
REVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT SCOPING REPORT
OF THE PORTLAND BIGHT AREA (SIC)
INCLUSIVE OF THE GOAT ISLANDS
*Conducted by Conrad Douglas & Associates
for the Port Authority of Jamaica
Released October 16th, 2013*



Great Goat Island © International Iguana Foundation

REVIEW DONE BY:

BOTANICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

Amanda Neill, M.S., Director of the Herbarium, Primary Investigator of the Hellshire Hills and Goat Islands botanical survey for the Caribbean Wildlife Alliance (2012-2013)

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Background

The Government of Jamaica is engaged in negotiations with China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) to establish a large transshipment port in the Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA) in the vicinity of the Goat Islands. The GOJ contracted Conrad Douglas & Associates to carry out a scoping study to, *inter alia*, “identify the biologically sensitive features of the marine and terrestrial environment, their spatial distribution and the location of rare, threatened and endangered species in the Portland Bight and Ridge area and Goat Islands” (Page 1-2). The study was released on October 16th, 2013.

According to a statement made in Parliament by Dr. the Hon. Omar Davies, Minister of Transport and Works dated September 10th, 2013, the scoping study will guide the issues to be addressed by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and will inform the development of a Framework Agreement between the GOJ and CHEC, specifically the preliminary designs of the project. The Framework Agreement will then be submitted to Cabinet for a decision. Assuming the decision is to proceed, the project will then be submitted to the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) for the development of Terms of Reference for an EIA. The Minister’s full statement is attached at Appendix 1.

Given that the scoping study will inform Cabinet’s decision on this important matter, a group of stakeholders jointly reviewed the scoping study, entitled the Environmental Management Scoping Report (EMSR).

Summary Statement

The undersigned groups and individuals find the Environmental Management Scoping Report (EMSR) to be flawed in several respects. The EMSR:

- Is based on a cursory literature review, scant field observations and inadequate consultation with critical stakeholders
- Overstates the existing extent of industrial development in the PBPA
- Overstates environmental degradation of the Goat Islands from historical human activities and hence wrongly implies that the majority of the coastal environment is degraded
- Does not accurately list or describe the rare, threatened and endangered species and their spatial distribution in and dependence on the Portland Bight & Ridge area and the Goat Islands
- Concentrates too narrowly on the Goat Islands themselves, with insufficient assessment of the environmental characteristics of the adjacent coastline and mainland, the Bight as an integrated ecological system and the mainland (especially Hellshire Hills). This is especially important as many of these areas will be destroyed as part of the wider development
- Underestimates the number of fishers and their dependence on the PBPA for income and subsistence, and
- Proposes mitigation measures that are not feasible

The Environmental Management Scoping Report (EMSR) is therefore inadequate as a guide to decision makers.

The undersigned groups and individuals would like to emphasize the significant environmental assets of the Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA). *“The coastline includes the largest mangrove system in Jamaica (about 2/3 of all Jamaica’s mangroves, according to land use 1998) which together with extensive sea-grass beds and coral reefs, likely contains the largest nursery area for fish and shellfish on the island. The land area includes 81 square miles of dry limestone forests and 32 square miles of wetlands. These areas are of high conservation value due to the numbers of vulnerable and endemic*

species that live there. Overlooking Portland Bight are three tropical dry forests including the largest remaining area of intact dry limestone forest in Jamaica, where 271 plant species have been identified, including 53 that are endemic and found nowhere else on Earth. The PBPA is also home to 44 communities with a total of 50,000 human inhabitants. The area also contains the highest concentration of fishers in Jamaica (Government of Jamaica. 2012.)”.

The undersigned groups and individuals express their concern about the lack of information in the public domain as to the detailed investigations carried out to identify alternative sites for this port. We remind the Government of Jamaica of its legal commitments to this (and other protected areas), undertaken when the PBPA was protected under the NRCA Act, precisely because of its important natural resources.

Although the PBPA may not be “pristine” – very few such areas exist anywhere in the world – it does contain within its boundaries the very best of a variety of valuable ecosystems left in Jamaica.

