

EARTH TODAY



PHOTO BY DAYNE BUDDO

An aerial view of the East Portland Special Fisheries Conservation Area.

J'cans weigh in on new forest sector plan

JAMAICANS NOW have the opportunity to weigh in on the island's new forest management and conservation plan, which, among other things, is to inform how the sector responds to the challenge of climate change.

Over the last month, the Forestry Department has hosted a series of islandwide public consultations directed at a variety of players from key sectors, including agriculture and tourism.

"We want all the players to give us their feedback. There are different actions that will be taken over the next 10 years, which involves other partners and stakeholders so we need their input before it is signed off so that when we go to action, everybody is signed off," noted Francine Black Richards, senior manager for public relations and corporate communications.

THE PLAN

She was speaking with *The Gleaner* from the more recent consultation session, held in Montego Bay on Tuesday.

Work on the plan, which succeeds an earlier one done in 2001 and which expired in 2010, has been financed to the tune of US\$500,000 by the Climate Economic Analysis for Development, Investment and Resilience (CEADIR) initiative of the United States Agency for International Development.

Guiding principles of the plan include:

- Enhancing partnerships and encouraging authentic dialogue and participation among all stakeholders;
- Combating climate change, "recognising the impact of climate change on forests and sustainable forest management and contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies";
- Implementing sustainable for-

est management, "including giving due consideration to emerging thinking on landscape restoration"; and

■ Forest finance, which is about "diversifying financing mechanisms for the management and conservation of the forest sector".

Other principles include increasing public education and awareness and enhancing the decision-making capability "through investments in developing staff capability and expanding and supporting forest research".

These are in addition to:

- Ensuring the alignment to Vision 2030 Jamaica, the island's national development plan;
- Embracing relevant national plans, among them the Protected Areas System Master Plan and National Biological Diversity Strategic Action Plan; and
- Meeting international obligations and commitments, "ensuring the forest sector supports the county's commitment to various multilateral agreements".

The consultations got underway in Mavis Bank, East Rural St Andrew, on February 9, with another following in Portland, and then the western resort city. The next one will be held in Trelawny and the final one hosted in Kingston on March 21 – with comments accepted up to March 24.

Once the consultations have been concluded, Black Richards said, the comments from the public would be incorporated and the document submitted to the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, the Forestry Department's parent ministry, for approval.

"Once the minister has approved it, then we can proceed to implementation," she noted.

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Tuesday's public consultation held in Montego Bay.

New project holds promise of climate resilience for communities

Petre Williams-Raynor
Contributing Editor

FROM THE restoration of coral reef, mangrove and coastal habitat within the East Portland Fish Sanctuary to livelihoods diversification in the Portland Bight Protected Area, several hundred Jamaicans are to benefit from a new climate resilience-building project on the island.

The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (5Cs) is implementing the project – dubbed Coastal Protection for Climate Change Adaptation in Small Island States in the Caribbean – with funding from the German Development Bank, KfW.

With technical support from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the project is responsible for 11 others in the region – four of which are being implemented in Jamaica.

The others are being implemented in St Vincent, Saint Lucia and Dominica.

The Jamaica projects – all of them community based – are being run by:

- the University of the West Indies Centre for Marine Sciences (CMS), working in the East Portland Fish Sanctuary;
- the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (C-CAM), working in the Portland Bight Protected Area;
- the Westmoreland Parish Council, working in the Negril Environmental Protection Area; and
- the Urban Development Corporation, working in Montego Bay.

"The overall idea is that the projects will take an ecosystem-based adaptation approach to reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts at the community level," noted Leslie Walling, the national coordinator for Jamaica, recruited by the IUCN.

"In a number of places, they will be looking at ecosystem restoration. So where you have mangroves that have been impacted, there will be replanting of mangroves.

But along with this is management to ensure that where ecosystems are restored, you have some sort of management regime in place," he added.

"In conjunction with all of this, you have the additional ecosystem services in addition to the protection services that relate to livelihoods," Walling said further.

The C-CAM project, for example, is looking to see to mangrove and coastal replanting, armouring, restoration and conservation protection for 45 kilometres of coastline, together with the implementation of a mangrove and coastal forest awareness programme.

This is with the goal to have "1,000 fishers and workers in the fisheries sector benefit from increased income from fishing in the areas surrounding sanctuaries", according to project documents.

The CMS project is, for its part, to have a management plan developed and implemented for the East Portland Special Fisheries Conservation Area, together with training and the development of sustainable livelihoods. It is looking specifically to enhance the community dive business "through the establishment of a partnership with pre-existing local dive operation".

"This will provide fishers with direct training, mentoring and support to operate a community-based scuba diving and snorkelling station (and) a marketing programme implemented to increase citizen and visitor uptake", its project documents revealed.

According to Walling, it is a win-win. "Because of that additional suite of benefits, you have the opportunity for the development of people in the community to either participate in the ecosystem restoration process or working with to improve management of the areas in which the ecosystems are located or to create livelihood opportunities," he told *The Gleaner* from Barbados.

