LBCC ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT – 2023 AGM

Debbie Sorrell, Nola Stair, Holly Minotti, Juliette Baker, George Savage

The purpose of this report is to highlight Negril's three different ecosystems and environment initiatives (at LBCC and in Negril) in which various members of the LBCC Environment Committee are involved.

Figure 1. Travellers' Philanthropy and Impact Tourism in Negril. (McFall, 2021)

To help combat overflowing landfill areas, reduce the amount of waste products, and assist with decreasing one's carbon footprint, recycling is a major way to keep the environment and ecosystem clean as well as preserve natural resources.

Recycling

Since 2021, LBCC has been part of the **Recycle Now Jamaica** initiative, in collaboration with Recycling Partners of Jamaica (RPJ), which provides weekly pickups at LBCC. Thanks to those homeowners who participate by rinsing/bagging their plastic bottles and depositing them in the 6x6x6 recycling bin located by the old LBCC guard house / current staff lounge.

If you don't recycle yet, consider designating a specific container in your home, where bottles can be collected and then bagged. However, **please do not throw individual gallon plastic bottles** in the green garbage bins around the community – as this is a burden to LBCC staff who must dig in the garbage bins to collect your plastic bottles. **Please be more considerate!**

Turtles Hatched

After a few years absence, it was wonderful to see turtles on the LBCC beach during nesting season. Did you know there are four different species of sea turtles in Jamaican waters? They are leatherback, green turtle, hawksbill and loggerhead. All are listed as either critically endangered or endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Many are not aware of the challenges which turtles face in their development and completion of their life cycles. **As a gentle reminder, please do not touch or disturb nesting sea turtles, hatchlings, or their nests.**

Sea Grass

Although seagrass makes up only 0.1% of the area of the ocean floor, it accounts for approximately 10-18% of the total oceanic carbon burial. The importance of the sea grass to turtles is food and it also acts as a medium for carbon sequestration to counteract climate change.

Sargassum

It's not just seaweed – it is sargassum that is being frequently washed ashore on the LBCC beach. According to the Mona Geoinformatics Institute at the University of the West Indies, Mona,'' sargassum is here to stay and it's likely to get worse''.

In addition to the unsightliness and smell, additional concerns include respiratory illnesses. Another major problem is that a lot of garbage gets trapped in the sargassum, which is then deposited onshore.

Coral Bleaching

The barrier reef in Negril has suffered a **serious bleaching episode this summer**, with substantial parts of the shallower reef showing large areas of white coral. You can see this if snorkelling in our bay.

Coral bleaching is the process when corals become white due to various stressors, such as changes in temperature, light, or nutrients, and with the hot summer experienced in Negril, our bleaching has been caused by ocean temperatures exceeding those at which the symbiotic relationship between the marine invertebrates (animal organisms that produce the coral "rock" as an exoskeleton) and the marine algae living inside them, can thrive. This can be as little as 1 degree Centigrade (2 degrees F) above normal and is increasingly caused by global warming.

Bleaching occurs when coral polyps expel the algae (zooxanthellae) that live inside their tissue, causing the coral to turn white. Bleached corals continue to live, but they are more vulnerable to disease and starvation. Zooxanthellae provide up to 90 percent of the coral's energy through photosynthesis, so corals are deprived of nutrients when zooxanthellae are expelled. Some corals recover if conditions return to normal, and some corals can feed themselves. However, the majority of coral without zooxanthellae starve.

The barrier reef in Negril is essential to protect the coast from storm damage and erosion of the sandy beaches.

Whilst we cannot directly do anything about the water temperature, we can help to regenerate the reef by supporting (including by financial donations) environmental projects such as the Orange Bay Coral Nursery. One of the Moonshot projects in the Bahamas is also seeing success in generating coral varieties that are more resistant to higher water temperatures, with funding, we could potentially use these to regenerate the Negril reef.

