

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY

HON. DARYL VAZ, M.P.

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

(LAND, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE &

INVESTMENT)

AT THE LAUNCH OF THE

INTEGRATING WATER, LAND, AND ECOSYSTEMS

MANAGEMENT

IN CARIBBEAN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2018 @ 11.00 A.M.

AT COUPLES, SWEEP AWAY IN NEGRIL

*Member of Parliament, Western Westmoreland, Dr. Wykeham McNeil

*Member of Parliament, Mr. Ian Hayles, Western Hanover

*His Worship the Mayor of Savanna-la-Mar, Councillor Bertel Moore

*Mr Peter Knight, CEO and Government Town Planner, NEPA

*Mr. Daniel Grizzle, Negril Chamber of Commerce

*Ms. Donna Sue Spencer, Global Environment Facility (GEF)-IWEco
Project

*Representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Authority
(NRCA) Advisory Board

*Representatives from Ministries, Agencies and Departments of
Government

*Staff from the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA)

*Stakeholders from the Negril Environment Protection Area

*Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

I am pleased to be here in beautiful Negril for the launch of this Integrating Water, Land, and Ecosystems Management Project launch. I can think of no better location for this launch and with good reason.

Negril continues to experience rapid development including the construction of hotels and housing projects. I am sure that you would have heard The Most Honourable Prime Minister's recent comments on Negril. The PM highlighted proposed infrastructure upgrading and works, particularly water supply and sewage treatment, to be implemented in the very near future.

We have to bear in mind that while development occurs, it is critical to ensure that the natural resources of Negril, and its biodiversity, are not impacted negatively and so the launch of this project is critically important.

Ladies and gentlemen, Jamaica continues to make significant investments in biodiversity conservation. Recognition has grown for the need and opportunities to mainstream environmental concerns and biodiversity conservation into the daily operations of biodiversity-dependent production sectors in Jamaica. Negril is no exception.

The biodiversity of the Negril Environmental Protection Area is threatened by human induced drainage of its wetlands, coastal development, unsustainable agricultural practices and the proliferation of informal settlements.

GOJ/NEPA in Negril

Negril has been a focus area for many years for the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) and National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), in terms of the built and natural environments.

The GOJ recognizes that for Negril and its community to develop, focus has to be placed on orderly development and conservation of the environment.

A recent Cabinet Decision mandated the development of a Master Plan for what is being called the ‘New Negril’ since the Cabinet has no intention of changing the dynamics of the ‘old’ Negril. In fact, NEPA is presently embarking on the preparation of a master plan for the built environment in the greater Negril area and its environs.

NEPA will undertake the work under the direction of the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, in keeping with Cabinet’s instruction to make the creation of a new Negril town a priority.

The activities were earlier presented at the “Let’s Talk Negril” town hall meeting. My instruction to NEPA’s CEO is to ensure comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders in developing the Master Plan.

If accepted by Cabinet, the Master Plan will ensure that development proceeds in such a way, so as to place Negril in a position to better compete with other tourist destinations in Jamaica and across the region, while better managing the natural resources of the area. As stakeholders you will be hearing more on this plan as preparations continue.

In the meantime, the Government through NEPA and other stakeholders has been very active in Negril and has undertaken a number of initiatives to shore-up and support preservation and conservation in the area. They include:-

- I. The establishment of a functional multi-stakeholder Marine Park Advisory Board (MPAB) in 2017, which provides advice and makes recommendations to the Natural Resources

- Conservation Authority regarding the effective and efficient management of marine parks.
- II. Other activities relevant to the management of the natural resources of Negril including the monitoring of beach erosion patterns, the status of the West Indian Whistling Duck, and the health of coral reefs which includes monitoring sea temperature and routine water quality monitoring,
 - III. Preparation and Gazetting in July 2018 of the Negril Marine Park Zoning Plan (2017-2022). The preparation of the Zoning Plan was finalized through stakeholder consultations and provides users of the marine park with information on the activities which are permitted and those which are not.
 - IV. Initiatives undertaken by NEPA in partnership with several agencies as well as the local municipal corporation and others to push-back on the disorderly development affecting the area

mainly due to squatting, illegal vending, encroachments in the marine park and along the beach, improper collection and disposal of garbage, among other interventions.

About the IWECO Project

The project we are launching today, **“Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Development States”** supports the overall plan of the Government for Negril and is another strategy of the Government, through NEPA.

It will require that all partners and stakeholders work harmoniously to implement activities within the project. Successful completion of the project will see tremendous value being added to Negril and its surrounding communities.

Importantly, among the activities proposed for Negril under the IWECO project are training opportunities for the community including farmers and the hotel sector.

The project will focus on the restoration of important elements of biodiversity within the Negril Great Morass and will impact hundreds of lives.

NEPA and several key stakeholders, from both the public and private sectors will be responsible for implementing the project. In fact, many of these stakeholders are here in the room today including:

- The Negril Chamber of Commerce
- Farmers Association
- Water Resources Authority
- Negril/Green Island Local Area Planning Authority
- Tourism Product Development Company Limited

- Hoteliers and other partners who will be responsible for implementing activities.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) over the years has been providing funding to support Jamaica's environmental conservation programmes. These grants have enabled us to mainstream biodiversity into the policy and planning process and productive sector of the island.

The IWECO project is regional with Jamaica being one of the seven countries which are implementing national projects aimed at the management of water, land and ecosystems at specific sites.

The focus of the National Project is the Negril Environment Protection Area (EPA) which was declared in 1997. The Negril EPA encompasses 406.7 sq. kms of coastal and marine ecosystems and makes up approximately six percent of Jamaica's 1022 km of coastline.

The duration of the project is for four years with completion slated for 2022. The total value of the project is US\$13million of which the GEF will provide US\$3.2 million; co-financing US\$10.3 million; and GOJ support US\$438,000.00.

Project Objective

The project is aimed at restoring the historical hydrological and other physical process of the Negril Great Morass; enhancing and re-establishing native vegetation communities to provide habitats for wetland fauna; eliminating conflicts that degrade ecosystem functions; and implementing institutional arrangements to ensure the long-term sustainability of wetland biological resources.

Through this project a number of long term impacts are expected including the management of the Negril EPA to ensure the conservation

and sustainable use of the Negril Great Morass as well as the livelihoods of the users of the resources;

It is also expected to reduce adverse wetland impact through implementation of best environmental practices; enhance the ability of stakeholders to effectively resolve land tenure-related conflicts; and also contribute to the sustainable access and use to the resources by the surrounding communities.

Ladies and gentlemen, I call upon every stakeholder in Negril to play their part in the success of this project. As such, along with the usual Project Steering Committee that will be established, a Negril Stakeholder Advisory Committee will also be set up.

NEPA, over the next few weeks, will be writing to the various stakeholder groups inviting them to nominate representatives. Your participation will make or break this project so let us all work together to make it a success.

It gives me great pleasure to now officially launch the National Sub-Project for Jamaica under the IWECO Project within the Negril Environmental Protection Area.

I look forward to seeing its progress and want to assure you that I personally stand ready to offer whatever support I can, so where there are challenges, we will meet them head on together.

Thank you. God bless you all.