

**PRIVATE SECTOR CONSULTATION
ON THE OVERARCHING POLICY FOR
JAMAICA'S PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM
(GREEN PAPER)**

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Black River

**Prepared by Maxine McDonnough
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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Acronyms | 3 |
| Background | 4 |
| Opening Remarks, Gillian Guthrie, Technical Director, Development and Planning, Environment Policy and Management (MEGJC) | 6 |
| Keynote Address, Senator the Honourable Matthew Samuda, Minister without Portfolio, MEGJC, presented by Ms Guthrie | 6 |
| Protected National Heritage, Georgia Rookwood, Senior Research Officer Archaeology Division, Jamaica National Heritage Trust | 8 |
| Jamaica's Protected Forests, Nasheji-Gaye Elliot, Public Relations & Communications Officer, Forestry Department | 10 |
| National Environment and Planning Agency and Protected Areas, André Edwards, Coordinator, Protected Areas Branch | 12 |
| Discussion | 14 |
| Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System, Toni-Ann Miller, Director, Natural Resources, Environment and Risk Management Branch, MEGJC | 18 |
| Conclusion | 35 |

Acronyms

| | |
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| 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 Gillian Guthrie welcomed private sector stakeholders to the Consultation on the Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System. Ms Guthrie apologised for the unavoidable absence of Senator the Honourable Matthew Samuda, Minister without Portfolio in the MEGJC. He sent his wishes for a productive discussion on the draft policy.

Ms Guthrie presented the message on behalf of Minister Samuda.

Keynote Address, Senator the Honourable Matthew Samuda, Minister without Portfolio, MEGJC, presented by Ms Guthrie

Senator, the Honourable Minister Samuda extended a warm welcome to participants attending the MEGJC's public sector consultation on the Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas. He observed that it was critical that stakeholders, including the public, 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 their work on the draft policy as well as the coordination of the consultative sessions.

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. He added 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 to address challenges in managing and conserving the protected areas.

The emphasis that the Policy placed on enhanced collaboration among the entities responsible for the regulation and management of protected areas, he observed, encouraged a collaborative approach fostering more effective management and protection of Jamaica's natural and cultural attributes. The main goal of the green paper, he underscored, was to effectively and equitably manage protected areas for the protection and conservation of the biodiversity of the island's cultural heritage as well as to maximise social and economic benefits. To achieve 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 supports 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 as protected areas. In the 2023/24 financial year, the government enacted protected areas regulations under the Natural Resources Conservation Act and 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 in 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 of 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 the 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 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.

He encouraged proactive engagement and cooperation between and among government, 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 apologised for the late arrival of Permanent Secretary Arlene Williams who would be joining the meeting later and extended welcome on her behalf.

Ms Guthrie advised participants that the meeting was being recorded and a report would be prepared by the rapporteur and placed on the Ministry's website for the benefit of those stakeholders who had been unable to attend.

She advised that three of the four public sector entities with responsibility for the management of various protected areas would be making presentations. The four entities were The National Environment Planning Agency (NEPA), the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT), the Forestry Department (FD) and the National Fisheries Authority (NFA). Making presentations were the JNHT, FD, and NEPA. Ms Guthrie shared that this was the second in a series of four presentations. The first with public sector stakeholders was held on Tuesday, June 18, the third would be held with NGOs, CBOs and academia on June 28 and the final would be a virtual town hall meeting on July 11. She invited participants to join the town hall meeting.

Ms Guthrie reported that Jamaica had over 300 protected areas declared under law. She listed several pieces of legislation which mandated the protection of these areas: the Forest Act the NRCA Act, Beach Control Act, Wildlife Act and the JNHT Act.

Ms Guthrie invited Ms Georgia Rookwood to present on behalf of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust.

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

Ms Rookwood reported that the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT) was a statutory body established by the JNHT Act of 1985. The agency, she noted, fell under the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport. Its mandate was to provide oversight and:

- Promote the preservation of national monuments and anything designated as protected national heritage for the benefit of the island;
- Conduct such research as necessary or desirable for the purposes of the performance of its functions;
- Recommend and undertake development deemed necessary for the preservation of national monuments or heritage sites; and
- 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.

Functions of the agency were identified as:

- Legally protecting heritage sites and buildings;
- Conserving archaeological objects;
- 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 JNHT Board of Trustees;
- Conducting archaeological and historical research; and
- Providing archaeological and heritage impact assessments.

Research and Documentation

Ms Rookwood shared that the JNHT conducted research to gather information about Jamaica's heritage to be able to understand the historical significance and cultural importance of these sites. The documentation of efforts ensured that valuable information about heritage sites was recorded and preserved for future generations

She informed participants that there were three methods by which the JNHT acquired legal jurisdiction – (i) declaring a national monument, (ii) designating protected national heritage, and (iii) establishing an interim preservation measure (or preservation notice) which has a life of six months for imperilled sites.

She explained that the Act identified a national monument as any building, structure, object or work of man or nature (or part thereof) whether above or below the surface of the land or on the floor of the sea within the territorial waters. Protected national heritage can be any place name, species of animal or life, place or object.

Sites protected under the JNHT Act include the Milk River Bath (Declared September 1990).

Education and Awareness

The JNHT works to raise awareness about Jamaica's heritage sites among the public. Through educational programs, outreach initiatives, and promotional campaigns, the JNHT encourages appreciation and respect for the country's cultural heritage. This helps to foster a sense of pride and ownership among Jamaicans.

Identification and Declaration

The JNHT identifies significant cultural and historical sites across Jamaica based on values listed in the JNHT Act – historic, architectural, traditional, aesthetic, scientific and archaeological. Once identified, these sites are declared as heritage sites, acknowledging their importance to Jamaican history and culture. The Two Sisters Cave was declared in 2003.

Conservation and Preservation

The JNHT was reported to be responsible for the conservation and preservation of declared heritage sites. This involves implementing measures to protect these sites from damage, deterioration, or destruction. Conservation efforts may include restoration projects, maintenance work, and implementing guidelines for sustainable use. Once a site is declared a national monument or designated as protected national heritage, the owner or occupant may not make any alterations without written approval from the JNHT.