We urge the Government of Jamaica to identify a more suitable location for this transshipment port.

Cursory Literature Review

The literature review conducted by the “team of experienced and highly qualified professionals,” and included in the Bibliography section (beginning on page V of the report) seems extraordinarily incomplete. A brief search of the scientific literature focusing on publications about the ecological and environmental characteristics of the Goat Islands and Portland Bight Protected Area found thirteen (13) references. A list of these is provided at Appendix 2. It is disconcerting that the EMSR does not include a single one of these references, and therefore, seems to be uninformed about critical information from scholarly sources. C-CAM’s bibliography for the PBPA includes >400 references, including those that have been commissioned to support planning and conservation in the area. In fact, the majority of the materials in the Bibliography seem to be from EIAs and other government publications generated by consultants in support of development projects in the PBPA.

Scant field observations

The “limited terrestrial and marine field investigations” were VERY limited indeed. They were limited geographically to the Goat Islands and temporally to a short period. They cannot, therefore, be expected to make a useful contribution to the analysis and the reported results are misleading.

In the case of the terrestrial investigations, this seems to have consisted mainly of short walks around the perimeter of Little and Great Goat Islands. Field assessment of the avifauna and herpetofauna was unnecessary given the extensive information that is available from a variety of sources.

The marine field assessments were similarly flawed. For example, drogue studies (to assess currents) were carried out for a few hours, on one day, in the immediate vicinity of the Goat Islands. Current patterns vary with season, tides and prevailing winds. Thus the assessment of currents on one day is meaningless and should not have been presented. Collecting data from the Goat Islands vicinity alone is insufficient to address issues related to the area likely to be impacted. The video transects suffered from similar incompleteness. The analysis showed a lack of ecological understanding, with a naturally occurring component of the highly productive ecosystem in Galleon Harbour (benthic muds) being wrongly identified as if it were a liability because of the presence of hydrogen sulphide – a natural product of organic processes and nutrient cycling in all wetland ecosystems. There were many omissions from the analysis of Galleon Harbour, including its critical importance as a fish nursery (which was the reason why it was selected as a Special Fisheries Conservation Area by the fishers and experts)

and its regular use by manatees, turtles, sting rays, crocodiles and West Indian whistling ducks. There was no sampling survey or literature assessment related to the fishable resources. The marine surveys omitted sandy and muddy bottoms as an important ecosystem type. These areas are highly productive, especially for marine invertebrates, which are foundation species in marine food chains.

Lack of consultation with critical stakeholders

The team of consultants who conducted the EMSR did not contact the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (C-CAM), the managers of the PBPA, the land owners/managers including the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), the Forestry Department (which has responsibility for the forested Crown Lands and Forest Reserves in the area), the managers of the Galleon Harbour SFCA (C-CAM) on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Fisheries Division or either of the two scientists at the University of the West Indies (UWI) carrying out field work in the area. C-CAM has extensive knowledge of the PBPA, has worked for decades with fishers and other members of the community and ought to have been an important resource for the consultants. C-CAM and the Caribbean Wildlife Alliance have contracted recent botanical surveys and other ecological surveys (including a climate change risk assessment) of Portland Ridge, the Hellshire Hills, and the Goat Islands, performed by an international group of highly qualified biologists. The reports from this work have been compiled by C-CAM and would have been extremely valuable additions to the EMSR, had C-CAM been approached to provide them. Prof. Byron Wilson is an acknowledged expert on the herpetofauna of the PBPA, and has served as Head of the Jamaican Iguana Recovery Group for 10 years. In addition to re-discovering the blue-tailed galliwasp (*Celestus duquesneyi*) in 1997, he has conducted crocodile and sea turtle research in the area. Dr. Kurt McLaren is a forest ecologist and has extensive knowledge of the forests of the Hellshire Hills and is an expert in landscape ecology - the impact of different land use types/development on natural ecosystems, biodiversity and ecological processes at different spatial scales.

