plans and preservation schemes to include ecosystem restoration activities
- Prepare and implement business plans for PAs

3.2 Periodically assess the status of keystone, threatened, endangered and rare species to identify appropriate management strategies to ensure their conservation

- Assess the status of keystone, threatened, endangered and rare species in PAs
- Develop and implement management strategies for effective conservation

3.3 Improve monitoring and enforcement

- Increase monitoring activities
- Evaluate current monitoring and enforcement strategies
- identify gaps and areas for improvement
- assess new methods for surveillance and enforcement including the effective use of technology

OBJECTIVE 4: Strengthen communication, education and public awareness and enhance and secure the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders in the conservation and protection of the PAS

Implementation Strategies and Activities

4.1 Increase public education and awareness

- Develop and implement strategies, programmes and plans to increase awareness and understanding of the values and benefits of PAs and PAS
- Utilize a variety of mechanisms and programmes to facilitate involvement of stakeholders including local communities taking into consideration youth and gender equity
- Develop and implement legislation - ABS legislation
- Develop a national PA database

OBJECTIVE 5: To provide adequate and sustainable financing for the PAs within the national PAS

Implementation Strategies and Activities**5.1 Identify and generate funds from diverse sources and enhance the effective and efficient use of funds**

- Develop and implement sustainable finance plans
- Identify and generate additional funds for PA management
- Identify potential sources of funding to increase contributions to the National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica (NCTFJ)
- Secure a percentage of annual revenue generated from the Environmental Levy
- Development and implementation of a PAs resource mobilization strategy

OBJECTIVE 6 Ensure that scientific and traditional knowledge contribute to the establishment and effectiveness of PAs and the PAS**Implementation Strategies and Activities****6.1 To utilize scientific and traditional knowledge for PA management**

- Develop and implement a national research agenda
- Develop a scientific database on the status of the island's flora, fauna and cultural resources to inform decision-making
- Promotion of scientific research in PAs and appropriate framework developed and implemented which must include free, prior and informed consent.
- Continue to pursue formal agreements for partnerships in scientific research

The Policy has a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (page 94) which includes:

- Expected Results
- Proposed Indicators
- Targets
- Means of Verification
- Methods of Data Collection

Ms Miller reported that the monitoring and evaluation of the policy would be led by the Ministry with responsibility for the environment (MRE) (which was currently MEGJC) in consultation with the PAC to ensure effective implementation.

Discussion

Ms Guthrie thanked Ms Miller for the comprehensive overview presented on the draft Policy.

The following questions were provided as a guide for the discussion.

1. In relation to existing policies, legislation and state and non-state actors. Are there additional gaps or other matters to be addressed by the Policy?
2. Are the Vision, Goal and Objectives adequate?
3. Are strategies and activities adequate?
4. Are there any key programmes, projects strategies, plans or other initiatives (past, ongoing, or planned) that may have an impact on the Policy's context and its recommended objectives, strategies/actions?
5. Other recommendations?

Ms Guthrie emphasised that the purpose of the consultation was to ensure that the text of the document was clearly expressed and communicated. She underscored that the input of stakeholders participating in the consultation was key as they worked most closely with the communities in these areas and were most familiar with the issues on the ground.

Ms Guthrie reminded participants that the presentation cited legislation that was to be amended. She drew attention to an annex in the document that spoke to that proposal. Currently, there was only a few listed and the team would like further recommendations from stakeholders. It should be borne in mind, she said, that once the Policy was finalised, an omnibus legislation would be drafted for the governance of all protected areas. In keeping with this, the Forest Act would be repealed and replaced. It was hoped that this exercise would be far advanced by the end of the current financial year (March 2025). She announced that new protected area legislation had already been promulgated and could be found on NEPA's website.

