



For Immediate Release  
July 10, 2018  
Cockpit Country, Jamaica

## **COCKPIT COUNTRY COMMUNITIES RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT PROTECTED AREA**

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*Under their new project aimed at advancing the protection of Jamaica's Cockpit Country, the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) has met with Cockpit Country communities to gather their feedback on the Prime Minister's November 2017 announcement to Parliament of the Cockpit Country Protected Area (CCPA) boundary and the GOJ's intention to close it to mining. During the recent Cockpit Country community meetings, which were held in Gibraltar, St Ann on June 28 and Elderslie, St Elizabeth on July 5, JET presented a summary of the Prime Minister's announcement and maps of the designated CCPA which we received through an Access to Information (ATI) request to the Forestry Department (FD). The presentation was followed by a discussion on what the designation of the CCPA could mean for communities located inside or outside its boundary, during which community members asked questions and voiced their concerns.*

**On behalf of the Cockpit Country community members present at the Gibraltar and Elderslie meetings, JET outlines the following concerns related to the declaration of the CCPA:**

- 1. Generally, there has been an absence of information on the CCPA provided to Cockpit Country communities by the GOJ.** No one present at either the Elderslie or Gibraltar meeting had knowledge of any GOJ outreach to discuss what the Prime Minister's announcement about the CCPA will mean for their communities. In Elderslie, half of the people present at the meeting were unaware that an announcement regarding Cockpit Country had been made by the Prime Minister. Communities want more information on the CCPA and its implications.
- 2. Community members felt their feedback during Cockpit Country stakeholder consultations had not been considered in declaring the CCPA boundary.** Despite these consultations, residents felt that a top-down approach had been used by the GOJ to determine the boundary. **Community members are concerned that this top-down approach will also be used to develop the management plan for CCPA.**
- 3. No detailed spatial information on the CCPA boundary has been provided to Cockpit Country communities by the GOJ.** Using the maps provided by the FD to JET it is difficult to know where precisely the CCPA boundary is likely to fall on the ground. Communities very

close to the boundary, e.g. Madras, St Ann and Elderslie, St Elizabeth, are not certain whether their community is inside or outside the designated protected area. Communities want a clearer understanding of their position in relation to the CCPA boundary.

- 4. A clearer understanding of the timeline for completion of the ground-truthing of the CCPA boundary is needed.** Communities want to know when ground-truthing will be done in their area and how long the entire process is expected to take. FD representatives present at the Elderslie meeting on July 5 told those present that the first section of the boundary to be ground-truthed is the stretch from Troy to Jackson Town. They stated that this area was being prioritized for completion in the 2018/19 financial year due to the bauxite interests operating near the boundary. The FD representatives were unable to say when the remainder of the ground-truthing exercise would take place; but told the meeting that the two-year estimate provided by their department at the start of 2018 had not changed. Residents expressed the desire to see the finalized “ground-truthed” boundary before the CCPA is gazetted into law.
- 5. The expansion of bauxite mining into new areas near the CCPA boundary.** Residents of Gibraltar and Barnstaple in St Ann - two communities which have been left out of the CCPA - expressed grave concerns about the expansion of bauxite mining activities in their area. At a meeting in Gibraltar in March 2018, representatives of New Day Jamaica Bauxite told residents of Gibraltar and its environs about the company's intent to expand bauxite mining in that area in the direction of Richmond Pen, Hopewell and Belmont, St Ann. This is of particular concern to residents because of the anticipated threat from the proposed bauxite mining to the community's water supply, public health, historical sites, livelihoods and food security. Residents also fear that bauxite will negatively impact the groundwater in the area, which supplies several North coast rivers, including the Rio Bueno in Trelawny. At the Elderslie meeting, concerns were raised regarding bauxite prospecting activities which had recently taken place in Elderslie, St Elizabeth; it remains unclear whether Elderslie is inside or outside the designated boundary. At both meetings JET proposed that a buffer zone be established around the CCPA and this area also be closed to mining. JET also recommended a moratorium be placed on mining and prospecting within the CCPA whilst the ground-truthing of the boundary takes place. Community members were in agreement with these JET proposals. At the Elderslie meeting FD representatives indicated that discussions had recently taken place within the GOJ and its agencies regarding the amendment of bauxite mining and prospecting licenses to exclude areas which intersect the designated CCPA boundary; however, no timeline could be given as to when changes would officially be made. JET is concerned whether mining and/or prospecting is permitted within and close to the designated boundary under existing licenses while ground truthing is being done.
- 6. More clarity is needed on what activities (other than mining) are likely to be restricted in the CCPA once it has been gazetted.** There is a concern that the establishment of the CCPA will restrict economic activity within its boundary and infringe on landowners' rights to enjoyment of property. Residents of Accompong also noted that sections of the protected area cover maroon-occupied territory and are concerned about the possible implications for their community.