Overstates the existing extent of industrial development in the PBPA

The EMSR gives the misleading impression that the coastline of the PBPA is already substantially industrialized. This is not the case. The PBPA has the longest contiguous mangrove coastline in Jamaica. The length of coastline occupied by developments and villages is minor, compared to the extensive undisturbed coastline. Exact figures are not available but a preliminary assessment using a simplified coastline (excluding small bays, cays and islets) suggests that 95% of the PBPA coastline is in its natural state of wetland, cliffs or sandy beaches and is therefore ecologically functional. Most of the developments listed in the EMSR are not coastal and none are located on the islands and cays of Portland Bight. While there are certainly industrial and commercial applications in the PBPA and 50,000 people live there, most have quite small footprints. The Tarentum Industrial Zone, for instance, is a very small cluster of commercial, small industrial facilities well inland of a very wide mangrove buffer.

Overstates environmental degradation of the Goat Islands

The EMSR states that the Goat Islands “have experienced anthropogenic intrusion (human activity) from Pre Columbian times. During World War II, Little Goat Island was developed as a United States of America Naval Station under the ‘destroyers for land exchange’ between Great Britain and the United States of America (pages 5 & 46)”. But World War II ended nearly 70 years ago and while there are still remnants of the Naval Station on Little Goat Island, significant re-growth of vegetation has occurred. In the case of Great Goat Island, the implication is that Taino settlements in the 15th century were the “anthropogenic intrusion!” Great Goat Island today shows minimal evidence of past human activities and has recovered from grazing since the removal of the goats. Furthermore, Great Goat Island contains surprisingly high quality intact dry forest, very similar to that found in the Hellshire Hills (HH), and has

long been identified as the ideal site for establishing a reserve for the Critically Endangered Jamaican iguana (*Cyclura collei*) and other threatened endemic species (e.g., Jamaican boa, Jamaican hutia, Jamaican skink, and blue-tailed galliwasp. The plan to eradicate invasive alien species (goats, cats, and mongooses) and reintroduce the iguana appears in NEPA's National Strategy and Action Plan on Biodiversity in Jamaica.

Rare, threatened and endangered species

The lists and descriptions of rare, threatened and endangered species are full of errors.

The conservation status "critical threatened" and "Vulnerable Threatened" (pages 93 and Appendix 3, e.g.) do not exist. The official threat categories of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species are: Extinct (EX); Extinct in the wild (EW); Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU); Near Threatened (NT); Least Concern (LC); Data Deficient (DD) and Not Evaluated (NE). The three underlined categories (CR, EN and VU) are considered "Threatened". Use of these terms is inconsistent and incomplete in the EMSR, for example, the status for the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) is not noted and is Endangered (page XXXIV).

The EMSR states: "Twenty-one (21) rare, threatened and endangered species of plants and animals occur in the PBPA (Page 8)". This number is a gross underestimate. Recent reports provided to C-CAM for contemporary biological surveys performed in Portland Ridge, the Hellshire Hills, and the Goat Islands provide further evidence of the high rate of species endemism in the PBPA, and have documented at least 51 plant species endemic to Jamaica (Neill 2013; Oberli 2012).

Animals

The EMSR states: "It has been reported that there are signs that the Jamaican Hutia, or coney, which was thought to be extinct, may exist on the mainland (Page 89)." In fact, Hellshire is well known as harbouring a healthy population of Jamaican hutia (*Geocapromys brownii*) – Jamaica's only surviving endemic land mammal. No recent status surveys have been done, but the consensus of scientists who have worked in the area is that the Hellshire population is one of the healthiest in Jamaica.

The EMSR does not mention the regionally threatened West Indian whistling duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*), although the PBPA is one of its most important remaining habitats in Jamaica.

The bird list for the Goat Islands survey contains only six species. Two of the named six species do not exist. There is no such thing as a 'Grey heron' or a 'White Giant Heron', and unlike other taxonomic groups (e.g., reptiles), so-called common names are established usage for birds.