The Port Royal and Palisadoes area was protected under the JNHT Act in July 1999. It is also protected under the NRCA Act.

Regulation and Management

Ms Rookwood noted that the JNHT regulates activities within declared heritage sites to ensure the integrity of the sites are preserved. This may involve establishing guidelines and working with stakeholders to manage sites sustainably. By managing these sites effectively, the JNHT helps to balance conservation needs and meet the sustainable development goals.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Ms Rookwood advised that the JNHT collaborated with various stakeholders including government agencies, local communities, nonprofit organizations, and international partners to achieve its objectives. By working with these entities, the JNHT was able to leverage resources and obtain expertise and support to safeguard Jamaica's cultural heritage effectively.

The Bath Botanical Gardens was designated protected national heritage in April 2003.

Recap

Ms Guthrie reminded stakeholders that Ms Rookwood had described the criteria used to determine what was declared a protected national monument, natural heritage or site. She spoke of the legislation under which such protection was declared. She described the interim or preservation measure under which temporary protection was applied for a period of six months. During this time the site was researched in order for a determination to be made regarding its status. She also provided several examples of national heritage spaces already declared and underscored the importance of these to the Jamaican national identity, for the island's biodiversity preservation, cultural preservation and to economic growth and development as well as social benefits.

Ms Guthrie thanked Ms Rookwood for the presentation and invited Ms Nasheji-Gaye Elliot to present on the Forestry Department's role in relation to the country's PAS.

Jamaica's Protected Forests, Nasheji-Gaye Elliot, Public Relations & Communications Officer, Forestry Department

Ms Elliot explained 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 lands. She noted that 47 per cent of Jamaica was forest and 24 per cent fell under the management of the Forestry Department. Some forested land was privately owned.

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

- Forest Act (1996)
- National Forest Management and Conservation Plan, (2016-2026)

- Forest Policy (2017)
- Forest Regulations (2001)
- National Mangrove and Swamp Forest Management Plan

Sections 5-7, Section 6.1 of the Forest Act governs:

- 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
- The protection and conservation of endemic flora and fauna.

She explained that the Forest Act addresses how forests are to be treated, the conservation of existing forest lands and the development of new forests.

There were provisions in the Act that allowed the leasing of lands for the establishment of forest reserves but had to comply with specifications listed in Section 6(2):

- The land may only be used for purposes listed under subsection 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.

She described the distinguishing features between forest reserves and forest management areas.

Forest reserves are comprised predominantly of broadleaf forest or other specialised type. There was minimal evidence of agricultural activities and where such agricultural activities existed measures were being implemented to limit or exclude them. Extraction of timber was prohibited in forest reserves.

Forest management areas were comprised mostly of secondary and plantation forest and had additional signs of human disturbance such as the more pronounced presence of agricultural activity. Limiting such activities was found to be socially and politically challenging. Timber can be extracted on a sustainable basis.

Financing

Ms Elliot advised that the Agency's conservation and maintenance efforts were funded by:

- recurrent funding to reforest 100 hectares and maintain 300 hectares of forest per annum.
- The Adopt-A-Hillside Programme facilitates the reforestation of certain areas by corporate entities. Some major partners identified were The Jamaica Public Service (JPS) and Total Energies (another energy company), along with other partners such as the EU.

National Environment and Planning Agency and Protected Areas, André Edwards, Coordinator, Protected Areas Branch

Mr Edwards said it was NEPA's responsibility to take the necessary steps for 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.

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

- 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
- Additional protected areas will be declared including Canoe Valley and Bengal in St. Ann.

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

Regulations governing the protected areas

- Natural Resources Conservation (Protected Areas) Regulations, 2023
- Natural Resources (Marine Parks) Regulations, 1992
- Natural Resources Conservation (National Parks) Regulations, 1993

He noted that the regulations allowed for zoning of the protected, a management tool used to protect the resources from overuse and to separate conflicting human activity as well as governing allowable activities in specified sections of the protected areas.

Management plan

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 of beaches and mangroves
- Waste Management Programme competitions encourage environmental stewardship
- Sea turtle monitoring.

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

Public education, awareness and outreach are achieved through various programmes including:

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

Governance and administration

Partnerships represent an important mechanism through which the PAS is administered. Various types of collaborative arrangements exist.

- 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) the focus of which was the removal of invasive ferns
- Multi-stakeholder Management Committees (in cases where there are no partnership agreements) collaborative efforts were strengthened towards the implementation of management activities within the protected areas

He said that the Government of Jamaica and the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) financed the management of the protected area for which NEPA had responsibility. The approved budget (2024-2025) was reported to be \$80 million. This was supplemented by projects and fees.

Recap

Ms Guthrie thanked Mr Edwards for the presentation on NEPA'S activities in relation to the country's protected areas and reminded participants. NEPA utilised several pieces of legislation

including the NRCA Act, the Beach Control Act, and the Wild Life Protection Act in the execution of its role in declaring various terrestrial, coastal and marine protected areas. She noted that in the 2023/24 financial year, the Honourable Prime Minister, also the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, had designated 15 areas across the country to be ecologically sensitive areas. These areas were, thus, earmarked by NEPA and the Forestry Department as areas in which activities would be restricted, further. In the 2024/25 fiscal period, work was begun on the declaration of five of those 15 areas. Minister Samuda's earlier remarks identified the relevant areas – Industry Cove in Hanover, Long Mountain in St. Andrew, Canoe Valley on the border of St. James, Montpelier in St. James and Bengal in St Ann.

Ms Guthrie cited Ms Elliot's presentation on the role of the Forestry Department in declaring forest reserves and forest management areas under the Forest Act. She had reported that the FD intended to declare some 23 pieces of crown land as forest reserves in which activities were strictly managed. Ms Rookwood, of the JNHT, provided information on the heritage sites that had been declared national monuments and protected areas. Ms Guthrie noted the absence of the National Fisheries Authority (NFA), the fourth protected area manager, which was responsible for the country's fish sanctuaries. She reported that the NFA would be presenting at the virtual town hall meeting on July 11 to which they were all invited. All four managers (JNHT, FD, NEPA and NFA) would be making presentations, she said.

