

The National Forest Management and Conservation Plan 2016-2026

1. Attached for the information of the Houses is **The National Forest Management and Conservation Plan 2016-2026**.

2. **Background**

2.1 Cabinet by Decision No. 3/18, dated 22nd January 2018, approved The National Forest Management Conservation Plan 2016 – 2026 and its tabling in the Houses of Parliament.

2.2 Under Section 16 of the Forest Act (1996), the Conservator of Forests is required to, *inter alia*, prepare a draft National Forest Management and Conservation plan¹. The Act also specifies the elements of the Plan, including:

- (a) a statement of the forest resource management and conservation policy;
- (b) an inventory and description of forest lands;
- (c) provision for the protection, conservation and production of forest resources;
- (d) an outline of the economic objectives for the sustainable development of wood-based industries in Jamaica; and
- (e) proposals for implementation of the Plan²

2.2 The Forestry Department (FD) completed the first National Forest Management and Conservation Plan 2001-2010 in 2001 as per section 16 of the Forest Act.

2.3 The Forest Act also mandates that the National Forest Management and Conservation Plan (hereinafter referred to as “the Plan”) be reviewed, and where necessary, amendments made in accordance with section 18 of the Act. Any amendments to the Plan should be subject to: (i) stakeholder consultations, (ii) the approval of the Plan by the Minister and thereafter its tabling in both Houses of Parliament.³

2.4 A revised Plan has been prepared (Appendix I) with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Climate Economic Analysis for Development, Investment and Resilience (CEADIR) project.

2.5 The Plan has been developed with due consideration given to some key national instruments and policies, with an emphasis on achieving national sustainable development objectives, including:

- Vision 2030: Jamaica National Development Plan and its Medium Term socio-economic Policy Framework
- The Forest Policy for Jamaica (2017); and

¹ The Forest Act, 1996, Section 16 (1)

² The Forest Act, 1996, Section 16 (2)

³ The Forest Act, 1996, Section 18

- The Climate Change Policy Framework (2015)

Issues

3.1 Jamaica's forests cover an estimated forty per cent (40%) of the island's land mass. Jamaica's forest resources are essential for the provision of social, economic and environmental development. Forests and forest resources provide, food, timber, fuel wood, support livelihoods and provide ecosystem services. These ecosystem services include: soil conservation, water conservation and the protection of flora and fauna.

3.2 Compared with moist forests, tropical dry forests are considered globally as the most threatened ecosystem. There is also limited understanding of resilience to disturbance and this is critical to developing conservation and management strategies.⁴ Forests are also susceptible to the impacts of climate change; however, sustainable forest management can contribute to building climate resilience. It has been recognized that forests will play a significant role in climate change mitigation and it has been put forward that maintaining nature's capacity to buffer the impacts of climate change will be less costly and more efficient than the utilization of heavy infrastructural technology.⁵

3.4 Globally, deforestation and forest degradation account for approximately 17 per cent of carbon emissions.⁶ The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in 1992 agreed that there was great potential for the forest sector to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Following this acknowledgement, in 2005, the idea for REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) emerged. REDD+ is a mechanism developed by Parties to the UNFCCC. The Mechanism ascribes a financial value for the carbon stored in forests by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. Developing countries would receive results-based payments for results-based actions. REDD+ also includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. The guiding principles of REDD+ are that through more sustainable forest management practices, it is possible to:

- Reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions produced by the forest sector; and
- Enhance the capacity of the forest sector to act as a carbon sink, by storing and enhancing carbon in the five carbon pools (i.e. aboveground biomass, below ground biomass, soil organic carbon, litter and dead wood).

3.5 It should be noted that Jamaica is a Party to the UNFCCC and as such the Forestry Department is currently pursuing activities to become REDD+ ready.

⁴ Nion, M, McLaren K. P. and Meilby, H. et al. (2014) Long terms changes in above ground biomass in a neotropical dry forest, Hellshire Hills, Jamaica, *Plant Ecology*

⁵ Lucatelli, B and Pramova, E. Forests and Adaptation to Climate Change: What is at Stake? https://agritrop.cirad.fr/559387/1/document_559387.pdf

⁶ <http://www.unredd.net/about/what-is-redd-plus.html>

4. Analysis

4.1 The Plan addresses both national priorities for forests including conservation, protection and reforestation of forest ecosystems as well as the need for forests to be supportive of rural livelihoods and developed for recreational uses.

