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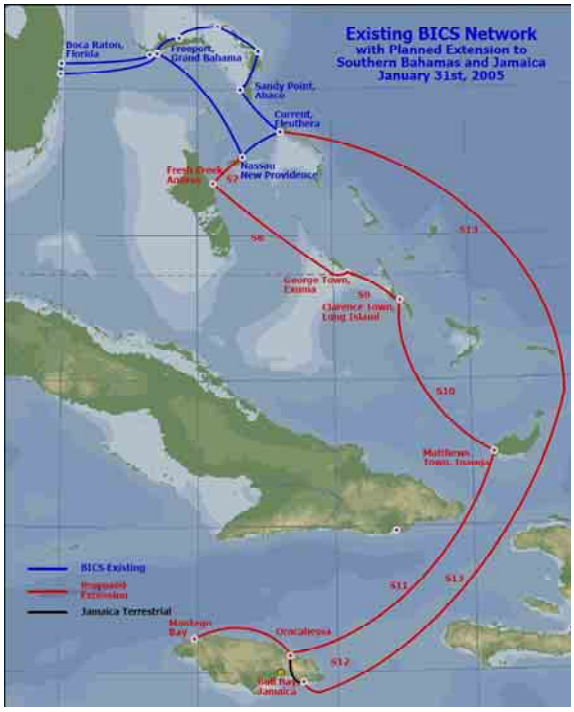

Environmental Impact Assessment for Establishment of a Fibre Optic Cable Network from the Bahamas to Jamaica

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Fibralink Jamaica is planning to expand their existing submarine fibre-optic network connection in the Bahamas to Jamaica.

This will provide a high-capacity fiber-optic connection between the United States (US) and Jamaica. The project will see an efficient communications system being put in place that improves on quality and reliability. The project is designed to minimize network contingencies such as potential data transmission disruptions due to network cuts and outages, and natural disasters such as hurricanes, as witnessed during Hurricane Ivan in September 2004.

The project will provide the first direct connection between the Bahamas and Jamaica, and supply the increasing demand for global voice and data transmission capability. The proposed fiber-optic project will add additional data transmission capability, increased suppliers and reduced costs, and supply the increasing demand for electronic communications (phone, facsimile, email, Internet).

The purpose of project is to employ marine cable installation technology to install a submarine fiber-optic cable between Jamaica and the Bahamas. The specific landing sites in Jamaica for the proposed project are as follows:

- Montego Bay, St. James
- Tower Isle, St. Mary
- Bull Bay, St. Thomas

The project will use state-of-the-art cable installation technology to provide for the maximum possible integrity and safety of the installed cable. The proposed work covered in this EIA involves:

- Explanations of the technology, routing and process of deployment of the cable
- The environmental setting and baseline for the proposed submarine cable expansion included studies, analyses and assessments on:
    - geomorphology
    - geology
    - water resources
    - terrestrial and marine ecology

- land use and aesthetics
- socio-economics
- community consultations
- archaeological and historical heritage resources
- air quality
- weather, noise, etc.

• Cable type, cable laying methods
• Solid and hazardous waste management practice.
• Routing of cables and associated risks of proposed actions
• Analysis of Alternatives
• Impact identification
• Impact mitigation
• Structural integrity testing of cable.

The potential negative environmental impacts of this study have been thoroughly addressed and our findings indicate that those potential impact identified maybe considered negligible and of short duration. These potentially negative impacts have been identified mainly during the construction phase of the project and with good project management can be sufficiently mitigated..

No new or unfamiliar major negative impacts or risks were identified. Additionally, several potentially beneficial impacts have been identified that can be realized from the implementation of this project.

The potential impacts identified for the pre-construction, construction and operating phases of the proposed project include:

Negative

• Minimal suspended solids during cable laying
• Minimal noise and vibration during construction
• Minimal aesthetics and transient change of land and marine use

Positive

• Improved broadband access by commissioning new connections
• Potential vast increase in investment revenue and job creation due to improvements in the telecommunications industry from this project.

- No loss of biodiversity
- No loss of archaeological and historical heritage resources.

Any negative impacts identified will be effectively mitigated using traditional and state of the art methods, as necessary.

Several government agencies were contacted as well as various public interests throughout the EIA process. This was done to present all parties with information on the project determined areas of potential conflict and to encourage open dialogue on this very important development project. Further, Fibralink has promised to provide the appropriate authorities with As-Laid positions and charts for notification to the appropriate mapping agencies in the island.

An environmental management plan will be incorporated as well as a monitoring protocol for all aspects from startup to operation.

Conclusion

The proposed expansion of the broadband network for Jamaica is planned to take place against a background of improvements in the quality of broadband connection, increases in connectivity in meeting the demand, decreases in cost for access to all, and the lessening of disruption due to accidents or natural disasters.

The potential impacts identified if realized will be mitigated using proven technologies. No new or unfamiliar environmental impacts or risks have been identified with the proposed project.

The proposed project represents a large investment in Jamaica and bears the potential for enormous macro and micro economic growth and development as well as social benefits to Jamaica.