Ms Guthrie invited stakeholders to ask questions or discuss points raised in the preceding three presentations.

Discussion

Ms Diana McIntyre Pike requested information on the status of Canoe Valley as there were reports that it was being sold. She said that she had heard that the Cross Keyes area was seen as an area for investment and there was interest from Dubai. The community was concerned that the area would be destroyed, thus, it was important to be clear about what was happening to this area. She said it was rich in cultural heritage sites including a Taino Cave.

Ms Guthrie advised that Canoe Valley was on the list on which work had begun, by NEPA, for declaration as a protected area. However, she asked NEPA to respond in a more fulsome way.

Mr Edwards, NEPA responded that he was not aware of any reports on the area being sold. The aim was to have it declared as a national protected area as it was recognised to be an ecologically sensitive site.

Ms Carla Gordon, NEPA, noted that Canoe Valley was one of the areas declared by the government to be protected. One of the recommendations was that some of these sites be declared protected under various acts, including the NRCA Act. The government was using existing regulations to protect the country's resources.

Ms Sophie Grizzle Roumel, JHTA Negril Chapter, and Negril Chamber of Commerce observed that although Industry Cove in Hanover was slated for protection, many acres of mangroves had been removed in proximity to Green Island.

Damian Salmon, JHTA, Rock House, and Negril Chamber of Commerce (Director) reported that the Princess Hotel had been built in the area recognised as Industry Cove. He concurred that the Industry Cove landscape had been significantly altered and observed the establishment of a housing development by the National Housing Trust (NHT). He asked what aspect or area of Industry Cove was to be declared a protected zone – the water, the mangroves the wetlands or the housing development.

Ms Guthrie stated that work had just begun on the process of declaration and the first step would be an assessment of the resources to be protected by NEPA. She emphasised that the assessment would include consultations with the local stakeholders. The boundary of the protected area would then be established. She asked for further comments from Ms Gordon of NEPA.

Ms Gordon agreed that on-the-ground assessments would be carried out and recommendations made accordingly. The policy document had proposed the establishment of boundaries, but this would be subject to the result of an assessment.

Ms Guthrie acknowledged the many concerns raised and assured stakeholders that all would be addressed in the Policy, where appropriate. She reiterated that the work had not yet begun. She, again, cited the statement by Prime Minister Holness regarding protected and ecologically sensitive areas in his budget speech, noting that Industry Cove could be one such and, therefore, would be protected under the NRCA Act at a minimum. She advised that actions would be based on the findings of the assessment of the resources in the area. She suggested that in the case of a forested area, NEPA would declare it under the NRCA Act as a terrestrial area; a coastal area would fall under the Beach Control Act; and the Forestry Department, if it was a forested area of significance, could declare it as a forest reserve or a forest management area under the Forest Act. The JNHT, if culturally significant sites were to be identified, could do a declaration of cultural or heritage sites/assets under the JNHT Act. There were several pieces of legislation under which various areas might be protected depending on what the team's assessment demonstrated. This would include consultations with local stakeholders. She noted that the Negril Protected Area comprised marine/coastal and terrestrial areas.

Sophie Grizzle Roumel observed that there was already significant housing on Industry Cove and some areas were privately owned. She asked what happened in that event.

Gillian Guthrie said that where land was privately owned the government would be obliged to consult with owners but that would not prevent agencies or the government from declaring it a protected area. The assessment would take existing land use into consideration, such as the current housing development. However, strict regulations may be imposed within areas of protected areas for conservation purposes. If the area were to be declared under the NRCA Act

there would be a management plan which would include a zoning plan based on the land use in the area.

She noted that mangroves were forests, so if declared a forest, the Forestry Department would decide if the area should be declared under the Forestry Act. If declared a forest reserve, the type of activities would be restricted as opposed to a forest management area. All would depend on the results of the assessment and consultations which would include the private landowners. She emphasised that it would not, however, lessen the government's responsibility to declare the area protected. She advised that all protected areas included some privately owned land.

Ms Guthrie invited Ms Deandra Roberts of the NFA to share some of the activities of her agency with stakeholders, particularly in regard to the role of fish sanctuaries as a type of protected area.

Deandra Roberts, National Fisheries Authority (NFA), reported that the NFA was responsible for declaring fish sanctuaries and had declared 20 gazetted fish sanctuaries to date. They were, typically, no-fishing zones. Currently, there were 10,800 hectares of protected area to be increased to 20,000 by 2027. The NFA was focused on restocking fish resources for the fisheries sector as well as for the health of marine biodiversity.

Gillian Guthrie reiterated that Ms Roberts had reported that there were 20 fish sanctuaries declared under the National Fisheries Act of 2018 with an area of 10,800 hectares. The NFA, she said, would like to increase this to 20,00 hectares by 2027. The purpose of the fish sanctuary was to increase fish stock as well as the health of marine biodiversity.

Mr Mais, White River Fish Sanctuary, requested an update on funding from the Ministry and the NFA regarding sanctuaries which did not currently receive government subventions. He lamented that these sanctuaries would not survive without funding and would be forced to close, starting with the White River Fish Sanctuary. He wanted to ensure that stakeholders were aware of the gravity of the situation.

Deandra Roberts informed him that an increase in funding had been approved for those sanctuaries already receiving subventions from the government. But, even so, the funds were insufficient to properly manage the areas. She was unable to speak to funding for private fish sanctuaries. Accessing sustainable financing was one of the issues that this Policy would explore and would advocate for. She shared that the NFA was aware of the gravity of the situation for all fish sanctuaries. She noted that the objective of the consultation was to discuss ideas for funding.