The EMSR lists seven endemic birds, but misses others, including the Jamaican owl (*Pseudoscops grammicus*), the Jamaican lizard Cuckoo (*Saurothera vetula*), the red-billed Streamertail (*Trochilus polytmus*), and the Jamaican poorwill (*Siphonorhis brewsteri*). The Jamaican poorwill is IUCN Red Listed as Critically Endangered but is likely to be extinct; nevertheless, the PBPA is the only habitat where this species could be persisting, so like the iguana, it could ultimately be re-discovered in the PBPA. In addition, the yellow-billed parrot (*Amazona collaria*) has been recorded in Hellshire.

What is a 'Dwarf snake'? There is no such common name for any Jamaican species. Assumed to be confused with 'dwarf boa' (Page 93 – Table 12).

The IUCN Endangered green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) is not listed; hence one of the four species of marine turtle occurring in the PBPA does not appear on the species list.

The ESMR misses ten endemic reptiles (three anole lizards (*Anolis lineatopus*, *A. opalinus*, and *A. valencienni*), two snakes (*Hypsirhynchus callilaemus* and *Typhlops jamaicensis*), two poly lizards (*Sphaerodactylus goniorhynchus* and *S. parkeri*), the Jamaican ground lizard (*Ameiva dorsalis*), the Vulnerable (V) Jamaican slider turtle (*Trachemys terrapen*), and the Jamaican galliwasp (*Celestus cruscus*). The ESMR does not list the endemic Gosse's frog (*Eleutherodactylus gossei*). Overall, the ESMR missed around half of the endemic vertebrate species occurring in the PBPA

The ESMR also presented incorrect information on the Jamaican Fig-eating bat (*Ariteus flavescens*) (Page 93 – Table 12). While the species is endemic to Jamaica, it is not, as noted by the ESMR, endemic (i.e., restricted entirely) to Portland Ridge. The ESMR also failed to do a simple search of the published registry of Jamaican Caves (Fincham 1997) to present information on bats which occur throughout the PBPA.

The woeful inability to present accurate species lists merely emphasizes the substandard quality of the ESMR; a fundamental understanding of ecological processes and the spatial and temporal relationships necessary for maintaining connectivity and, ultimately, viable ecosystems is not demonstrated in this document. Further, in the absence of accurate data, it is impossible to correctly identify and value the ecosystem services currently provided by PBPA, against which to compare the effects of the proposed trans-shipment hub.

Plants

The EMSR incorrectly states that fifteen (15) species of plants endemic to Jamaica are found in the PBPA (Page 6) and goes on to contradict itself with another incorrect statement that only fourteen (14) endemic plant species occur in the PBPA (Table 10, Page 91). On the preceding page, however, in a further contradiction, the EMSR quotes a Jamaica *Gleaner* article, which was referencing the *Hellshire Hills Scientific Survey* (Woodley 1971), and states that 271 plant species are found in the region, including 53 endemic species found in Jamaica (and the Caymans). The EMSR's accounts of the endemic plant species of the region are incorrect and contradictory.

A 2012-2013 survey of the plants of Hellshire Hills (HH), including the Goat Islands, performed by a multinational team of botanists vouchered records for 376 species of plants in the area (Neill 2013). Of these, 229 species had already been reported by Woodley (1971). This project collected 147 species not previously published as occurring in HH, and the two species lists were combined to obtain a total of 418 plant species. These include new records of weeds (generally from coastal habitats) as well as endemic and IUCN Red List Endangered species not previously recorded for HH, including *Swietenia mahagoni* (West Indian mahogany) and *Bursera hollickii* (grey birch).

The combined plant species lists for HH and the Goat Islands include 17 species of conservation concern from the IUCN Red List: eight (8) Near-Threatened, three (3) Vulnerable, five (5) Endangered, and one (1) Critically Endangered. The combined species lists for HH and the Goat Islands include 47 plant species endemic to Jamaica.