She noted that Ms Miller had also referenced strides made by the government in declaring protected areas – the Cockpit Country (the largest terrestrial protected area in the country and in the English-speaking Caribbean); the Pedro Cays and Surrounding Waters; and the Black River, under the NRCA Act. The Prime Minister, in his budget presentation, had stated that NEPA was working to advance the protected status of five of the ecologically sensitive areas that had been declared in his 2023-24 budget presentation. For further information, stakeholders were referred to the Prime Minister's budget speech which could be accessed online.

She also referenced Mr Dunkley, from the Forestry Department, who had indicated that forest reserves and forest management areas were to be declared. The NFA, too, had announced the declaration of new fish sanctuaries and the expansion of existing ones.

Ms Guthrie reiterated that Jamaica would adopt the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifications as indicated in the draft Policy. She also highlighted the vision, goal and objectives and implementation strategies embodied in the document. The consultation was intended to refine the draft.

Ms Guthrie asked participants to look first at the vision statement to see whether any edits were required to the text. She also asked them to consider whether, as worded, it was something they could support.

VISION: Jamaica's protected areas system is ecologically representative, sustainably, effectively and equitably managed, preserving its ecological functions and services and conserving its rich biological diversity and cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

Ann Sutton suggested the addition of the words equitably and effectively to read – “ecologically representative, sustainably, effectively and equitably managed”, preserving its ecological functions and services.

Daniel Dunkley suggested that the vision should be more concise.

Ms Guthrie asked for suggestions to make the vision more concise while maintaining the ideas embodied in it.

Ina Vandebroek, UWI, Department of Life Sciences, thought that the word “effectively” was already conveyed in the section of the statement which read “preserving its ecological functions and services”. She felt that denoted effective management and suggested instead – “sustainably and equitably managed”.

Ms Guthrie noted that Ena's suggestion would see the vision reading – “Jamaica's protected areas system is ecologically representative, sustainably **and equitably** managed ...”.

Danellia Aitcheson, NCTFJ recommended the removal of the phrase “ecologically representative” as the concept is already included to read – “sustainably managed”. She suggested that ecologically representative was repeating the phrase “preserving its ecological functions and services”. She suggested keeping equitably and recommended using core values rather than packing everything into the vision. It is sometimes necessary to state the vision, if it is too much it becomes difficult.

Ms Guthrie asked participants to react to the several recommendations made.

Andrea Donaldson, NEPA, responding to the suggestion of removing “ecologically representative”, clarified that this referred to different ecosystem types in Jamaica's PAS and therefore was not being repeated in the phrase “ecological functions and services”. She also agreed that the statement could be more concise.

Deceita Turner agreed that the vision should be more concise and also supported Danellia's recommendation to remove the phrase “ecologically representative”.

Inilek Wilmot recommended the inclusion of national and international biodiversity targets in the vision statement.

Ms Guthrie thanked participants for their recommendations for the amendment of the Vision and committed to taking all comments into account in refining the statement.

GOAL: To effectively and equitably manage protected areas for the protection and conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage as well as for social and economic benefits

Ms Guthrie requested recommendations for improving the goal. She noted that the phrase “effectively and equitably” was represented in the goal and asked whether it was more appropriately placed here or in the vision statement.

Ann noted that it was not necessary to have the phrase in both the goal and the vision.

Inilek – believed that the goal was well expressed but asked if it should also be SMART.

Deceita said the goal was fine as written and seemed to capture the necessary points. It spoke to the biodiversity, heritage and social benefits

Ms Guthrie reminded participants that they could reflect further and submit written comments.

Objectives

1. Develop enabling policies and legislation and strengthen the governance arrangements for the effective management of a comprehensive PAS.
2. Build and maintain a representative, inter-connected, resilient PAS that maintains ecological processes and systems, promotes human well-being and conserves, protects and preserves the country's natural and cultural heritage.
3. Improve protected area management effectiveness
4. Strengthen communication, education and public awareness and enhance and secure the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders in the conservation and protection of the PAS
5. To provide adequate and sustainable financing for the PAs within the national PAS

Implementation Strategies and Activities

6. Ensure that scientific and traditional knowledge contribute to the establishment and effectiveness of PAs

Ms Guthrie asked stakeholders to look at the objectives in the draft document and provide comments. She noted that Miss Miller had shared only a selection of the implementation strategies and activities in the presentation so it was necessary to go deeper into the document. She asked them to consider if there were objectives that were not currently reflected that needed to be included and if there were any that needed to be split. Also, were there any that should be deleted.

She stressed that the document needed to be comprehensive and responsive to the needs of Jamaica's PAS.

Objective 4

There was consensus among stakeholders that the Policy prescriptions regarding stakeholder participation, at all levels of planning and decision-making, needed to be more explicit.

David Walters, Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (JCDT), asked who made decisions about financing (might be more appropriate in Goal 6). Also, what tools/mechanisms were in place to facilitate the participation of stakeholders. He did not think the inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making was adequately captured as this statement (Objective 4) reflected information flow rather than a participatory process facilitating exchange and joint decision-making.

Ms Guthrie noted that the theme of participation transcended all goals and was not a stand-alone issue. She pointed to implementation strategy 4.1 on page 75 of the Policy – “Protected area entities will use a variety of mechanisms to involve stakeholders including local communities in protected area planning and management.” She asked if further elaboration was necessary and whether 4.1 could stand in this regard.

David Walters noted that he had not gone through the document and was, thus, somewhat hesitant in making a recommendation. However, he would like to see something that spoke to improving and strengthening participation by stakeholders. He added that if the strategies and other tools in the document supported that he would be satisfied with that statement.

Inilek felt that the objective of strengthening public awareness could be expanded to include stakeholder participation.

Ms Guthrie pointed to page 107, 4.2.1. of the monitoring framework which addressed “A variety of mechanisms and programmes utilized to facilitate the involvement of stakeholders including local communities taking into consideration youth and gender equity.” Also, under proposed indicators, there was reference to “Stakeholder participation in protected area management increased number of co-management or similar agreements in place”. She felt, however, that in light of comments by David and Inilek something more explicit was required.

Ann Sutton opined that the two things were different, and it was necessary to add another objective to cover the stakeholder participation at every level. She stressed the need for a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach. She felt that wording should include “free, prior and informed consent”.

Ms Guthrie noted that the concept of “free, prior and informed consent” was promoted by the Convention on Biological Diversity in relation to the traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities which included protected areas stakeholders. She underscored that this knowledge should not be accessed, commercialised or utilised without benefit accruing to the knowledge owners. This, she advised would have been discussed in Objective 6 which referenced research and knowledge.

Miss Guthrie advised that the team explore the addition of an objective that directly addressed the stakeholder participatory process in the planning and management of the protected areas.

Ms Guthrie recapped the discussion noting that there was one recommendation for a separate objective to be added while the suggestions mostly addressed the finetuning of the objective.

Objective 5

The main thrust of the discussion addressed issues relating to securing sustainable financing for the maintenance and development of the country's protected areas. This was a topic fraught with challenges but which elicited several creative and viable ideas to be addressed in the Policy.

Deceita highlighted the issue of adequate and sustainable financing, pointing to the consistent struggle to provide financing for the management of the protected areas and suggested the need to identify a sustainable source of funding.

Ms Guthrie acknowledged that the issue of sustainable financing was critical and one with which stakeholders had been grappling for a long time. The National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica was identified as one of the solutions initiated by the government to supplement the subventions that the government had for protected areas, but which was not enough. The presenters – Daniel from the Forestry Department, Hugarcia Green from NEPA and Ms Rookwood from JNHT – had indicated the expenditure by the government in their respective areas. Despite the amounts expended, the funds were insufficient to adequately meet the needs of the protected areas.

Ms Guthrie also highlighted the need for additional financing for fish sanctuaries which not only contributed to the economy but were significant for the island's biodiversity. She noted that of the 20 fish sanctuaries declared under the Act, only nine were financed by the government.