Gillian Guthrie advised that the Policy was currently a draft, and the purpose of the consultation was to solicit recommendations from key stakeholders to decide on the prescriptions to be included in the document to ensure the effective management of the PAs. She noted that Objective 5 of the Policy spoke to adequate and sustainable financing for protected areas, of which fish sanctuaries were one. She was hopeful that the private sector would be able to make recommendations as to what policy prescriptions should be included to support these protected areas as all suffered from the challenge of finding financing. She acknowledged that what was

currently available was insufficient to effectively manage areas which supported the tourism and agricultural sectors.

Mr Mais explained that he understood the point and had attended the initial consultation along with the vice president of the JHTA. He wanted to make it transparent and clear that although tourism was seen as a robust industry in Jamaica, its status was precarious, at best, based on the environmental impacts of climate change, whether it was sea level rise or the overall global warming effects on Jamaica's reefs. Consequently, it was imperative that the ministries collaborated on identifying strategies to source the funding required to protect the industry.

Gillian Guthrie repeated that this was the opportunity for the private sector to recommend policy prescriptions for the Policy. She underscored that the government was not about declaring protected areas as a matter of form but so the protected areas were able to provide the services that the island required. These areas supported the agriculture industry and the tourism sector, hence looking for greater investment to be able to sustain the PAS

Ms Guthrie introduced Ms Toni-Ann Miller who would make the presentation on the Overarching Protected Areas Policy.

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

Ms Miller advised participants that the primary objective of the Policy for the Protective Areas was to “effectively and equitably manage protected areas for the protection and conservation of biodiversity”.

Background

Ms Miller noted 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. This, she pointed out, aligned with Jamaica's National Development Plan, Vision 2030, with an emphasis on Outcomes 13 and 14. Outcome 13 focussed on sustainable management and use of the island's natural resources and Outcome 14 addressed hazard risk reduction and adaptation to climate change.

International Commitments/Country-led Initiatives

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

- Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The GBF has 23 global targets and Jamaica was in the process of developing national targets to align with these. The proposed national target is to protect 30 per cent of the terrestrial areas and coastal and marine areas by 2025.
- Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 13 which looks at conservation and the sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources.
- High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People – Jamaica has committed to protecting 30 per cent of its land and marine/coastal areas by 2030 – referred to as the 30X30 target.
- Global Ocean Alliance
- Leaders Pledge for Nature.

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

The values and benefits accruing from Jamaica's protected areas were listed 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
- Providing opportunities for recreation and support to key economic sectors such as health and tourism
- The enhancement of mental wellbeing
- Contributing to Cultural identity
- Providing habitats for plants and animals
- Bolstering food security
- Providing jobs for Jamaicans
- safeguarding biodiversity and culture
- Protecting coastal areas and communities.

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 as protected. In recent years, the following areas have received designation as protected areas under the NRCA Act: Pedro Cays and surrounding waters (2023); the Cockpit Country (2022), and the Black River Landscape and Seascape (2021).

Threats 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 including the:

- National Land Policy of Jamaica, 1997
- Forest Policy for Jamaica, 2017
- Biosafety Policy for Jamaica, 2021
- National Minerals Policy, 2017–2030
- Climate Change Policy Framework, 2023
- Watersheds Policy for Jamaica, 2024
- National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE), 2011
- Protected Areas System Master Plan (PASMP)
- 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 legislations were highlighted as directly related to 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

Among the key stakeholders with responsibility for the PAS were:

- National Fisheries Authority
 - Fishermen Cooperatives
- Forestry Department
 - Local Forest Management Committees
- National Environment and Planning Agency in collaboration with:
 - Jamaica National Heritage Trust
 - Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation
 - Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust
 - Montego Bay Marine Park 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

The Policy outlines 14 types of protected areas including forest reserves, national parks, marine parks, fish sanctuaries, game reserves, and forest management areas among others. The Policy seeks to align these types of protected areas with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categories which includes: national parks, strict nature reserves, national

monuments, protected landscape/seascape, protected area with sustainable use of natural resources and habitat/species management 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 ministries involved in the management of the PAS were listed as the Ministry responsible for environment along with NEPA, the Ministry with responsibility for fisheries and the NFA, and the Ministry with responsibility for culture and the JNHT. Ms Miller advised that the Protected Areas Committee (PAC) would have primary responsibility for the institutional coordination of the PAS and ensuring the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy and plans. In carrying out its functions, the PAC would collaborate with the parent ministries for the entities with management responsibility for protected areas, including the JNHT, NFA, NEPA and the Forestry Department. Cabinet was identified as the ultimate decision-making body.

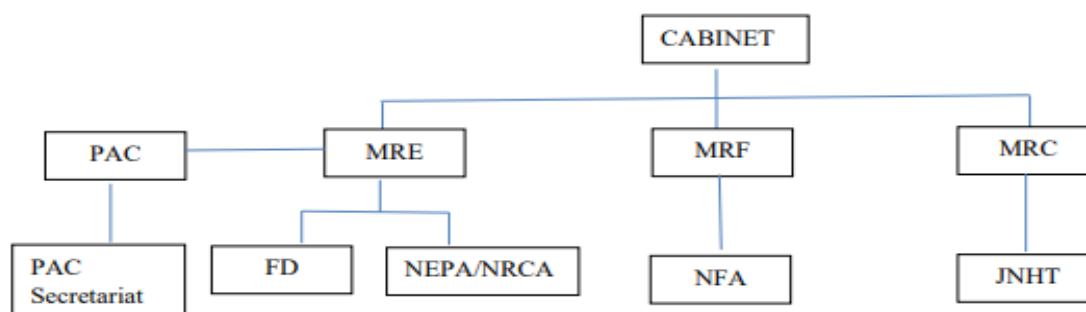


Figure 3: Institutional Arrangements-Protected Areas System

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

Ms Miller provided a synopsis of the six objectives of the policy with a selection of their attendant implementation strategies and activities. A detailed accounting may be found in the Policy document between pages 79 and 110. In addition, there were indicators, suggested timelines, responsible entities and indicative costs.