4.2 The goal of the Plan is to “Sustainably manage and utilise Jamaica’s forest resources to enhance social and economic development and contribute to building the country’s climate resilience.” Four Strategic Forest Management and Conservation Objectives are outlined in the Plan and are the main avenues for the achievement of the goal, namely:

1. Reverse forest degradation, deforestation and the loss of forest biodiversity, through conservation and sustainable forest management, as well as strengthening the legislative, policy and institutional framework of the sector;
2. Enhance economic, social and environmental benefits of forests through the sustainable utilisation of forest resources;
3. Build the capacity within the Forestry Department, its partners and forest communities to manage, protect and conserve the forest resources; and
4. Increase public education and awareness to protect, conserve, restore and manage Jamaica’s forests.

International Considerations

4.3 The Plan supports fulfillment of Jamaica’s obligations under various multilateral environmental agreements, to which it is a Party, as well as support the country’s efforts towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goals 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15. These include the United Nations Forum on Forests, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

4.4 Member States to the UNFF are committed to the principles outlined in the UN Forest Instrument (UNFI). The objectives of the UNFI include:

- Reversing the loss of forest cover through sustainable forest management
- Enhancing forest-based benefits including improving livelihoods
- Increasing the area of protected forests

The Plan focuses on sustainable forest management and includes activities aimed at reforestation, increasing capacity to manage forested areas, increasing the capacity of community groups through the provision of funding for the development of, inter alia, alternative livelihoods and conservation projects.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

4.5 The Plan supports the CBD's Aichi Targets⁷: 5 (reduce the rate of loss of natural habitats including forests and reduce degradation and fragmentation), 14 (restore and safeguard ecosystems that provide essential services related to water etc.) and 15 (enhance ecosystem resilience through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and combating desertification).

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

4.6 The Paris Agreement adopted in 2015 recognizes the important role that forests play in mitigating the impacts of climate change. Jamaica signed the Agreement in April 2016. Article 5 of the agreement "requires Parties to take action to conserve and enhance sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases, including forests."

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

4.8 The Plan supports SDG 15 which states as follows: "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. In addition, the Plan will support progress towards SDGs 6, 12, 13 and 14.

Financial arrangements for the management of the island's forests

4.9 Activities undertaken by the Forestry Department (FD) are supported primarily from annual government subventions and income earned from revenue generating activities undertaken by the FD. However, consistent funding is required for the management and conservation of the island's forests. A draft budget for the implementation of the Plan was developed through comprehensive costing of individual plan activities. The estimated minimum cost for implementing the Plan is approximately US\$11.8 million or J\$1.534 billion⁸. However, the financing of specific areas or activities within the Plan is still being negotiated with potential donors.

4.10 The Forestry Department has identified both local and international sources of funding and is developing the necessary financial strategies. In addition to the annual subventions from the Government of Jamaica, the Department has identified the following potential sources of financing for the Plan, namely:

Local

- National Housing Trust (NHT) - previous support received for activities aligned with the Plan

⁷ The Aichi Targets are a set of 20 global targets under the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 adopted by the tenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010.

⁸ At an estimated exchange rate of J\$130 to US\$1.

- Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) – previous support received for activities aligned with the Plan
- The Private Sector

International sources

- The 11th European Development Fund (EDF) (*New 2014-2020 programme for the development of ACP and overseas countries*). It should be noted that the approval of the NFCMP is one of the requirements for the finalization of the financial agreement between the Government of Jamaica and the European Union;
- Green Climate Fund (GCF) - Jamaica is currently preparing a Project Preparation Funding (PPF) application for REDD+ to the GCF. The current REDD+ application is centered on an integrated landscape management project with significant implication for Jamaica's forests. It is therefore expected that many of the activities outlined in the plan will be covered under the project;
- The 7th replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-7);and
- Overseas Development Assistance (e.g. USAID, EU, Global Forest Fund, International Climate Fund, etc.)

4.11 In addition, some already identified strategies to secure sustainable financing for the sector include:

- Promoting forest investments as engines for economic growth;
- Making forest investments and programmes compatible with REDD+ and other international mechanisms;
- Promote non-timber forest products as economically attractive investments; and
- Integrate Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) in the economics of forestry.

5. Consultations

5.1 The NFMCP 2016-2026 was developed over a period of approximately two and a half years through a series of stakeholder consultations. Public consultations on the draft NFMCP 2016-2026 were undertaken by the Forestry Department in February and March 2017. During this period, six public consultations were held in Mavis Bank, Port Antonio, Montego Bay, Clarke's Town, Chapelton and Kingston. The public was also able to access the document from websites of the Forestry Department and the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation or at public libraries.

5.2 The outcomes of these public consultations informed development of the Plan which was completed in September 2017.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Holness", written over a horizontal dotted line.

Andrew Holness, ON, MP

Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Growth and Job Creation

February 02, 2018