The Goat Islands are adjacent to HH and are more floristically similar to HH than they are to the more distant Portland Ridge section of the PBPA. In any case, recent botanical surveys of Portland Ridge, commissioned by C-CAM, reported 189 plant species there, including 19 species endemic to Jamaica

(Oberli 2012). Four of these endemics have not been reported for HH, bringing the total number of endemic plants in the PBPA to at least 51. Additional exploration of the PBPA is likely to reveal even more endemic species. Reports of both these surveys were provided to C-CAM and should have been referenced by the EMSR.

Table 10 of the EMSR (page 91) provides the inexplicably low number of fourteen (14) endemic Jamaican plant species occurring in the PBPA, and lists these. Thirteen (13) of the species on the list are endemic to Jamaica although in most cases they are represented as belonging to plant families they do not belong to. *Agave sobolifera* is in the Agavaceae, not the palm family Arecaceae. Neither *Hylocereus triangularis* (Cactaceae) nor *Calliandra pilosa* (Fabaceae) are related at all to the family Burseraceae. *Ziziphus sarcomphalus* is in the Rhamnaceae, not the Piperaceae family. *Brunfelsia membranacea* is in the Solanaceae, not the Sapotaceae family. Furthermore, *Esenbeckia pentaphylla* is not endemic to Jamaica and has not been reported from the PBPA. These examples make it clear that the EMSR did not receive any input from knowledgeable biologists in the creation of this list. Table 10 (page 91), which lists “all” of the endemic plants neglected to include thirty-eight (38) endemic plants from the area.

There are further errors in the plates in Appendix Three, on pages XXX-XXXII, with photos supposedly representing the same strange, small listing provided in Table 10. Plate 21 is not of *Galactia pendula* at all, or any legume relative, or anything even similar in appearance to *Galactia*, but is a photo of a member of the *Geranium* family from what appears to be a gardening website in France! Plate 23, uncited but supposedly representing the tree *Bumelia rotundifolia* is in fact a photo of a herbaceous temperate member of the carrot family. Plate 25 is not of *Esenbeckia* (which is not endemic anyway) but is a photo of an orange tree. Plate 26 is not of a *Bursera* at all, but is a photo of a North American birch tree (*Betula*). Plate 30 is not of *Calliandra pilosa*, but is *Calliandra foliolosa* from South America. And finally, Plate 34's citation makes it obvious that this is a photo of the cultivated plant *Brunfelsia uniflora*, not *Brunfelsia membranacea*. These plates were clearly produced by someone without any botanical knowledge, and furthermore without any knowledge of how to interpret the results of a Google image search. The pretension of this document to represent anything factual about the plants of the PBPA cannot be taken seriously and is of absolutely no use to a decision maker.

Narrow focus on the Goat Islands

The proposed development will abut, if not encroach on, the Hellshire Hills (HH). The HH is the last remaining near-pristine dry forest in Jamaica, the Caribbean and possibly in Central and South America. Some trees in the HH are estimated to be over 500 years old. HH is also the last remaining habitat for the Jamaican iguana (*Cyclura collei*) that is listed as one of the 100 most threatened (with extinction) species in the world (Baillie & Butcher 2012). The impact of development on the eastern and northern sides is already being felt close to the core forest which is home to the iguana. This proposed project will now open up a third front on the western side. If this development proceeds, the HH will likely be devastated and this will result in the certain extinction of the iguana and other endemic animals and plants.

Underestimates the number of fishers and their dependence on the PBPA for income and subsistence

The EMSR cites the Fisheries Division's data on licensed fishers. C-CAM has been working with the fishers for many years and has learned that many fishers are not licensed, especially the spear fishermen. Dependence on fisheries is not limited to fishers, but includes vendors, scalers and those involved in boat and equipment maintenance. Many families depend on marine sources of protein as an important source of high value nutrition in an otherwise poor diet. Contrary to the EMSR's statements,

(Page 7), many fishers are still active in the area. This statement is based on catch and effort surveys, information from the Portland Bight Fisheries Management Council and personal observation by the C-CAM employees. We believe the figure quoted of 2,585 fishers (Page 123) is for Old Harbour Bay and Rocky Point alone – there are other fishing beaches in the PBPA – but even for these beaches the numbers are an underestimate.

