

August 7th, 2019

The Editor,
Gleaner Company
7 North Street
Kingston

Sir,

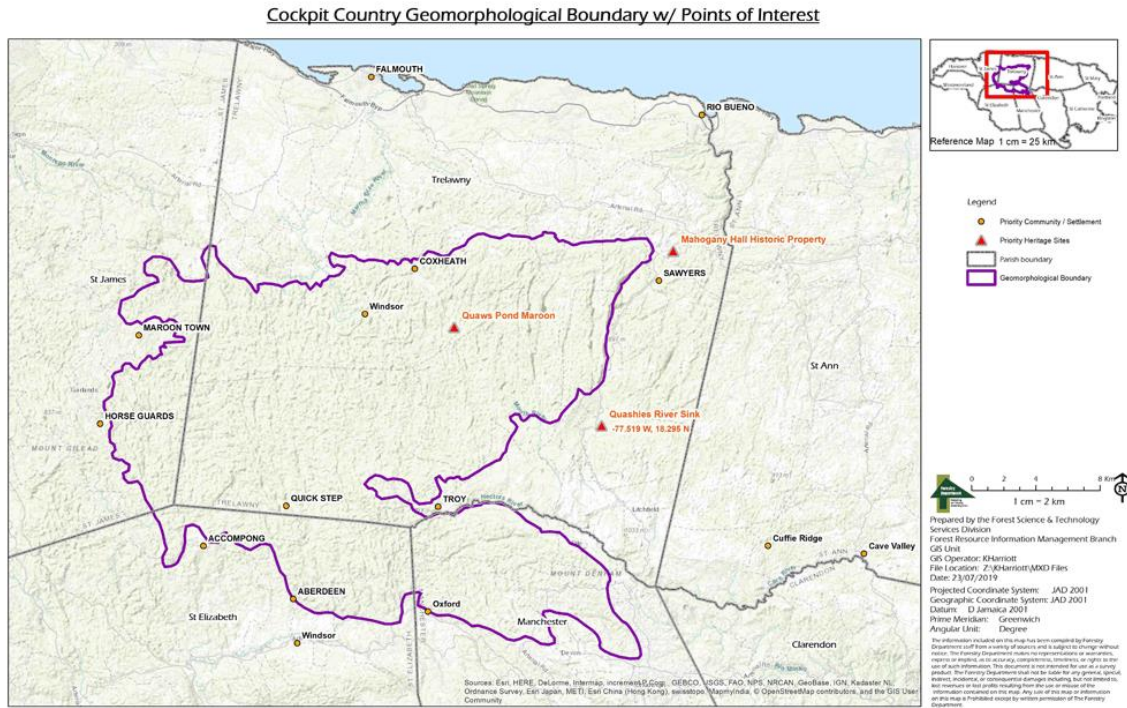
We, the undersigned, would like to respond to the article by Senator Robert Morgan, “Beyond the Noise on Cockpit Country” published by the Gleaner on August 4th, 2019. We understand that the Cockpit Country boundary issue has confused many, so we will start with that:

History and Heritage

Cockpit Country is that part of Jamaica’s landscape where the Leeward Maroons operated, and successfully negotiated a Peace Treaty with the British during 1738-39. History and heritage are intrinsically linked to Cockpit Country.