Deceita suggested that a mechanism such as the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) would be a sustainable option.

Ms Guthrie pointed to Objective 5.1 which addressed the need to identify sustainable funds along with a selection of recommended strategies for discussion.

5.1 Identify and generate funds from diverse sources and enhance the effective and efficient use of funds

- a. Protected area entities will implement sustainable finance plans.
- b. Ministries and their respective protected area entities will seek to identify and generate additional funds for management of the protected areas system from a variety of sources.
- c. The NCTFJ Board will identify potential sources to increase contributions to the Fund.
- d. A percentage of revenue generated per annum from the Environmental Protection Levy will be utilized to provide dedicated financing for protected areas management.
- e. The Forestry Department will continue its implementation of REDD+ leading to results-based payments.
- f. A strategy for resource mobilization for protected areas will be developed and implemented. This strategy will take into consideration new and emerging potential sources of funding and identify additional incentives for the private sector and general public. The feasibility of the following potential sources of financing will be examined in the strategy:

- the tax regime to identify areas for possible waivers/reductions to further incentivise private sector stakeholders
- issuance of green and blue bonds
- institution of debt-for-climate/nature swaps
- carbon trading to maximize the benefits to Jamaica in the management of protected areas
- opportunities for public-private partnerships.

Ms Guthrie asked Deceita to look at some of the policy prescriptions being proposed by the government in the implementation strategy 5.1.

David observed that the issue of sustainable financing was directly linked to an enabling environment facilitated through legislation and policy. He highlighted the tax environment under which the government can direct the channelling of funds towards conservation and natural resources management, an example of which would be corporate tax breaks. He asked about incentives to encourage corporate entities to donate to charitable endeavours. He noted that Jamaica did not have a 501(3) (c) regime which incentivised such charitable donations. He recommended looking at the various trust funds such as the NCTFJ (National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica) and advised that there were others which could be revitalised. He encouraged the exploration of the landscape for endowment funds, debt for nature swaps and so on. He said, further, that beneficiaries of nature should contribute financially to the conservation of nature in good economic terms, meaning that the contribution should be commensurate with the level of benefit received. He emphasised that that was his thinking in recognising an enabling environment.

He reiterated his position on stakeholder participation in decisions regarding financing for protected areas. He noted that the availability of funding did not automatically translate into efficient and prudent financial management. He requested the injection into the document of a statement that addressed, directly, participation and efficient management of funds.

Ms Guthrie pointed to the reference to carbon trading which was listed in Objective 5 on sustainable financing as a revenue earning strategy and advised that wind farms Wigton 1 and Wigton 2 were based on the carbon trading market. There had also been discussions on mangrove forests as part of the carbon trading phenomenon. The implementation strategy also recommended the issuance of blue and green bonds. She recalled the announcement by the Jamaica Stock Exchange of its intention to issue blue and green bonds and asked whether stakeholders thought that investment should be a benefit to the protected areas. She invited further exploration of these points.

Ms Guthrie opined that the government was not interested in levying any further taxes at this point. She reported that that information had been shared by the representative from the Ministry of Finance at a previous consultation. The private sector had also expressed the view

that there should be no additional taxation. However, David's recommendation relating to corporate taxation would be explored.

Deceita raised the issue of project funding which focussed on the expenditure on tangible items, for example the purchase of a boat over the payment of salaries.

Ms Guthrie acknowledged the point that donors favoured expenditure on fixed assets rather than payment of salaries to people who managed the protected areas but explained that the Policy would not address those granular details but rather create policy prescriptions that would facilitate that.

David wondered whether there was a gap in addressing the voluntary market in the area of carbon trading and recommended a direct statement in regard to voluntary carbon trading to encourage stakeholders to explore this.