Some proposed mitigation measures not feasible nor demonstrated to be valid

The ESMR proposes mitigation measures to address the potential environmental impacts and to possibly “enhance” the existing environmental conditions. These include the creation of an alternative fish sanctuary, relocation and replanting of disturbed areas of mangrove and sea grass and the development of a habitat within the PBPA for the species that may need to be relocated. This suggestion is being reported by the media and was quoted by Dr. the Hon. Omar Davies in his address to Parliament. Some of the mitigation measures outlined are difficult or impossible to achieve, such as replanting an area equivalent to 20% of the mangroves found in Jamaica. Another suggestion is to develop “a habitat within the PBPA for species that may need to be relocated”. To the best of our knowledge, this has not been done anywhere else in the world, especially after removing the primary habitat of forest-dependent species.

November 18th, 2013

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**Government of Jamaica
Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing**

*Statement
by
Dr. the Hon. Omar Davies, MP
Minister of Transport, Works and Housing*

**THE PROPOSED CHINESE INVESTMENT IN THE PORTLAND
BIGHT PROTECTED AREA**

Tuesday, 10th September 2013

Appendix 1

**STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT
PRESENTED BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS AND
HOUSING CONCERNING THE PROPOSED CHINESE INVESTMENT IN THE
PORTLAND BIGHT PROTECTED AREA**

Tuesday, 10th September 2013

- (1) Mr. Speaker, you would have been aware of the concerns raised through the various public media and other fora about potential environmental risks to the proposed Chinese investment in the Goat Islands and greater Portland Bight Protected Area. Indeed, the Cabinet and the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing have been giving consideration to these issues and have been engaging stakeholders towards ensuring that any decision to proceed is based on a factual assessment of the associated risks and implementation of any required mitigation and protection mechanisms.
- (2) Mr Speaker, it is therefore important that I use this opportunity to steer the discourse away from much of the controversy, wild assertions and baseless speculation that have been taking place in the public sphere.
- (3) Upon assuming office in January 2012, this Administration inherited a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Port Authority of Jamaica and the China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC), under which CHEC would carry out investigations to determine whether they would enter in to a definitive agreement for the development of Fort Augusta as a trans-shipment port.
- (4) You will recall that, in her 2013/2014 Budget Presentation, the Most Honourable Prime Minister informed this Honourable House and the country of the fact that CHEC, having completed its analysis of the Fort Augusta location, came to the conclusion that it did not sufficiently qualify for such a development, partly because the scope and nature of their proposed project had expanded in the ensuing period. Consequently, CHEC sought the GOJ's agreement to an ADDENDUM to the MOU which would allow extra time for assessing alternative locations.

- (5) Having been advised of the changing situation, the Cabinet on April 21, 2013 approved an Addendum to the existing MOU between the Port Authority and CHEC to allow the investors to undertake the necessary feasibility studies/due diligence of the project. This would include consideration of the technical, financial and environmental factors, to facilitate the refinement of a final proposal that would be submitted to the Government of Jamaica. The period of assessment is one year and is expected to be completed by the end of April 2014. At that time a decision will be made as to whether to proceed to a conclusive agreement, providing that all social, developmental and environmental issues have been addressed and the requisite regulatory permits are in place.
- (6) Whilst this assessment is being carried out, officials of the GOJ, in particular those from the Port Authority, have remained in constant dialogue with CHEC. It is through this interaction that the GOJ was informed that CHEC's first choice for the development was Goat Island and lands to the north on the mainland.
- (7) I have instructed the Port Authority to continue its assessment and monitoring of the proposed project area to undertake detailed environmental and feasibility studies, and to offer effective guidance to the Chinese investors about the required development processes and approvals which must be followed or attained, before any final proposal is put to the Cabinet for consideration.
- (8) In this regard the Port Authority has commissioned an Environmental Management Scoping Project to identify precisely the levels of interest in Portland Bight and the principal bio-physical and socio-cultural characteristics.
- (9) Among the objectives of this study are:
- Determining the geographic boundaries of the Portland Bight Protected Area
 - Conducting archival research on the historical use of the area
 - Identifying applicable international and national environmental policies, legislation, regulations and standards for the area

