



NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING AGENCY

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Ref: NRCA/NEPA 22/27

2 February 2024

Mr. David Dobson, JP
Chief Technical Director
Ministry of Tourism
Jamaica Tourism Centre
1-3 Floors
64 Knutsford Boulevard
Kingston 5

Re: Reports of excessive accumulation of seagrass/seaweed and debris on a number of beaches including Negril

The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) acknowledges the request for appropriate methods/guidelines for removal of seagrass/seaweed and debris that has accumulated on a number of beaches due to severe weather conditions being experienced along the coast.

The Agency wishes to advise that permission is granted to hotel/resort owners, beach operators and fishing groups for the mechanical removal of accumulated seagrass/seaweed and debris on the beaches of their respective properties. Mechanical removal using a bobcat should be conducted according to the following guidelines:

1. Staging/storage areas should be identified for clean-up and seagrass/seaweed removal.
2. Removal of seagrass/seaweed and debris should be from and to agreed areas and the equipment should use the same route on and off the beach where possible to prevent harming the dune system, destroying dune vegetation and turtle or bird nests.
3. In the event exceptional amounts of seagrass/seaweed occur on the beach (i.e. in excess of 1 m/3 ft. deep), then the upper layers of seagrass/seaweed should be first removed without touching the sand, followed by mechanized beach-raking in order to reduce sand loss. A mechanized beach rake can remove moderate quantities of seagrass/seaweed on dry sand.

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Any reply or subsequent reference to this communication should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, to the attention of the officer dealing with the matter, and the reference quoted where applicable.

Mr. David Dobson, JP
Chief Technical Director
Ministry of Tourism
9 February 2024

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4. The original beach profile should be restored immediately following the seagrass/seaweed and debris removal.
5. Cleaning should occur preferable at low tide and heavy equipment should stay on wet sand in the tidal zone. Adjust cleaning schedules to when wind and storms are less likely to immediately bring new influxes.
6. Consider public safety and avoid mechanical beach cleaning in the presence of fishers or beach goers.
7. Beach cleaning should be done only in the presence of monitors who check for wildlife prior to any cleaning and operators must respect no-go areas such as sea turtle or bird nests. Any turtle nest is identified it should be clearly demarcated and avoided.

Beach operators are advised that the use of heavy equipment such as tractors and front-end loaders for the removal of seagrass/seaweed and other accumulated debris is strictly prohibited without the explicit approval of NEPA.

The Ministry should take note that based on initial reports received by the agency, local stakeholders along the northern coastline have also been impacted by the severe weather conditions. It is therefore recommended that this advisory be widely distributed.

The Agency reserves the right to revoke this permission if it is found that the hotel/resort owners, beach operators and fishing groups or its agents have acted in violation of the terms outlined herein.

Yours sincerely

National Environment & Planning Agency



Monique Curtis (Ms.)

Manager, Ecosystems Management Branch
for Chief Executive Officer/Government Town Planner