Implementation Strategies and Activities

1.1 Implement mechanisms for improved governance

- Enshrine the PAC in the Overarching Protected Areas legislation
- Amend Natural Resources (National Parks) Regulations, 1993
- Amend Marine Parks Regulations (1992) to put the PAC in place to deal with matters normally dealt with by the marine parks.
- Increase the number of LFMCs and enhance their capacity

- Share current/accurate data and information about new and existing PAS declared/designated
- Increase active involvement of NGOs and CBOs in the planning and management of PAS.

Responsible entities include the Ministry responsible for environment (MRE), the Ministry responsible for local government (MRLG), the Protected Areas Committee (PAC), NEPA/NRCA, JNHT, NFA, and FD. The NGOs and CBOs will also be important to this activity.

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

- Promulgation - Overarching Protected Areas legislation which will include a definition of a protected area, different types of protected areas, the criteria for designating a protected area and also the IUCN equivalents of the different types of protected areas.
- Mainstream biodiversity conservation and PA management into sector plans and programmes

Responsible entities are the 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 and implement business plans for PAs
- Prepare, revise and implement management plans and preservation schemes to include ecosystem restoration activities.

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

- Periodically assessing 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 in protected areas
- 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: Provide adequate and sustainable financing for the PAs within the national PAS

Implementation Strategies and Objectives

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 from diverse sources 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 Objectives

6.1 To utilize scientific and traditional knowledge for PA management

- Continue to pursue formal agreements for partnerships in scientific research
- 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 including compliance with the concept of free, prior and informed consent and mutually agreed terms for access and benefit sharing from the utilisation of the areas' resources.

Ms Miller pointed out that the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework could be found on page 94. It outlines the indicators, expected results, targets, means of verification, methods of data collection. She reported that the M&E activity would be led by MEGJC in consultation with the PAC.

She stated that participants to read through the document and send written comments by July 4 to ermb.gov.jm.

Recap

Gillian Guthrie thanked Ms Miller for the comprehensive overview presented of the draft policy. She reminded participants that hard copies of the green paper could be accessed at parish libraries and at the offices of the island's municipal corporations. She advised that electronic copies might be accessed from the websites of MEGJC..

Ms Guthrie reminded participants that the Policy was at the draft stage and, as yet, nothing was set in stone. The Ministry was seeking assistance from stakeholders in creating relevant policy prescriptions. A part of the document, she noted, established the government's broad objectives and another part looked at the implementation including activities for implementation. The purpose of the consultation was to decide on the most appropriate and effective policy prescriptions and to make the distinction between policy direction and policy prescription.

She noted that the National Fisheries Authority had not made a presentation at this consultation but had made one at the public sector consultation and would do so at the virtual town hall meeting. She observed that there were comments in the chat that required an immediate response and asked the Dr Gavin Bellamy, from the National Fisheries Authority, to respond to issues raised related to the White River Fish Sanctuary and funding for that sanctuary as well as for fish sanctuaries in general.

Dr Bellamy - CEO, NFA, declared the government and the NFA's fulsome support of all fish sanctuaries. He recalled that when the White River Fish Sanctuary was established, they had made the commitment to be self-supporting. He noted that the White River Fish Sanctuary wrote to the NFA about two months previously requesting financial support and the request was being considered. He reported that the government currently funded nine sanctuaries at a value of \$40 million per annum. He reiterated the point that White River had always been self-funded.

Gillian Guthrie noted that Dr Bellamy and other parties from the NFA would continue to be available for any further questions and discussions. She noted that the issue of sustainable financing for the PAS was a challenge and looked forward to ideas for resource mobilization in this consultation.

Ms Morrow stated that she was looking forward to additional funding and hoped that the government would be able to assist in this regard. Representatives of the White River Fish Sanctuary had met with Minister Green about four years ago requesting financial assistance for the administration of the sanctuary. They were asked to show proof of support from the community but had never been told that the full burden of financing the sanctuary would be solely theirs. She observed that reaching out to the private sector for assistance with funding was a good idea. However, in instances where sanctuaries were funded by foreign companies, financing ceased when those companies left Jamaica and the sanctuaries folded. She reiterated that sanctuaries were too important to Jamaica to be underfunded. She pointed out that they were more than fish sanctuaries. They protected the livelihood of fishermen; protected the resilience of the tourism industry, the beaches and water. It was more appropriate, she said, to refer to the areas as marine protected areas and, thus, they should not be dependent on fisheries for funding but should also be supported by the tourism sector which was a major beneficiary. She posed the question as to what a hotel would be without a beach. The funding of marine protected areas should not be the burden of the fisheries sector. She reiterated previous requests for funding and would welcome Dr Bellamy's support.

Gillian Guthrie noted that all funding was currently provided by the government and stressed the importance of exploring workable solutions for sourcing financing for the protected areas in which our biological and cultural heritage reside.

Discussion

Gillian Guthrie asked stakeholders to consider whether the Vision, Goal and Objectives, as written in the draft document, were adequate. The group was asked to first interrogate the Vision. Ms Guthrie explained that she wanted recommended amendments to the text to be comprehensive with logical flow. She was also asking for the implementation plan to be examined for elements that might be missing and for stakeholders to focus on the subject matter to see how best to achieve a fulsome document that addresses the concerns relating to the management of the island's natural resources.

Ms Guthrie requested feedback on the vision statement.

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.

Sophie Grizzle Roumel raised several issues.

