

**Interim Report on the Implementation of Article 6 of the
Convention on Biological Diversity**

Jamaica

**Natural Resources Conservation Authority
Ministry of Environment and Housing**

February, 1998

Interim Report on the Implementation of Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Executive Summary

The Government of Jamaica places a high priority on the conservation and sustainable use of its biological resources.

A high level of endemism characterizes the biological diversity of Jamaica, which has a variety of ecosystems, the most significant being mangroves, coral reefs, wetlands, dry and wet limestone forests, montane cloud forests, rain forests and elfin woodlands.

Jamaica's economy is dependent on its natural resources as the main economic activities are bauxite mining, tourism and agriculture.

Jamaica signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on 11 June, 1992 and acceded to the Convention on 6 January, 1995. The focal point for the Clearing House Mechanism of the Convention is within the Institute of Jamaica whose Natural History Department is the repository of information and specimens of Jamaica's flora and fauna.

In order to meet the requirements of Article 6 of the Convention, Jamaica has submitted to the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) an enabling activity proposal in Biodiversity for the preparation of the first national report as well as a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

¹The principal tasks of this project will be to

- 1) conduct a comprehensive assessment of the existing information on biodiversity in Jamaica;
- 2) implement a participatory, strategic planning process and develop priorities for action in protecting Jamaica's biodiversity, culminating in a NBSAP;
- 3) conduct a public information campaign to encourage participation in the strategic planning exercises;
- 4) prepare the first National Report for submission to the Conference of Parties

The process of preparing the GEF/UNDP project proposal involved the participation of Government Ministries and agencies, the University of the West Indies and Non-Governmental Organisations. The project features islandwide consultation with representatives of each parish. The project is to start in March/April, 1998 and will last for twelve months. The first national report

¹ From the draft project proposal to the GEF/UNDP

is to be submitted by the fourth month of the project.

A team of national consultants led by a project team leader will conduct the initial stocktaking and assessment of existing information. Using the results of this assessment, they will work collaboratively with the National Steering Committee to prepare a detailed "first draft" outline of the strategy. This draft will outline the present status of the country's key biodiversity resources and related sectors and define specific goals and objectives for the next five years covering a range of sectors including economic development, forestry, fisheries, tourism and protected areas.

The draft strategy will form the basis of local consultations with interested stakeholders, during which persons will be nominated to participate in the national consultation on the final draft of the NBSAP.

The Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA), established under the NRCA Act, 1991 is the Government's lead environmental management agency, empowered to "take such steps as are necessary for the efficient management of the physical management of Jamaica so as to ensure the conservation, protection and proper use of its natural resources."

The NRCA will be responsible for coordination of the GEF project in collaboration with the biodiversity focal point. The project steering committee will include the Ministry of Environment and Housing, the University, the private sector, NGOs as well as agencies and Ministries responsible for planning, economic development and science and technology.

Jamaica has developed or is in the process of developing several policies relative to natural resources - for example, the National Land Policy (1996), the National System of Parks and Protected Areas (1997), the Forest Land Use Policy and the new Forest Act (1996), the Water Resources Act (1995) and the draft Fisheries Bill. Several pieces of legislation concerning natural resources are being reviewed. A National Industrial Policy has also been developed which incorporates information pertinent to natural resources use.

In 1996/97, the Sustainable Development Council of Jamaica was established to assist in the development and shaping of policies and programmes for the effective management of the environment.

An annual state of the environment report is produced as well as three-year Jamaica National Environmental Action Plan which outline the programmes and projects to deal with environmental issues.

The interim report describes the importance of biodiversity to the country and its local communities and outlines some of the action taken to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of biodiversity to Jamaica and its local communities

A high level of endemism characterizes the Biological diversity of Jamaica. For Jamaica, as a small island State with a fragile ecosystem, its biodiversity has both an ecological and economical value. Ecologically it is supported by varied ecosystems such as mangroves and coral reefs in the coastal zones, and the dry and wet limestone, and elfin forest on the coast and inland areas. These ecosystems protect the island from rising sea levels, the impact of hurricanes, earthquakes and heavy rainfalls. The national interest also requires that Jamaica supports research and monitoring of global warming and its effects sea level rise.

In terms of economics, biological resources contribute to the island's social and economic development, for example in the leading tourism and agriculture sectors. Tourism is the leading foreign exchange earner and a potential growth sector. Local communities realize that jobs can be created and that the attractiveness of rural areas can be enhanced through sustainable economic growth. This can be accomplished by means of eco-tourism sites, protected areas that conserve the diversity of species, and ecosystems which provide timber, fisheries, flora, hydrology and material for medicinal use.

Jamaica's coral reefs are commercially important for two main reasons; most of Jamaica's artisanal fishermen use traps to capture reef fish and secondly the reefs are important dive sites for water sports operations in the tourism industry. Over the years there has been extensive degradation of Jamaica's coral reefs, leading to decreases in fish catches and increases in visitor dissatisfaction. The importance of sea grass beds in the growth cycles of fish, lobster and other commercially important species is recognized by scientists and other users of the resources. Both flora and fauna have been recognized for their contribution to the ecological balance in the island's ecosystem.

Forests and other woodlands account for approximately forty-five percent (45%) of the island, mostly in areas of rugged terrain such as the Blue Mountains and Cockpit Country as well as in the dry and hilly uplands in the southern, western and north-western parts of Jamaica. Few large areas of virgin forest exist in Jamaica which is now comprised mainly of ruinate or secondary growth. Approximately twenty-six percent (26%) of the natural forests contribute to sustained timber production. The prospects for industrial uses of domestic timber for major forest products are minimal.