He noted that in the area of participation, he had failed to mention project or programme development conservation and the subsequent use of funds. He explained that the government often approached international development partners to access funds for environmental projects (climate change etc.) but these approaches did not demonstrate a collaborative pitch showing that the government was working with stakeholders to develop the project. It was his opinion that a collaborative approach would present a stronger case for funding as it would be evidence of good governance embodying democratic processes with multiple stakeholders being involved in the management of protected areas.

Ms Guthrie thanked him for introducing a different approach in attempts to engage donors. She committed to including, more explicitly, the participation of local managers in the design and planning of the governance of protected areas which was also in keeping with sentiments shared by Ann.

Management Plans

Inilek recalled that some years previously NEPA had commissioned a consultant to develop a business plan for the Ocho Rios Marine Park. He suggested that business planning was an important strategy to be included at the policy level.

Ms Guthrie concurred, noting that this point had been made in the consultation with the private sector who wanted to see business plans that they could react to. They were not sufficiently aware of opportunities within the PAS and needed to see how they could fit into and contribute to an overarching plan.

Ms Guthrie noted that NEPA had previously prepared management plans and referenced implementation strategy 3.1.

Implementation Strategies: 3.1 Improve protected areas system and site-based planning and management

- a) Protected area entities will prepare or cause to be prepared management plans for protected areas at the site level. This will be guided by a master plan for the protected areas system. Protected area entities will include ecosystem restoration activities (inclusive of buffer zones) as part of their management plans. They will also include in situ conservation of genetic resources, to protect and enhance ecosystem services, as part of their management plans.
- b) Protected area entities will prepare or cause to be prepared business plans and promote same.
- c) Protected area entities and partners will conduct management effectiveness evaluations.

Inilek suggested that this point would be appropriately placed under sustainable financing (5.1) and perhaps should be cross-referenced to strengthen it. He expressed his comfort with the point as stated and noted that managers in the fish sanctuaries had not paid sufficient attention to this aspect of administration.

Ms Guthrie noted that David had hinted at the PES (payment for ecosystem services) in his comment, adding that NEPA had a project which looked at the feasibility of the PES and that this could be explored further. She observed that user fees had not been mentioned by participants as a source of financing for the protected areas nor had there been any mention of bioprospecting fees. She noted that these areas were rich in biodiversity and asked whether bioprospecting fees could represent a viable source of revenue if one looked at resource extraction fees referring specifically to the nutraceutical sector which extracted plants for commercialisation. She noted that this was not currently in the document but simply food for thought.

Ms Guthrie reiterated that the private sector indicated that they knew very little about the protected areas and the potential for business and, thus, needed to be guided in regard to business opportunities, while maintaining the integrity of the space and allowing the areas to perform the services they were intended to provide.

Ms Guthrie asked participants to respond to suggestions regarding additional sources of funding – PES, user fees, eco-tourism, bio-prospecting fees, resource extraction fees and so on.

Daniellia observed that an issue with financing was the collection component of the mechanism. She said whatever is proposed the collection aspect had to be thought through and to recognise the barriers whether the Ministry of Finance had to be at the table. Who will collect and whether any restrictions might be imposed by IMF. Many different revenue earning strategies had been proposed but it all came back to how monies would be collected and asked whether collections might be independent of the consolidated fund.

Ms Guthrie acknowledged the point. She observed that where the government levied taxes, the money collected went directly to the consolidated fund. She said that what had to be considered was what mechanisms/ strategies the local managers could institute in terms of user fees. She noted that payment for ecosystem services was something that was government-led and thus would go into the consolidated fund. She suggested that legislation be promulgated to allow local

managers to effect activities at their level. For example, user fees legislation to empower them to set and collect fees.

Danellia gave the example of Mexico where a fee was collected to enter the protected area but within the area another \$5 fee was collected by operators, leaving her feeling as if she had paid twice.

She noted that the Conservation Trust Fund has a sustainable financing mechanism that generated some funds from the private sector called “changemaker membership fee” that members of corporate Jamaica paid into the trust fund, annually. Launched on Earth Day, up to now the usual suspects had been showing interest. There were different tiers of membership. She noted that it was a long-term initiative and while not generating huge amounts of revenue was sustainable.