**JET would also like to add to the list of concerns, our dissatisfaction with the seemingly slow pace of the CCPA boundary ground-truthing process.** Although the Prime Minister has announced the GOJ's intention to close the CCPA to mining, this cannot be done until the boundary has been ground-truthed and gazetted into law. During our meeting in Elderslie, FD

representatives indicated that only 20 kilometres of the designated CCPA boundary in the vicinity of Troy has been assessed by their field staff to date. Ground markers for that 20km section of boundary have been proposed by the FD, but these are yet to be confirmed by a certified land surveyor – a necessary step in the ground-truthing process. Although FD indicated that they are in discussions with the National Land Agency (NLA) to identify and contract a certified land surveyor to assist in ground-truthing process, no timeline could be provided by their representatives as to when this would be done.

JET and the communities of Cockpit Country call on the GOJ to address the concerns listed above and provide an updated timeline for when the CCPA will be declared under law.

## **Signed**

### **Jamaica Environment Trust**

Suzanne Stanley, CEO - (876) 470-7580  
Terri-Ann Guyah, Legal Director – (876) 461-9440  
Diana McCaulay, Chairman – (876) 469-1315

### **Windsor Research Centre**

Susan Koenig - (876) 997-3832

### **Cockpit Country Community Contacts**

Ivy Walton, Gibraltar, St. Ann – (876) 824-7681  
Linsford Hamilton, Madras, St. Ann – (876) 919-8375  
John Gordon, Cambridge, St. James – (876) 586-8778  
Clavie Johnson, Principal at the Elderslie Primary & Junior High, St Elizabeth – (876) 334-7770

### Community members present at meeting at St Paul's Baptist Church, Gibraltar, St Ann on Thursday, June 28, 2018

#### **Gibraltar**

Ivy Walton, Rosetta Nelson, Rose Marie Higgins, Robert Clarke, Vincent Richards, Fitroy Smith, Nadine Ruddock Gibbs, Keteisha Miller Downie, Devono Clarke, Christopher Campbell, Denrick Atkinson, Rashane Christie, Livery Rowe, Khalia Higgins, Leller Laster, Linsford Hamilton, Allan McFarlane, Delosse Higgins, Stephen Walton, Andrae Brown, Lloyd Moulton, Theodolph McLeod, Vinnel Pryce, Lensford Gibbs, Jermaine Afflick, Merissa Higgins, Jacqueline Collins, Omar Codner, Javel Lawrence,

#### **Barnstaple**

David Fletcher, Lowland Fletcher, Christopher Smith, Aaron Johnson, James Simpson,

#### **Caledonia**

Clarkeland Sawyers, Karl Sawyers

### Community members present at meeting at Elderslie Primary, Elderslie, St Elizabeth on Thursday, July 5, 2018

#### **Elderslie**

Latoya Wallace, Latoya Parchment, Natoya Smith Reid, Carlton Francis, Geddes Dixon, Clavie Johnson, Jenita Hanson, Atasha Hanson, Paulette Newsome, Marvylin Salmon, Kandie Dick, Denise Brooks, Nicole Brooks, Lois Johnson, Shanoya Sanderson, suzette

Martin, Picky Waite, Melissa Campbell, Clear Wright, Melane Smith-Dunn, Sharon Smith, Naomi Smith,

**Accompong**

Norma Rowe-Edwards, Robert Cawley, Vivian Salmon,

**Arcadia**

Yanique Wright

**Jointwood**

Simone Parchment, Christopher Brown, Andrea Brown, Bertie Dunn, Romane Baker