



**For Immediate Release
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JET CALLS ON THE PRIME MINISTER TO RESPOND TO THE COCKPIT COUNTRY PETITION

Following the successful collection of over 20,000 signatures requesting Cockpit Country to be closed to mining and quarrying posted on the new Jamaica House petition site, the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) is concerned that there has been no response from the Prime Minister, despite a promise on September 25th that a response would be given within 30 days.

“While we understand the distractions presented by holding three by-elections, it is important that promises made by our political leaders are kept,” said Diana McCaulay, CEO of the Jamaica Environment Trust. “When commitments are not met, trust in our government is eroded and we already suffer from a significant trust deficit.”

With the help of a great many stakeholders from Cockpit Country communities, including Maroon communities, Windsor Research Centre and the media, signatures were also sought on hard copy petitions. JET wrote to the Prime Minister on September 27 and requested an opportunity to deliver the hard copy petitions with a small delegation of people from Cockpit Country, but there has been no response to that request either. The hard copy petitions contain another 15,141 signatures, making an overall total of 35,999 signatures.

The importance of Cockpit Country to Jamaica’s future is indisputable and the GOJ’s own boundary study in 2013 recommended the following: “*The Government of Jamaica should not authorise any form of exploration of mineral deposits, mining and quarrying activity within the Cockpit Country as the level of emotion is too high and the level of opposition and resistance by community members and leaders, community-based organisations, non-governmental and civil society organisations, some governmental agencies and members of the academic community may not provide enough guarantee and confidence for potential investors.*”

The study also concluded, “*The Cockpit Country should be legally protected because it plays a critical role in sustaining water security in Jamaica.*”

Given the projections of reduced rainfall and more severe droughts due to global climate change, JET’s position is that allowing mining or quarrying in Cockpit Country would be the height of recklessness.

“There has been unconscionable delay on this matter, across both administrations and going back to 2006,” said Diana McCaulay, CEO of JET. “It is long past time for a decision to be taken.”

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