Ms Guthrie thanked Danellia for sharing information on the initiative being pursued in collaboration with the private sector and advised that the team would look at it more closely with a view to replication.

User Fees

Ms Guthrie asked the managers of the protected areas to consider the idea of user fees. Ms Guthrie again shared that the private sector had indicated that they needed to know more about the PAs and eco-tourism type activities to see how they could support them in terms of promoting environmental imperatives and also how they might invest in the activities. She asked Inilek whether his fish sanctuaries facilitated dive tours or scientific research activities and charged fees accordingly. She wanted to know what activities took place and how policy prescriptions could enhance those activities.

Inilek responded that there was no mechanism that allowed the sanctuary to charge user fees but they had a dive shop that offered snorkeling and boat tours. The earnings supplemented the sanctuary subventions but was not a major revenue earner. There were operators in the fish sanctuary such as Sandals Hotels which sent a boat on a daily basis for diving within the sanctuary, however, there was no mechanism to introduce diver fees.

He suggested that the private sector could indicate what services/activities in the sanctuary might be of interest to them. He believed there was low-hanging fruit that they could tap into. He added that they could work together to add value for the private sector. Management of fish sanctuaries required strengthening. He said that each fish sanctuary needed to have its own management plan but there was also need for a fish sanctuary network management plan. Generating value for the private sector could be part of that overarching plan. That approach would also be useful for other sectors within the PAS.

David advised that JCDT was allowed to collect fees under the National Parks Regulations. User fees were collected for Hollywell and the Blue Mountain Trail. While it was a useful system it was a little challenge to balance the price point as the Trust did not want to price people out of

enjoying their natural heritage. However, there was a gap in the business side in terms of engaging corporate Jamaica. The Trust had prepared a 2023 business plan and was currently devising an investment deck (for corporate Jamaica) which outlined the benefits the Trust could offer and demonstrated why one should partner with JCDT. He reported that a redevelopment plan for Hollywell was underway and the Trust was currently seeking investors and partners to assist in the execution of the plan. They were seeking corporate social responsible partners. They had a consultant to guide the marketing.

JCDT also had a donation scheme “Friends of the Blue Mountains” with different tiers of membership through which one could donate on its website. He noted that the skill sets required to drive this type of project which were driven by marketing and business skills did not reside in organisations such as the JCDT as resource managers were, typically, scientists and environmentalists. He suggested government offer resources for capacity building in these areas.

Ms Guthrie thanked Inilek and David for their input. She said that the private sector had indicated clearly their need to know more about what happens in the PAs and thus the need to bridge the gap in terms of how they could get involved. She endorsed the need for continuous capacity building for local managers. She agreed that PAs had to be dealt with as businesses. While their primary purpose was protection of the ecosystem and the promotion of biodiversity they needed money to be sustainable.

Ms Guthrie asked NEPA to address the issue of user fees

Carla, NEPA noted that the NRCA Act had regulations for national and marine parks. She explained that currently user fees were charged only for the Blue and John Crow Mountains national parks. NEPA had made recommendations for the amendment of marine park user fees. She noted also that NEPA had started consultations on user fees and some of the feedback received focused on the need to see improvement in the health of resources and management of parks. The idea of instituting fees had generated a mixed response, some against and some supporting it. The Agency would proceed with consultations in hope that would see a start in the implementation of the fee system in the near future.

In recapping the discussion, she reiterated the significance of private sector support. The protected areas managers needed to engage and educate the private sector not only to demonstrate opportunities for a return on investment but for them to understand the value of PAs to the country's economic development and the well-being of the population. She recommended the amendment of the Fisheries Act to introduce user fees.

She endorsed the viability of management/business plans to facilitate business development ideas and the marketing of PAs to facilitate increased investment and to translate ideas into successful initiatives on the ground. She noted that the ideas introduced were not new and other jurisdictions had already instituted many. Jamaica needed to look at best practices, at how PES might be introduced. She thanked participants for the good ideas to be included in Objective 5.

