



Fact Sheet #1

Understanding Protected Areas

JAMAICA'S PROTECTED AREAS... towards safeguarding Jamaica's globally significant biodiversity

JANUARY 2013

What are Protected Areas?

Jamaica's policy framework for the national system of protected areas defines a protected area as "an area of land or water that is managed for the protection and maintenance of its ecological systems, biodiversity and/or specific natural, cultural or aesthetic resources."

Protected areas are considered to be the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation and help secure the human well-being of populations.

These areas maintain key habitats, provide refuge, allow for species migration and movement, and ensure the maintenance of natural ecological processes. There are many types and categories of Protected Areas. Some of these are: national parks, marine parks, special fishery conservation areas, forest reserves, game reserves, Ramsar sites, protected national heritage sites and national monuments.

Some protected areas in Jamaica are: Portland Bight Protected Area; Morant and Pedro Cays; Montego Bay Marine Park; Cockpit Country Forest Reserve; Rio Nuevo Taino Site; and Bogue Lagoon Special Fisheries Conservation Area.

There also are a number of international agreements related to protected areas. Of particular relevance are the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Heritage Convention of Wetlands of International Importance.

Well managed protected areas yield significant benefits far beyond their boundaries, and contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable prosperity for countries.

Globally there are about 30,000 protected areas accounting for 9.5% of the planet's land area. The Caribbean has approximately 4,400 protected areas and Jamaica has 249.

Under the Strengthening the Operational and Financial Sustainability of the National Protected Area System project, the Government of Jamaica aims to consolidate the operational and financial sustainability of Jamaica's national system of protected areas.

This 6-year project supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is being implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) in collaboration with the Forestry Department, Jamaica National Heritage Trust and the Fisheries Division.



Protected areas can be considered to be engines of economic growth. These areas provide livelihoods for nearly 1.1 billion people around the world and are the primary source of drinking water for over a third of the world's largest cities and are a major factor in ensuring global food security. Protected areas:

- **offer many environmental services**, for example they provide clean water and fresh air - the headwaters of many of Jamaica's main rivers are located in the Blue Mountain and the Cockpit Country forest reserves. These are the primary sources of water for Kingston and the major tourist area of Montego Bay
- **enable employment opportunities** (e.g. fishing, farming, tourism and recreational activities) for the local population residing in or near to these areas, increasing a country's overall income



Jamaica has extraordinary diversity of flora and fauna, including significant endemic species, within a variety of terrestrial, inland water and marine habitats. Protected areas are critical for preserving the country's biodiversity and for ensuring the socio-economic welfare of all Jamaicans.

How do Protected Areas Contribute to Social and Economic Development?

- **contribute to the tourism industry** by protecting and preserving some tourism assets and natural attractions such as marine parks, ensuring the long-term viability of this growing industry
- **have greatly benefitted the pharmaceutical industry** from use of the genetic diversity of species that aid in the making of modern medicines and safeguarding species in protected areas will ensure the possibility of discovery of future medicines
- can enhance opportunities for activities such as **organic agriculture**
- **can mitigate impacts and effects related to climate** such as floods and droughts



Many protected areas are generally designated in order to conserve species and ecosystems. Jamaica has a draft Protected Areas System Master Plan which will provide a structured framework within which protected areas will be managed. This Master Plan will address public awareness, legislation, culture and heritage, institutional arrangements, financial sustainability, and biodiversity conservation.



Strengthening the Operational and Financial Sustainability of the National Protected Area System Project



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



National Environment
and Planning Agency

For additional information contact:
National Environment and Planning Agency
10 & 11 Caledonia Avenue, Kingston 5, Jamaica;
E-mail - pubed@nepa.gov.jm

