

# NEWS RELEASE

## MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND MINING

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**Joint news release from the Ministry of Energy and Mining, Jamaica Environment Trust (JET), Windsor Research Centre and Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency (STEA)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 6, 2009**

### **Ministry of Energy and Mining Committed to working with Environmentalists**

The Ministry of Energy and Mining and representatives from Environmental Groups are describing as productive, a meeting hosted recently to discuss mining-related issues.

The meeting which was held on June 24 provided an opportunity for the environmentalists to give an overview of the Cockpit Country, especially its ecosystem services ('use values' such as water supply, carbon sequestration and climate regulation; 'indirect use values' such as tourism and 'non use values' such as geology, culture and bio-diversity).

They further stressed that the municipal and agricultural water supply for western Jamaica is dependent on the input of groundwater from Cockpit Country sources, which supplies 25% of Jamaica's surface water run-off and 40% of its exploitable groundwater.

The headwaters of a number of the island's major rivers are found within the Cockpit Country, including the Martha Brae, the Hector's River, Black River and the Rio Bueno.

The environmental groups also raised the issue of land reclamation and rehabilitation and pointed out that the 8 inches of soil currently being spread on hard-packed gravel, was not adequate for certain types of farming and would in any case be totally eroded within 200 years unless the industry incorporated different solutions, such as creating deeper pockets of soil for trees to be established.

Minister of Energy and Mining, James Robertson assured the environmentalists that the Ministry is open to new standards for land reclamation and to establishing pilot projects to investigate improved solutions. Continuing he emphasized the need for compromise and cooperation on environmental issues especially those relating to mining.

Meanwhile Minister Robertson informed the environmentalists that the issue of the Cockpit Country boundary will not be dragged out and a decision will be made in short order. He further disclosed that once a decision is made on the Cockpit Country boundary, it will be made available to the environmentalists and the general public for comment.

The Minister also asserted that the Government through its Draft National Energy Policy and related draft policies such as the Carbon Emissions Trading Policy is working to make Jamaica a carbon neutral country.

Minister Robertson requested a follow-up meeting for September 2009, where the environmentalists will propose solutions with supporting evidence of best

practices world wide, with respect to mining related issues such as land reclamation following mining activities.

It is anticipated that at the follow-up meeting, an Ecosystem Valuation of the Cockpit Country being undertaken by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) and the Windsor Research Centre would be introduced, in the expectation that this could assist the decision-making process of the Ministry's mining portfolio.

The meeting was also attended by State Minister Laurence Broderick, Permanent Secretary Marcia Forbes and other high level representatives from the Ministry, the Mines and Geology Division and the Jamaica Bauxite Institute.

The environmentalists were represented by Diana McCaulay, Jamaica Environment Trust, Mike Schwartz and Dr. Susan Koenig of Windsor Research Centre and Hugh Dixon from Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency.