

Press Release



Thursday, July 31, 2014

RE: Public Consultation on EIA for Negril Breakwater Project held on Tuesday July 29, at 3:30 pm at the Negril Community Centre

For many years, Negril has been suffering from beach erosion and the community has been asking for assistance from the Government in combating this problem. While numerous studies and reports have been done, showcasing the best methods of addressing the issues, very little has been accomplished by the relevant authorities.

In 2012, the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), National Environmental Planning Agency (NEPA) and the National Works Agency (NWA) put together a plan and applied to the United Nations Adaptation Fund, for a grant of US\$10 million dollars. Almost half of this grant was earmarked for a breakwater project for Negril. Breakwaters were a component of an integrated solution offered to the community; however the first option was always beach nourishment and addressing the water quality problems associated with the Greater Negril Morass.

The stakeholders only learnt of this plan in February 2014 and were not satisfied with many aspects of it. Thus in April 2014, they held a press conference and aired their views. Subsequently, the PIOJ has admitted that their consultation was clearly inadequate and NEPA has pointed out the project has not yet been approved.

Based on the media coverage and public outcry, the NWA ensured that they held this public consultation, giving ample notice and sending out numerous invitations to the community, as is required.

There was a large turnout for the Public Consultation meeting, which was somewhat disorganized and started 50 minutes late.

Just over 80 persons from the Negril community, wearing T-shirts with the slogan "Nuh Destroy Jah Land with Yu Breakwater Plan" emblazoned across the front, were present. Also present were members of NEPA, PIOJ, NWA, CEAC Solutions and CL Environmental. Diana McCaulay, CEO of Jamaica Environment Trust was also there.

After the introductions, the presentations started. These were on:

- the design process,
- the EIA findings,
- and measures to minimize the impacts,
- and a response to the environmental and engineering issues raised in the media by stakeholders of Negril.

It was noted that the presentations covered the benefits of breakwaters however;

Ms. McCaulay ensured that the negative environmental impacts were discussed. CEAC Solutions opted to only highlight the negative impacts of beach nourishment, ignoring the many benefits of this approach. Beach nourishment is what the community has been asking for to assist with the erosion problem in Negril. While this soft engineering solution poses some negative impacts, they are far less than putting in place two large rubble mound breakwater structures.

A questions and answer period followed. This segment was lively and heated at times, and the community members came prepared with informed and relevant questions. Persons showed their appreciation of statements and questions with outbursts of cheering and applause while others were told to sit down and keep quiet.

The majority of the questions were not fully answered by the consultants and some were quite condescending in their replies. This did not rest well with the audience.

At approximately 8:00 pm the chairperson said he had to end the meeting, as it was late. This was met with loud disapproval, as many had not yet been able to ask their questions.

Persons were reminded that they could write to NEPA and had 30 days in which to do so.

The meeting closed with the singing of the National Anthem.

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