Biological Resources cannot be conserved without the active participation of local communities in the decision making process and management. In recent years several Jamaican Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGO's) have been established and there are ENGOs in most of the parishes in Jamaica. There are some NGOs that focus specifically on flora or fauna conservation, for example the Goss Bird Club, the Jamaica Natural History Society and the Friends of the Hope Zoo. An umbrella Organisation, the National Environmental Societies Trust, represents over 40 NGOs. At the center of the expanding ENGO movement in Jamaica there are a number of critical factors including:

1. A growing number of parish-based environmental protection agencies.
2. The ongoing activities of a numbers of multi-parish and national environmental organisations.

The GOJ/USAID Development of Environmental Management Organisation (DEMO) Project and the CIDA Environmental Action (ENACT) programme are providing assistance with institutional strengthening and capacity development to some ENGOS

Jamaica's Commitment to the Provisions of the Convention

Since joining the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Jamaica has become a Party to other important environmental conventions such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention). Jamaica also became a member of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in 1996.

The establishment of a system of protected areas, restoration of degraded ecosystems, control of alien species and *ex situ* conservation programmes are being carried out by the NRCA, at four botanical gardens and through captive breeding programmes at the Hope Zoo. Plans are also in progress to establish gene banks for Jamaican germ plasm. In terms of *in situ* conservation management plans for priority protected areas which include Palisadoes/Port Royal, Portland Ridge and Bight, Hellshire Hills, Black River Lower Morass, Yallahs and Ocho Rios are being prepared or have been submitted to the Natural Resources Conservation Authority - the lead environmental management agency - for review. These sites will be declared and management authority delegated to ENGOS as appropriate.

The Blue and John Crown Mountains National Park and the Montego Bay Marine Park have already been declared and management delegated to two NGOs.

An atlas of integrated approach to coastal zone management, sponsored by the Government of Sweden, has provided a base for further research and monitoring of Jamaica's coastal resources.

In terms of the terrestrial conservation policies and plans, this has been addressed in the Jamaica National Forestry Action Plan, Mangrove and Coastal Wetlands Policy, A System of Protected Areas Policy, Watershed Policy, Land Use Policy, Protected Animals in Captivity Policy and management plans for endangered species.

Biodiversity cannot be conserved or used sustainably without changing the attitudes of the people. As such the promotion of public awareness and education on the conservation and sustainable use of the biological resources is being pursued by the formulation and implementation of a National Environmental Education Policy. This policy is being prepared by a National Environmental Education Committee.

The legal framework for undertaking Environmental Impact Assessment is provided under the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act, 1991. In January, 1997 Regulations for a Permit and Licence System for the use of Jamaica's resources were also enacted. Proposed amendments to the Wild Life Protection Act and the Trade in Endangered Species Convention (Bill) have been drafted. A new Forestry Act was enacted and a Fisheries Industry (Bill) has been prepared. Regulations governing the importation of plants genetically modified were enacted in 1997.

The transfer of technology and biotechnology is being fostered by the Scientific Research Council, University of Technology, University of the West Indies and the Scientific and Technological Council. These new technological developments are transferred to both the private sector and community groups for capital investment.

Training and research programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are facilitated by several projects.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals

The vision for biodiversity is embodied in the statement of objectives enunciated in the three-year Jamaica National Environmental Action Plan of 1995 -1997 as follows:

- Ensuring that renewable resources including forests and wildlife are used in a sustainable manner.
- Protecting and preserving the marine environment and territorial waters within the Exclusive Economic Zone.
- Promoting the research and development of appropriate technology that is environmentally friendly.
- Promoting socio-economic and technical research as it relates to the development and use of natural resources of the environment.

Objectives

Several objectives for biological diversity programmes for the implementation of the Convention are established up to the year 2004. They include:

1.0 Articles 7 and 8 - Identification and monitoring; *in situ* conservation

Implement natural resource assessments (including the development of a national data bank/network) to guide the preparation of environmental management plans and declaration of national parks and protected areas.

2.0 Article 8 - *In situ* conservation

- 2.1 Enforce compliance with the environmental regulations including establishment of a national monitoring and surveillance system.
- 2.2 Expand the system of protected areas and complete the formulation process of guidelines for management of protected areas.

3.0 Articles 8 and 9 - *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation

Promote the creation of financial mechanism to ensure the financial sustainability of environmental management.

4.0 Article 9 - *ex situ* conservation

- 4.1 Establish gene banks and rescue centres for flora and fauna.
- 4.2 Regulate and manage the collection of biological resources from natural habitats through legislation.
- 4.3 Prepare and implement management/recovery plans for threatened flora and fauna

5.0 Article 10 - Sustainable use of components of biological diversity

Establish environmental management systems and negotiate partnerships with public/private/NGO/CBO entities in the operational management of these systems.

6.0 Article 11 - Incentive measures

Broker economic incentives to encourage existing development to re-tooling for sustainable operation (pollution and re-cycling).

7.0 Article 13 - Public education

- 7.1 Assist the public, private and NGO/CBO sectors to define their respective roles in the achievement of an environmental sustainable future for their particular organisation/sector

- 7.2 Establish a public education campaign to inform the public, private and NGO/CBO sectors about the requirements of international treaties and conventions.

Natural Resources Conservation Authority
Ministry of Environment and Housing
February 1998