- The government's need to honour the MOU signed previously to execute all sewage systems at the tertiary level going forward. She observed that the island had a serious water quality issue – it was one of the lowest in the world. It was important, she said, to keep working on that agreement to protect the integrity of the island's coastal water and this should be reflected in the vision.
- The continuous tension that exists between development and environmental prudence. She said that any project exceeding a certain size must begin with consultation within the community. She cited Ms Guthrie's reference to gender and youth but reminded her that old people often understood their communities better.
- Technocrats who were responsible for advising ministers must be trained in environmental issues. She noted that some technocrats were brilliant and understood the issues but there were some who didn't seem to understand the issues.
- Similarly, there were ministers in Kingston who did not know or understand the challenges and vulnerabilities of certain rural areas and should not be making decisions about them. She described a scenario of a minister giving permission for a hotel to be built too close to the beach without understanding the full impact of the construction on the environment. She claimed no minister should be able to make such a decision, but it must be submitted to Parliament and approved by Cabinet. Also, the people in the community had to be given the opportunity to share their views on the issue.
- The change in chairmanship of PAC was of concern. For the most part, brilliant people were placed in these positions but sometimes appointments seemed to be politically motivated in order to get something done that should not be done. She acknowledged that she could be mistaken.
- The construction of a hotel within the fish sanctuary in the Negril Marine Park.

Sophie Grizzle Roumel cautioned that Jamaica was at a turning point and could not proceed these things without careful consideration, it will be a disaster.

Gillian Guthrie asked for any other comments on the vision statement to be shared.

Camille Needham, JHTA considered the vision statement to be well expressed with all the main elements included. She observed that the problem was always in the implementation which rested on political will and funding. She wanted to see the wishes of community members respected and that the developments approved complied with the vision and were not contradictory to good environmental management and sensitivity to community needs. She observed that, over the years, enough attention had not been paid to community services and there was increasing concern within communities about developments that are approved.

She asked that a provision be included which held perpetrators accountable for any environmental degradation/damage incurred. Too often citizens got away with polluting and degrading the environment which was unfair. There should also be provisions to mitigate against damage.

Gillian Guthrie addressed the issues raised as follows:

- ***The MOU on upgrading sewage treatment systems to at least a tertiary level to protect the island's coastal waters*** – Ms Guthrie stated that NEPA would agree that Jamaica's coastal water quality needed to be improved. There were regulations on the discharge of wastewater and sludge which were intended to govern sewage treatment plants. The discharge of effluent into the environment was not in keeping with the standards outlined in these regulations. She advised that the regulations were currently being amended to further upgrade the standards, recognising, also, the need for the upgrading and maintenance of the physical infrastructure to enable them to function effectively. She pointed to the need for improved monitoring and enforcement but questioned whether this was sufficiently addressed in the regulatory framework. While Ms Grizzle had referred specifically to sewage discharge, the policy would look more generally at land-based sources of pollution which would include solid waste – trade and sewage effluent, agricultural runoff and all the waste matter that impacted our coastal and marine environment. She reiterated the challenges related to monitoring and enforcement.
- ***Development vs environment*** – Ms Guthrie said she recognised the consistent tension between development and environment. She noted that NEPA had responsibility for the Town and Country Planning Act and the environment portfolio. As the country progressed, it was necessary to ensure that the necessary safeguards were in place to protect and maintain our natural resources. While success had not been achieved in all areas we should acknowledge the pursuit of success. Ms Guthrie underscored that everyone, and not just the government, had to work towards the common goal of preserving the environment as we develop as a country. Further discussion was needed on what else could be done and the gaps that currently existed.

- **Training of technocrats** – Ms. Guthrie pointed out that there were job descriptions for technocrats and their qualifications had to fit the requirements of the job. However, she recognised the importance of ongoing training. Technocrats should be at the top of their game in terms of the knowledge and competence that they brought to the table. She said the team was open to introducing a policy prescription related to capacity building for technical staff and regulatory entities. Finally, decisions were not made by technocrats. Everything had to go to Parliament for review and Cabinet made the final decision. She noted that this Policy would go to Cabinet.
- **Protected Areas Committee (PAC)** – She advised that the PAC was the Protected Area Committee which comprised the managers of all the agencies with responsibility for the protected areas – NFA, Forestry Department, JMHT and NEPA along with the agencies to which have given authority such as the Fisherman’s Cooperative and various NGOs and CBOs. She said she had no doubt that the government would welcome private sector entities adopting sections of the protected areas. **The rotation of leadership** was a concern of Ms Grizzles and Ms Guthrie noted this could be explored further, but currently the document stated that the chairmanship would rotate among the agencies.
- **Community involvement.** Ms Guthrie noted that the Policy addressed community involvement on page 59 with reference to the use of “traditional local community’s knowledge of the biodiversity with the involvement and incorporation of the owners of the knowledge with the necessary prior informed consent”. Ms Guthrie noted that the prescription could go further to incorporate the active involvement of the community in the making of decisions with respect to developments which will impact their communities. She said mechanisms must be designed to empower them to actively participate in the decision-making process.
- **Assuming responsibility for damage to the environment.** In responding to Ms Needham’s concern on this matter she, again, pointed to page 59 which highlights “The legislation governing protected areas, regulated by the relevant public sector entities should include an expanded range of enforcement options including seizures, fines, suspension of permits and licences, involvement of communities in patrolling, enforcement and compliance as well as options such as involving persons who breach the law in providing community service in protected areas.” She said offenders would be required to work in the protected areas.

Ms Guthrie announced that the NRCA and Wildlife Protection Acts were to be amended to increase fines and custodial sentences. Other similar legislation would be examined to determine whether the fines and sentences were a sufficient deterrent and whether any further action should be taken.

Gillian Guthrie invited Mr Salmon to make his comments.

Mr Salmon opined that the solution was not the establishment of new legislation and regulations but the increased enforcement of laws. He emphasised the need for better accountability.

Gillian Guthrie shared that previously, possibly in the 1990s, there were specially trained environmental wardens, led by a retired police officer from the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), whose job it was to monitor protected or environmentally sensitive areas to detect and prevent breaches of regulations. She asked stakeholders' opinions on reconvening a similar grouping that worked exclusively on monitoring and enforcement or whether the increased involvement of Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) and JCF should be sought in bolstering monitoring exercises. She advised that both groups currently assisted in the monitoring exercise so the question was whether their involvement should be increased.

Sophie Grizzle Roumel endorsed the need for improved enforcement. Using Negril as an example, she stated she regularly called NEPA or the Negril Planning Authority to report the dumping of hundreds of truckloads of marl in the morass, but it always took weeks for them to respond, by which time it was too late. Local people thought bribery was involved.