Photos taken by Sophie Britton

Planting Trees / Flowers – Norman Manley Boulevard

Kudos to Holly Minotti, who led the efforts to beautify the street medians along Norman Manley Boulevard in Negril. Her direction guiding other LBCC committee members, community volunteers as well as lending her expertise with plant selection was invaluable. Holly's contribution was recognized by the Negril Chamber of Commerce and Recycling Partners of Jamaica, who presented her with a special gift basket for her dedication and hard work!



Ways to get involved:

LBCC Environment Committee collaborates with the Stacy Ann Campbell, NEPA's regional environmental officer, who is based in Negril:

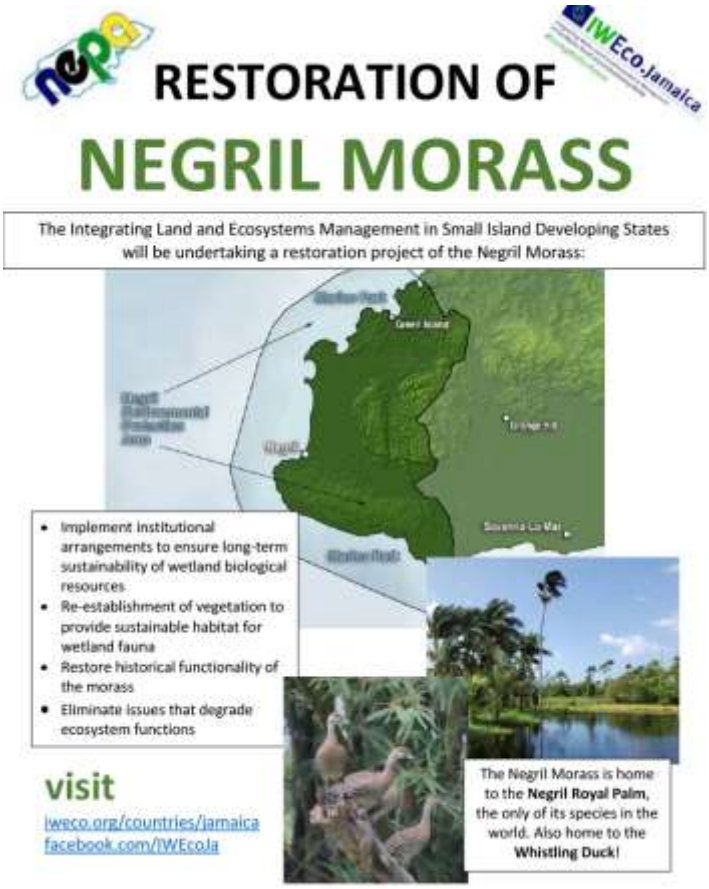
- **Word Wetlands Day –** In March 2023, Nola Stair and Debbie Sorrell were asked by the Negril NEPA office to judge the essay competition. Children from LBCC homes also participated in the event!
- **Nuh Dutty Up Negril** – In July 2023, members of the LBCC Environment Committee led the cleanup effort that covered the Negril Roundabout, areas of the Negril Fishing Village and parts of the Negril Community Center.

Did you know? Brief History of Negril Environment Protection Area (Negril EPA)

Negril, is distinguished by its white sand beaches, sea cliffs, limestone hills with endemic vegetation, and the Great Morass, which can be divided into four geographic regions:

1) White sand beaches, approx. 12 kms, separated by coral promontories
2) Negril Great Morass wetland is Jamaica's 2nd largest coastal wetland and one of the largest natural coastland ecosystems in Caribbean region, with internationally significant species endemism.
3) Limestone uplands, located north to south along eastern boundary of the Morass
4) Coralline limestone (Negril Hills), located south of the Norman Manley Boulevard beach.

At the core of this important EPA is the Negril Great Morass, which has been targeted for restoration efforts:



Did you notice that new fishing exclusion zone markers were finally deployed by NEPT?

To learn more and become involved with other exciting projects onboard for 2024, below are key contacts:

- Negril NEPA – Stacy Ann Campbell stacy-anncampbell@nepa.gov.jm
- Negril Environmental Protection Trust (NEPT) Reanne Mckenzie at negrilepa@gmail.com
- Negril Chamber of Commerce's Environmental Committee – info@negrilchamber.org