- Identifying the biologically sensitive features of the marine and terrestrial environment
 - Determining the location of rare, threatened and endangered species and their spatial distribution in the Portland Bight and Ridge Area and the Goat Islands
 - Identifying the boundaries of fish sanctuaries
- (10) When the Environmental Scoping Project is completed, the data from it will be used to inform the composition of the terms of reference for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that will be undertaken.
- (11) Mr Speaker, when development is proposed in or near to rich environmental areas, it is expected that concerns will be raised. However, given the present stage of the process that we are in, some of the statements that have been made and the resulting opinions and positions taken, are premature. Still, such public discourse is a healthy part of how we, as a nation, move forward on important issues.
- (12) Mr Speaker, this Administration is very aware of the need to protect the environment to the greatest extent possible. However, our definition of the environment involves human beings and so, even as we are concerned about the flora and fauna of the natural habitat, we are also concerned about the socio-economic advancement of the human population.
- (13) This proposed investment of approximately US\$1.5 billion would, represent a key development milestone and could have a significant positive impact on the country's development agenda. Although we are bound by the terms of the MOU whilst the feasibility studies are being undertaken, we are also aware that in the absence of some information about the project, it is easy for speculation and suspicion to be cultured. Therefore, it is important that we allow the process to take its course and await the findings from the Port Authority and CHEC so that all issues could be put to proper assessment and determination.
- (14) Mr. Speaker, at the base of everything, a critical issue is how to pursue economic and physical development whilst ensuring equitable social returns and the protection of the

natural environment.

This Government is cognizant of the nuances that exist in achieving this balance, but we are resolute in our commitment to achieving same and to fostering the environment where stakeholders can be a part of the decision-making process.

- (15) At the same time, we must all bear in mind the country's current economic and social challenges and the urgency with which we need to secure investment for the sustainable future for all Jamaicans. In that context, we believe that, as an Administration, we would be irresponsible were we to simply refuse to explore the possible benefits of an investment which would simultaneously create significant employment and expand the economy. At the same time, we invite those who have already taken a position in opposition to the project to place in the public domain some alternatives which would simultaneously protect the natural environment and assist the population.
- (16) Mr Speaker, before closing, let me take the opportunity to provide to Parliament and the nation a progress report on the proposed Public/Private Partnership for the expansion and modernization of the Kingston Container Terminal (KCT).
- (17) The KCT privatization is proceeding apace. Three companies have been shortlisted and will be invited to respond to a Request for Proposal. It is anticipated that a Concessionaire will be selected before or by the end of the first quarter of 2014.
- (18) The dredging of the Kingston Harbour Access Channel is a critical component of the expansion and modernization of the KCT. The objective is to increase the access channel depth from 14 metres to 17 metres to accommodate 14,500 TEU container vessels which will traverse the Panama Canal upon completion of its expansion. This project is now expected to be completed in 2016.
- (19) The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and will be submitted to NEPA before the end of this month.

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- (20) A Geotechnical Investigation is currently in progress to determine the quality of the material to be dredged. This information will be included in the tender documents which will be made available to the companies which have pre-qualified. The dredging works are on schedule to be implemented between April 2014 and July 2015.

Appendix 2 - List of peer reviewed scientific references on the ecological and environmental characteristics of the Portland Bight Protected Area

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- (3) Davis, Suzanne Mae Camille. (2010). Rethinking Biodiversity Conservation Effectiveness and Evaluation in the National Protected Areas Systems of Tropical Islands: The Case of Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive), Paper 1097. Wilfred Laurier University, Canada. Pp. 702.
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