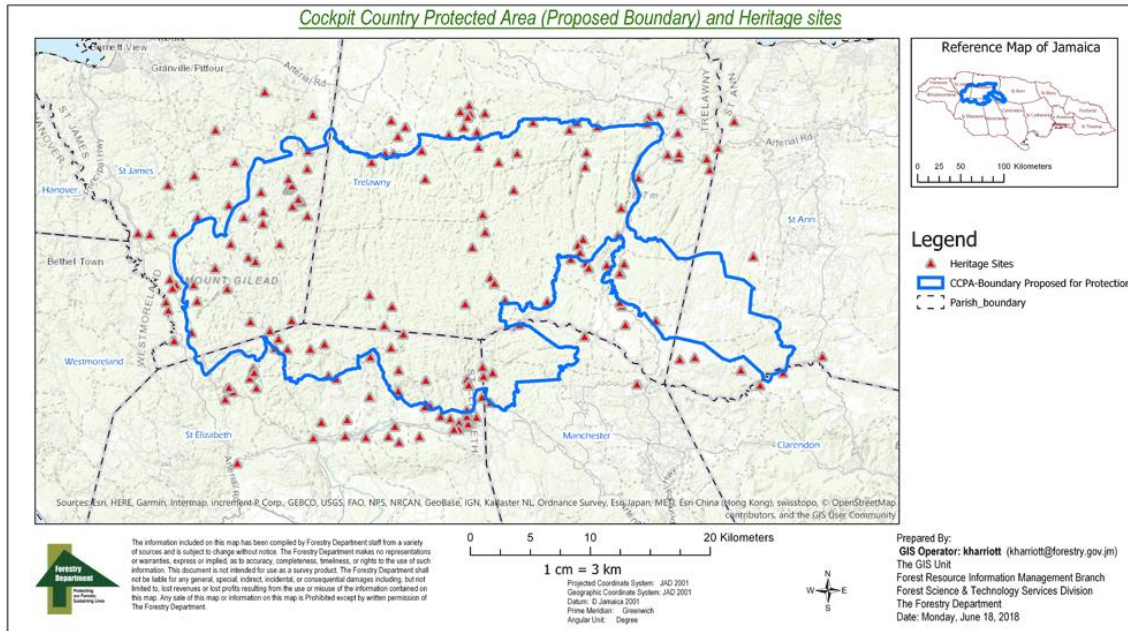
In his November 2017 presentation in Parliament on the proposed Cockpit Country boundary, the Prime Minister referred to the boundary identified by Dr. Parris Lyew-Ayee, Jr. in 2005, based on geomorphology – the upturned eggbox shapes we all recognize – as the Cockpit Country. This boundary – shown below – excludes Accompong, Maroon Town, Cuffie Ridge, Quashies River Sink and Mahogany Hall, so this geomorphological definition excludes Maroon heritage and Jamaican history.

MAP: Lyew-Ayee, Jr. (2005) boundary map, which excludes Accompong and Maroon Town.



A different boundary, the proposed Cockpit Country Protected Area (CCPA), was presented by the Prime Minister and it included some historical sites. If we look at the map of Heritage Sites which have been identified by the Jamaica National Heritage Trust in its 2009 Cockpit Country Heritage Survey Report, however, we see a large number of sites excluded from the CCPA.

MAP: CCPA boundary with historical sites shown

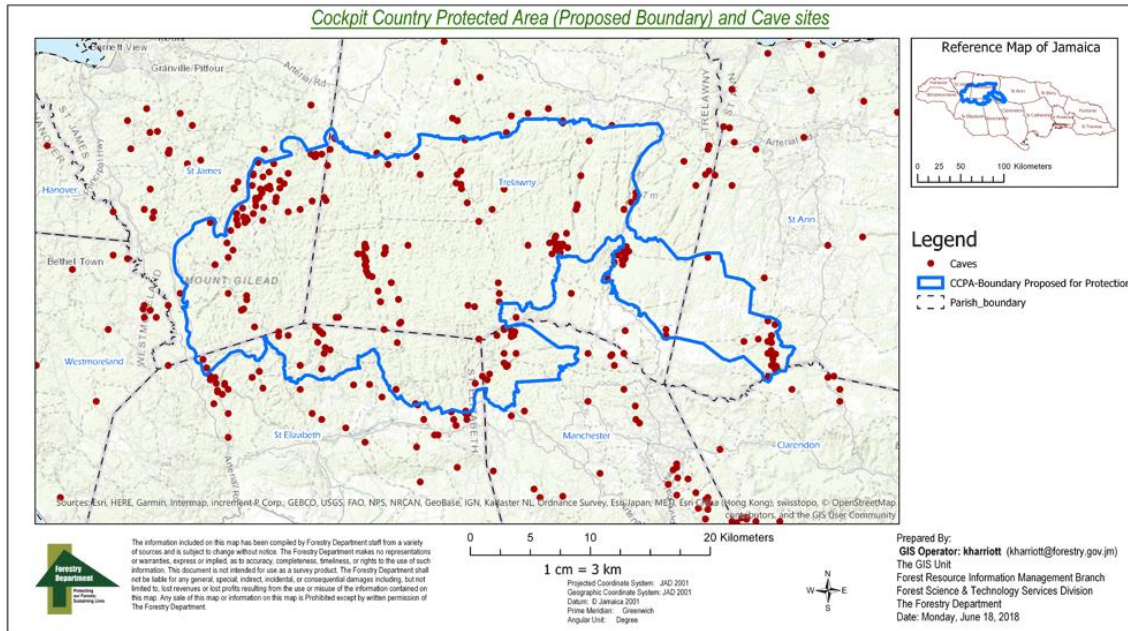


The proposed CCPA boundary therefore does NOT protect all historical and culturally important sites.