She expressed her displeasure at the practice of regularisation, noting that if people were not required to pull down what they had built illegally, it should not be regularised. She suggested that people who consistently broke the law in these areas should be subject to increased tax – double or quadruple – on that piece of land into eternity. The current fines were ineffective; they became obsolete very quickly and it took the government up to 20 years before they changed the fines.

She pointed to encroachment on the Negril Great Morass and businesses being built and operated by squatters on captured or reclaimed land they did not own, but it would be regularised. So, their taxes should be tripled or quadrupled. A message would be sent to everybody as people would not want to buy that land because the tax would be so heavy.

It was time to stop messing around and playing games, she said. It was time to be strict and to impose hefty penalties.

Camille Needham thought it would be useful to get the help of the JCF as it was a law enforcement matter but not the JDF.

Gillian Guthrie asked if Ms Needham was in favour of a special group, even within the JCF, whose focus was the monitoring and enforcement of fines and custodial sentences related to the environment.

Camille Needham agreed the mandate of the entity should be the protection of the environment in keeping with regulations.

Gillian Guthrie acknowledged that she misspoke in suggesting the assistance of the JDF. She noted that further assistance of the JCF might be sought as well as the enforcement units of the regulatory agencies as well as the marine police in strengthening monitoring and enforcement.

She invited Mr Fletcher to pose his question or make a comment.

Osmond Fletcher, Rose Hall Development opined that being a small island meant that the entire Jamaica should be a protected area. However, he understood the context in which specific small areas were the focus but pointed out that what occurred in the larger areas impacted the success of the smaller protected areas. He observed that he had not heard any mention of reefs, trade effluent disposal, impact of forest fires, solid waste management and deforestation. He pointed out that everywhere on the island was within 30 to 40 miles of the coastline thus the entire island could be regarded as coastal. He asked what plans were in place to address the Hellshire Dry Limestone Forest, the iguanas and the deer in Portland.

Gillian Guthrie thanked Mr Fletcher for his comments noting that they were all relevant to the discussion. She mentioned that a more explicit policy prescription might be required to address land-based pollution – sewage, trade effluent and solid waste. She said that guidelines had been developed to deal with the expanded deer population and would be introduced soon. The poor health of the island's reefs was a major issue as they impacted not only biodiversity but also the protection of the coastline. The status of the reefs had demonstrated that replanting would be required to restore them to reasonable health, also the land-based sources of pollution had to be dealt with in a fulsome way as this had a negative effect on the reefs. She reported that the good news was that the population of iguanas had been restored through a project between NEPA and the Hope Zoo. Bred at the Hope Zoo, they had been relocated to their natural habitat in the dry limestone forests. She added that the threats to the species, in the form of feral cats, dogs and pigs, were also being managed.

She invited Dr Bellamy of the NFA to provide his perspective on the issue of monitoring and enforcement within the marine and coastal areas and the fish sanctuaries specifically.

Dr Bellamy shared that the NFA was involved in a multi-agency mechanism through which it collaborated with other government ministries, departments and agencies in joint operations. He advised that the NFA worked with NEPA, the marine police and the coast guard when necessary. He noted, also, that the NFA had a compliance unit which worked along with the other entities – marine police and coast guard. However, he acknowledged that there was always room for improvement. He congratulated NEPA on the repopulation of the iguanas and the programme with the deer as important success stories and an indication that we were moving in the right direction.

He advised that within the fish sanctuaries, there were compliance officers who interacted with the environmental wardens, coast guard and marine police as needed. He recommended the model as one to be replicated in other protected areas across the island.

Sophie Grizzle Roumel agreed that some things were going well but financial support was required for further improvement. The process, she thought, should be more adaptable. She shared that it was a standard joke in Negril that the coast guard came to work when any wrongdoing was already completed. She said they reported for work at 9:00 a.m. when the fishermen were out from 5:00 a.m. and coming back in by 9:00 a.m. Everything was somebody

else's responsibility. When she spoke to the planning authority in Negril she was invariably told that they had to wait on the municipal corporation before they could act on a stop order. She suggested that perhaps NEPA needed more authority as, currently, it was not being taken seriously. People didn't take anything seriously until they had to pay a big fine or ended up in court.

Gillian Guthrie reminded Ms Grizzle that fines also custodial sentences had been increased under the NRCA and Wild Life Acts.

Ms Guthrie asked participants to consider Objective 5 which suggested alternative funding opportunities with potential for a sustained stream of financing to support annual subventions from government. She pointed out that government could not do this on its own and would appreciate recommendations from the private sector for other means of financing outside of taxpayers' money by way of government's annual subventions to finance the management of the protected areas. She observed that it was an issue with which the government had been grappling for some time.

She cited the National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica which was established to assist in providing additional resources but they, too, were struggling. The Kingston-based NCTFJ provided small grants to NGOs and CBOs to fund activities within protected areas and also to deal with matters related to climate change.

Gillian Guthrie pointed to ideas already included in the draft Policy such as:

- The debt for nature swap. The Environmental Foundation of Jamaica was an example of debt for nature swap between the US and Jamaican Governments. However, once the debt is depleted, the entity would have to find a new source of funding.
- Issuance of Green Bonds being discussed by the Jamaica Stock Exchange.
- Carbon trading – The Wigton Wind Farm was an example of carbon trading. She cited, also, blue carbon from the mangroves in which local and international private sectors might be interested investing in to rehabilitate and even expand them.
- Public private partnerships and ecotourism - The protected areas should be able to contribute to economic growth and development and lives and livelihoods.

She emphasised the need for the support of the private sector in identifying ideas for sustainable financing and also in the area of technical support. She wanted the private sector to say what would motivate them to invest in the protected areas. She asked if there were any opportunities that could be included as policy prescriptions that would be of interest to the private sector. She assured them that the government subventions would remain in place.