Walling said there is little question of the value of the projects' approach, amid the changing climate with impacts such as coastal erosion.

"All disasters are local so in terms of developing the measures to reduce the disaster risks or adaptation to climate change, those have to be location specific and developed with the input of the community. It is not a one size fits all nor a top-down approach," Walling noted.

He has urged community members to "be aware and be active" as the projects are implemented in the coming weeks and months.

"Be aware of the initiatives that are being implemented in your community and be active from the point of view of ensuring that you know how you can participate or benefit from the project," he said.

Each project has been provided with funding support of US\$600,000, with co-financing – in kind and/or cash – from the beneficiary organisations.

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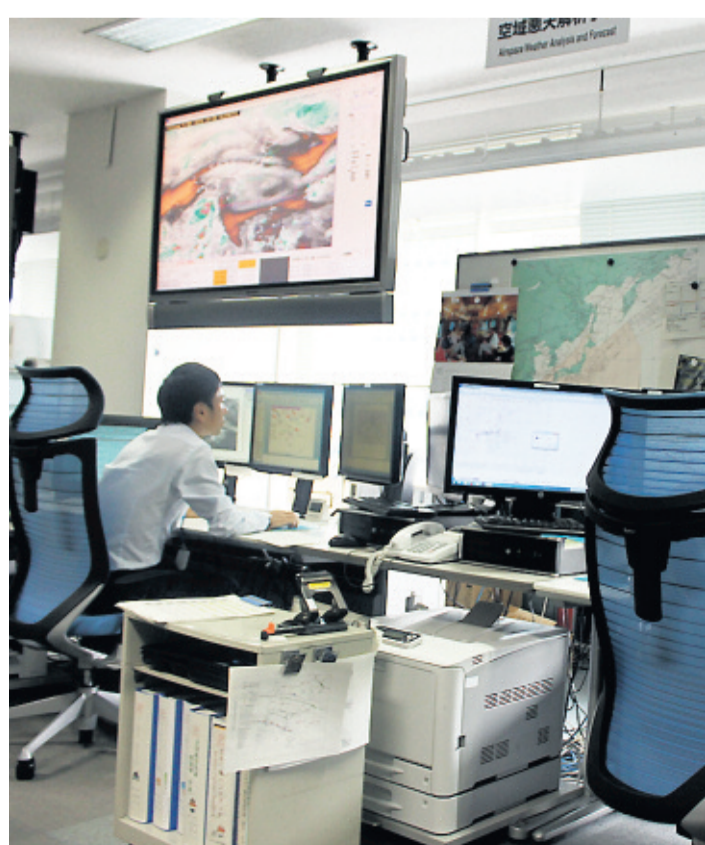


PHOTO BY AMITABH SHARMA

The Japan Meteorological Agency headquarters in Tokyo is the heart and soul of its disaster management.

Seamless info flow key to Japan's disaster management

Amitabh Sharma
Contributor

TOKYO, Japan: WITH GIGANTIC monitors displaying data, together with a battery of analysts to decipher statistics, the weather monitoring rooms at the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) appears to take a cue from the deck of Starship Enterprise.

An alarm goes off and there is a hush in the room, as personnel take "battle alert" positions. An earthquake was detected in the seas north of the country. In a matter of minutes, the location, intensity, and all related data appear on the screen; this one was 2.4 on the Richter scale.

Beyond the realms of this seemingly science fictional fantasy, the agency's 5,200 staff closely monitor weather conditions, from precipitation in the air to movement of the tectonic plates and volcanic activity.

The critical element in effective disaster preparedness and management is the getting

of real-time warning and information to the end user: the people and communities at risk.

The agency has close to 1,600 seismometers and nearly 4,400 seismic intensity metres installed across Japan, which monitor seismic activity and earthquakes.

MORE DETAILED

Shinji Watanabe, chief technical officer at Office of Observation System Operation, said information on seismic intensity is relayed within 90 seconds of any earthquake striking.

Tsunami warning, Watanabe added, is more detailed.

"We give periodic details like estimated time when the tsunami can hit (and) the projected height of the waves," he informed.

The agency also monitors activities of 110 active volcanoes and issues periodic bulletins. JMA disseminates daily and weekly weather forecasts and shares early warning and severe weather information with aviation authorities and maritime interests.

According to the chief technical officer, information dissemination to the media and citizens has been given priority in JMA's mission statement.

To get information across real time, there is a direct link to all major television stations in Japan.

In the event of a major natural disaster, a ticker at the bottom of the television screen will be activated. The state-run NHK television interrupts its broadcast to make the announcement.

Effective reaction to the information by the citizens, though, goes beyond the news flash; it boils down to the mindset, education and training for disaster preparedness, which is a long-term and continuous process.

Treading that road, Watanabe said, requires collective effort and cooperation at all levels.

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