Hydrology

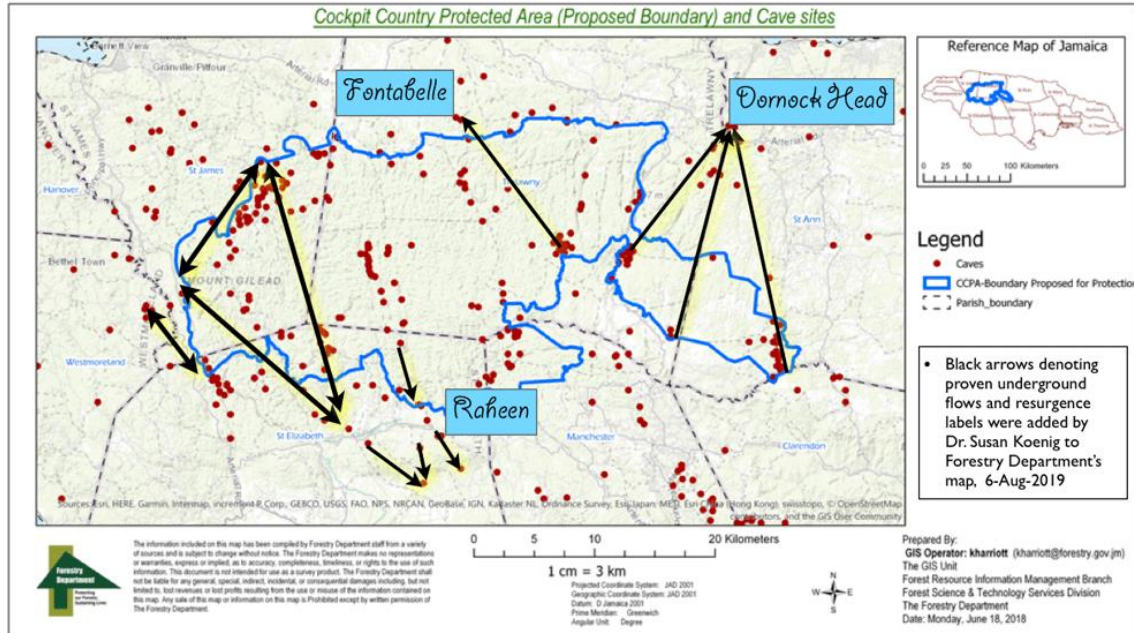
The Prime Minister also presented a map showing the locations of cave openings in the landscape, to serve as a proxy for hydrology. The use of caves is helpful because an opening can often (but not always) lead to a water-filled, subterranean passage.

MAP - CCPA boundary with caves shown



The many cave openings shown on the map, however, only give a static representation of what is, in fact, a dynamic system of water moving underground. A better representation of Cockpit Country hydrology is to include the proven underground flows and aquifer connections, descriptions of which have been available from scientific literature since the 1970s, such as those presented in Dr. Alan Fincham's registry of caves (*Jamaica Underground: The Caves, Sinkholes and Underground Rivers of the Island*, UWI Press 1997).