OBJECTIVE 5: To provide adequate and sustainable financing for the PAs**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

Sophie Grizzle Roumel opined that Jamaica needed to be more proactive in seeking ways to promote and monetize its unique and beautiful environment. She shared that visitors to Butang were required to sign a document agreeing not to litter the place. Visitors to Barbados had to pay a fee in order to dive. She believed that we could convince the rest of the world that Jamaica was worth investing in. She said she was often amazed at what people paid to see on tours overseas and Jamaica needed to place more value on its assets and charge accordingly. She noted that Jamaica's environment was diverse, and we needed to look at ourselves from that perspective. However, Jamaica had developed a bad rep relating to the environment because it has not been properly cared for.

Gillian Guthrie added that it was important to embrace the environment in Brand Jamaica, noting that the protected areas were repositories of important aspects of our culture.

Sophie Grizzle Roumel cited the fact that Jamaica was a part of the bird migratory system and there were people who were prepared to pay well for that experience but that was not an area that had been developed. She also noted that the marine park in Negril needed rehabilitation. She emphasised that there were opportunities to earn urgently needed revenue to contribute to the maintenance of the PAS.

Camille Needham declared that additional taxation could not be considered as a revenue earning strategy as the industry was already very heavily taxed. She suggested that the TEF (Tourism Enhancement Fund) might be approached for assistance, although it was now incorporated into the Consolidated Fund that was not the original intention. She said some resources might have to be reallocated.

Gillian Guthrie recapped noting that the discussion had covered the legislative framework and community involvement in the decision-making process. She committed to addressing these more explicitly in the policy document.

She asked for additional ideas for sustainable financing.

Diana McIntyre Pike observed that she had not seen anything in the document that resembled a business plan. A business plan would highlight the gaps and was something that could be share

with our diaspora partners who were interested in assisting the country. She pointed out that people could not be expected to contribute to something for which there was no organised plan.

She compared Jamaica to a beautiful hotel which hid the reality of Jamaica, the garbage littering the streets and the serious environmental crisis. Jamaica has succeeded in bringing visitors to the island and could get investors to visit but, like a hotel, it must prepare its product. She was afraid that if we did not do so we would lose our beaches and she was concerned that we were not approaching things in a serious way.

Gillian Guthrie observed that identifying channels of sustainable financing was one of the key issues discussed in the policy. Objective 5 looked at business and marketing plans to generate financing for protected areas to enable them to contribute to economic growth. In the previous consultation with the public sector, the recommendation was made for the development of marketing plans. She asked whether these were the fundamental elements to be addressed in developing a sustained financing and marketing policy for the protected areas of which there are some 300. Jamaica intended to declare more protected areas, so the question was how to find sustainable financing for these. She reiterated that the idea was that strategies should contribute to economic growth and development, social well-being and preserve the country's biodiversity.

Ms Guthrie reiterated the suggestion related to investment in green bonds and the institution of user fees.

Camille Needham agreed the suggestions were excellent strategies. User fees may be reviewed where they already existed. It was important to view everything with a marketing eye.

Gillian Guthrie asked participants to consider whether the policy should include strategies to encourage private sector investment in ecotourism as a revenue earner for the sector. She emphasised that she was looking at the type of investment that would be compatible with the objectives of the protected areas. She pointed to the Blue and John Crow Mountains which was the country's only national park and wondered what ecotourism activities residents might be involved in. She also highlighted the Cockpit Country, the island's largest terrestrial area, which was rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage, also Black River. What type of policy prescriptions were needed to motivate investment in these areas?

Sophie Grizzle Roumel recommended the introduction of tax incentives in the tourism industry. She also suggested that Jamaica needed more attractions for visitors. The protected areas, in themselves, were not money making, they had to be developed and maintained as attractions. For example, the Royal Palms Reserve in Negril needed to be refurbished. The boardwalks were all rotting, and the birdwatching towers were in a dilapidated state. Proper ecotourism attractions should be established. She recommended that the team talk to Ann Sutton and Wendy Lee who were involved in these areas but needed help to make their activities more attractive. Businesses would invest if government moved in the right direction.

She complained that the environment was always on the back burner observing that only a few people in the hotel sector were interested; the hotel industry was a big one yet only three hoteliers were at the meeting. Her interest in the environment was due to her mother's influence. Nothing was taught about the environment when she went to school. She said while it would not happen overnight if the government moved in the right direction and there was more public education on the value of the environment the interest would grow.

It would have to be seen that ecotourism attractions succeeded in bringing additional visitors to an area. The Royal Palm Reserve, she said, would not bring visitors to Negril but would be a pleasant experience for visitors in the area and they would share with their friends who would visit when they came to Negril.

Diana McIntyre Pike endorsed all that was discussed but advised that education was required to enhance the general appreciation for PAs and the environment. The low level of waste management was noticed and commented on by visitors to the island. She said the Eastern Caribbean was far cleaner than Jamaica and we had to become more serious about taking care of the environment.

Sophie Grizzle Roumel reported that she had shared the draft Policy with Professor Maltby who was the author of the Ramsar document for the IUCN. She recalled that he had worked on the Negril Morass. He continued to visit every year as he had a passion for Jamaica and wanted us to do well. She promised to share his comments and also noted that he was open to assisting in any way he could.

Conclusion

Gillian Guthrie thanked stakeholders for their robust participation. She reminded participants to go through the draft Policy and to send written comments on the document to ermb@megjc.gov.jm by July 4. She noted that all the comments would be taken into account and placed with the bank of comments already received and all used to refine the document for resubmission to Cabinet. She said it was hoped that the revised draft would be approved making it a white paper which would then become policy. It was anticipated that this process could be completed by the end of the financial year in March 2025.

She reminded stakeholders that a report of the consultation would be posted on the Ministry's website for the benefit of those stakeholders who had not been able to attend.

On behalf of Senator Samuda and Permanent Secretary Arlene Williams, Ms Guthrie thanked all stakeholders for taking time out to attend the meeting and for their valuable contribution. She reiterated her invitation for them to attend the public consultation on July 11.