Objective 6

Ina noted that local and indigenous communities were central to the area of her area of research which was culture and nature. She observed that the way the statement was written was open to interpretation of traditional knowledge being extracted for management of protected areas and in turn their being educated about how to manage the protected areas. She wanted to see something which addressed the benefits to be gained by the local communities. These communities were very often a part of the vulnerable groups. She wanted to see that they were not only recognised as the owners of traditional knowledge but also how their lives would be improved.

Ms Guthrie pointed out that when the issue of prior and informed consent was raised the link was made to Objective 6 brought Ena's attention to 6.1.d. which reads "Scientific research in protected areas will be promoted and the appropriate framework (including, free prior and informed consent and mutually agreed terms) for access and benefit sharing from the utilization of the genetic resources will be developed and implemented. The framework would take into consideration synthetic biology and digital sequencing information of genetic resources and their implications." She asked Ina to consider whether this appropriately and accurately addressed the issue.

Ina asked for time to review and consider the statement. She would then submit a written comment to the team.

Inilek asked whether there was any objective that specifically addressed climate change and climate resilience.

Ms Guthrie responded that there was no such objective but there were implementation strategies that might address impacts of climate change. She said the recommendation would be noted.

Daniel raised the issue of waste management. He cited the Kingston Harbour and the mangroves in the vicinity that were inundated with plastic. He wondered if any revenue could be generated from plastic extracted. He noted that he had not seen any references to the impact of waste on protected areas and how this would be managed.

Ms Guthrie noted that before closing she wanted to explore the topic of scientific research which, she opined was also linked to financial sustainability of the protected areas. She observed that protected areas had a great deal of information and data that had not yet been captured and there was much to be scaled up in the protected areas.

Ina offered that she was in the process of collaborating with the JCDT on some topics. She concurred that there were major gaps in knowledge about local species. Conservation assessment was based on research already conducted, so much ground truthing needed to be done. She added that there were several unexplored traditional communities living on the periphery of a number of protected areas that needed to be researched.

She also pointed to the need for a national database on biodiversity and recommended the institution of new graduate programmes in those areas. There were also unexplored biological resources and wealth of knowledge to be gleaned from Jamaica's traditional areas.

Ms Guthrie considered how this might be sustainably exploited.

Chauntelel Parkins, UWI Port Royal Marine Lab, advised that they had conducted research on their own and had also partnered with other stakeholders (NEPA and the Forestry Department, on the blue carbon project) on which sea grass and mangrove sites may be surveyed. The Marine Lab was ready to support any project that would support sustainability. She noted that there were major stakeholders in the Port Royal area. Subsidised fees were used to support the execution of some of their projects.

Ms Guthrie said the document would cite the need for a biodiversity database.

David suggested that NEPA should already have some data, and JCDT also had some.

Carla shared that NEPA had an inhouse database of the research they had done and noted that researchers were required to share their data with the IOJ (Institute of Jamaica) or other entity. Information was available and accessible. However, with some restrictions when it involved endangered or endemic species. For example, it was asked that no map of habitats be generated.

Closing Remarks

Ms Guthrie thanked presenters, on behalf of Senator Matthew Samuda and Permanent Secretary Arlene Williams, for the informative information shared on the island's protective areas and bolstering the knowledge of stakeholders on the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies. She thanked the stakeholders present for taking the time to go through the various aspects of the draft policy and for their thoughtful comments which would enhance the completion of the Policy. She asked all participants to read through the draft and to send written comments to MEGJC by July 12. Where possible the comments should be specific and the desired placement in the document should be indicated. She assured them that the Ministry was open to revisiting any part of the draft Policy to ensure clarity, completeness and more effective communication.

She invited everyone in attendance to join the virtual town hall on July 11, which would be the final consultation on the overarching policy on the island's protected areas.