MAP – CCPA boundary with water flows shown

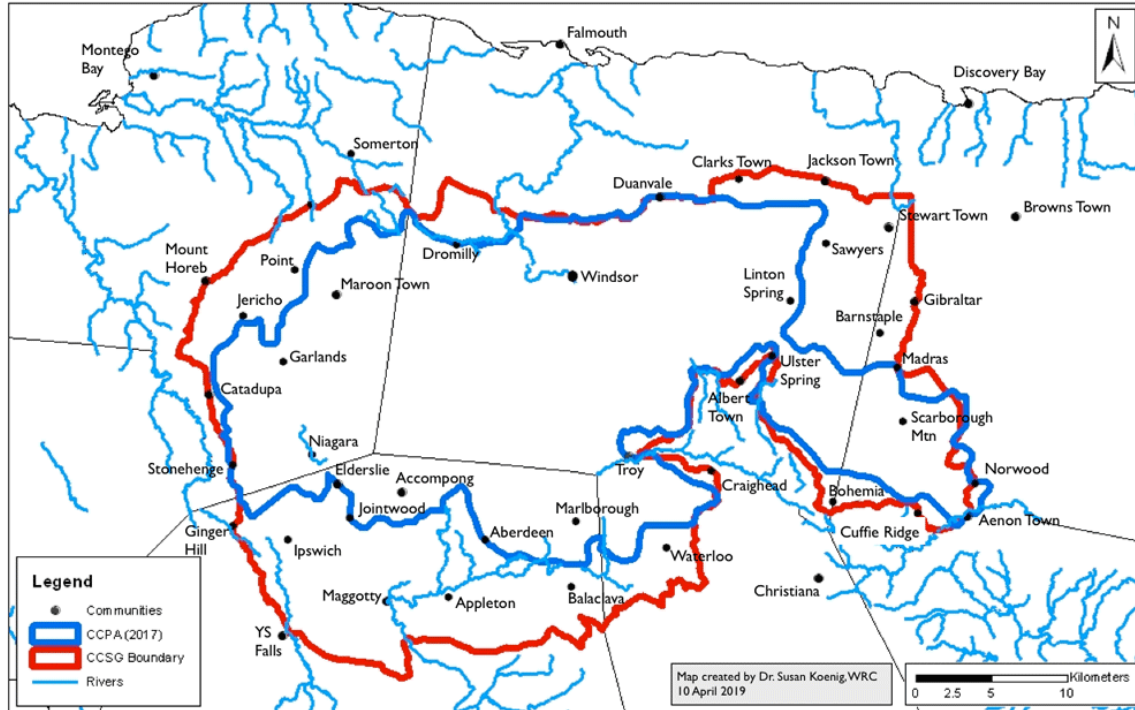


If the underground flows in the southeastern region of Cockpit Country merit protection - as evidenced by their inclusion in the CCPA designated boundary - why didn't their continuation through the northeast to their emergence at Dornock Head Rising and Rio Bueno warrant the same treatment?

The Cockpit Country Stakeholders Group (CCSG) followed the same process as outlined by the Prime Minister to identify a boundary of Cockpit Country. We overlaid all the relevant features – geomorphology, hydrology, biological diversity, heritage – to define Cockpit Country.

MAP – CCSG boundary and CCPA boundary

2017 Designated Cockpit Country Protected Area (CCPA-2017)
 compared to
 Cockpit Country Stakeholders Group (CCSG) Boundary
 (aka The Outer Boundary, UWI 2013)



Mining vs other economic activities

Senator Morgan makes much of the point that the larger CCSG boundary includes the Appleton Valley, and if that were to be included “the factory and all industrial practices would have to end”. We, the undersigned, have called for an end to all extractive and environmentally damaging practices within the protected area, not to all economic activity. We support Cockpit Country communities in continuing their much more sustainable farming livelihoods, while working to develop new types of economic activity, such as ecotourism, as well as ensure that other types of environmentally harmful practices cease. We also understand there will be management plans developed for the CCPA after thorough consultation and research, to include zoning, buffer zones and stringent regulations – these approaches are welcome.

Buffer Zones

Senator Morgan stated that buffer zones have been established to protect important areas outside the proposed boundary. This is good news and we would like to see where those areas are located – because the communities located on the boundary and just outside it want to be part of a buffer zone with no mining allowed. This was also proposed by the 2013 Cockpit Country Boundary Report done by the University

of the West Indies, which recommended that the CCSG boundary should be “The Outer Boundary” and given legal protection.

Conclusion – whose interests are served by bauxite mining?

Senator Morgan concludes that the Government of Jamaica has to balance competing interests, and this is undeniable. But if history, heritage, geology, hydrology and biological diversity are all to be considered in deciding the boundary of Cockpit Country, the proposed CCPA boundary has not done that.

By leaving out the northeastern and south / southwestern sections, which are important for hydrology and history, and where mining and prospecting leases have already been issued, it is hard not to conclude that sections of the CCPA boundary have been drawn to satisfy already-contracted mining interests. We therefore call on the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) not to issue an environmental permit for bauxite mining in the area covered by SML 173, now the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

There are many different types of protection available to the Government of Jamaica under our laws. The people who live in these areas and who will bear the weight of the sacrifice mining requires have made it clear they do not want bauxite mining in their communities. This is an entirely legitimate position and we hope their voices will be heard.

Signed by:

Agencies

Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (CCAM)
Caribbean Women's Regional & Diasporan Network (CWRDN)
Cockpit Country Stakeholders Group (CCSG)
Jamaica Caves Organization (JCO)
Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (JCDDT)
Jamaica Environment Trust (JET)
Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ)
Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency (STEA)
Windsor Research Centre (WRC)
Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC)

Individuals

Peta-Anne Baker, PhD, social worker
Jeanette Calder, civil society advocate
Laura Facey Cooper, artist
Peter Espeut, environmentalist
Esther Figueroa, PhD, Vagabond Media
Lana Finikin, director, Sistren Theatre Collective
Jennifer Jones, social researcher
Wendy A. Lee, environmentalist

Horace Levy, civil society advocate
Diana McIntyre-Pike, Countrystyle Community Tourism Network
Prof Trevor Munroe, civil society advocate
Carol Narcisse, civil society activist
Andreas Oberli, plant conservationist
Andrea Richards, heritage consultant/archaeologist
Robert Stephens, sustainable development consultant
Ann Sutton, PhD, independent consultant/Birds Caribbean
Linnette Vassell, civil society advocate
Judith Wedderburn, civil society activist