

Ministry Paper/2015

Report on activities in furtherance of the proper management of the Pedro Cays

1.0 Purpose

The matter for Tabling is an update on activities in furtherance of the proper management of the Pedro Cays.

2.0 Background

The Pedro Bank is a large offshore bank (8,040 km²) located south of mainland Jamaica. It is the most important fishing ground in Jamaican where queen conch and spiny lobsters are harvested for export. A significant proportion of finfish for local consumption is also caught on the Pedro Bank.

The Pedro Cays have been used as a base by fishers since the 1950s. Fishers are authorized to operate from only two (i.e., the North East and Middle Cays) of the four cays on the Pedro Bank through a licence issued under the Morant and Pedro Cays Act. Fishers are not allowed to operate from the Southwest Cay, the largest of the four cays. Further protection has been afforded to the Southwest Cay with the establishment in May 2012, of the Southwest Cay Special Fishery Conservation Area. This marine protected area completely surrounds the Southwest Cay and prohibits fishing within an approximate radius of 1 kilometre around the Cay.

There are several longstanding problems affecting the Pedro Cays. Among these problems are inadequate management of human excreta and solid waste (a situation made worse by unauthorized persons operating illegally from the Cays). Reports suggest that in the past unauthorized persons may exceed up to three times the number of licensed fishers in some cases. Remoteness, small size, geology, lack of adequate infrastructure and resources are among the several issues that have contributed to the problems.

In order to address the harsh living conditions on the Cays, especially with respect to the poor solid and human waste management situation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries embarked on several initiatives. These initiatives include:

- (a) The implementation of a solid waste removal strategy;

(b) The development and implementation of a suitable human excreta management strategy;

(c) Assessment and enhancement where necessary of a system to control the population density on the Cays; and

(d) Scientific assessments to determine among other things, the number of persons that can be allowed to operate from the Pedro Cays without irreversibly compromising their fragile ecosystem.

This Ministry Paper outlines the progress made by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' in terms of the initiatives implemented which are aimed at ensuring the proper management of the Pedro Cays for the 2014 – 2015 financial year.

I. Allocation and Expenditure to Date

As at April 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries through the budget of the Fisheries Division and the Fisheries Management and Development Fund (FMDF) has allocated a total of **\$34,535,897** towards the management of the Pedro Cays. Of the total allocation, **\$16,367,552** has been spent to date with **\$14,139,741** expended during the 2014 -2015 financial year.

II. Solid Waste Management

To date a total of **\$17,609,680** has been earmarked for solid waste management on the Pedro Cays. Of this total, **\$16,666,524** was spent for the removal of solid waste from the Pedro Cays to date and **\$10,000,000** has been expended during the 2014 – 2015 financial year.

Attempts at establishing a proper solid waste removal system for the Pedro Cays has met with limited success despite adequate funds being available. The National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) for a number of reasons was unable to sustain solid waste removal at the frequency required. Currently, the frequency of solid waste removal from the Pedro Cays range from once per month to once every 6 to 8 weeks. This unacceptable situation is believed to be one of the main contributing factors for the recent Enforcement Notice served on the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Commissioner of Lands.

In the interim, in order to immediately address this situation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, through the FMDF, will seek to procure the services of a suitable private contractor to remove the solid waste from the Pedro Cays at the frequency required. This interim arrangement will be constantly assessed to determine if it should be continued or if another suitable arrangement should be developed and implemented.

III. Human Excreta Management

It was recognized that two critical factors determine the most suitable human excreta management system for the Pedro Cays. These factors are: (1) the most appropriate sanitary system given the conditions of the Cays (e.g., lack of water, high water table, etc.); and (2) the number of persons the system would be catering for.

As a result of extensive consultation with key stakeholders (e.g., Ministry of Health, Scientific Research Council (SRC) and National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA)) it was determined that the best system for human excreta management on the Pedro Cays is the Ventilated Improved Double Pit Latrine (VIPD).

Further, based on the socioeconomic census and carrying capacity study conducted by the University of the West Indies (UWI) in February 2014 it was determined that the maximum population density shall not exceed 200 persons per Cay. Using these maximum densities it was determined that 10 VIPDs per Cay would be adequate.

Through the Fisheries Management and Development Fund (FMDF) **\$20,000,000** has been allocated to install 10 VIDPs on each Cay. Installation of VIDPs is scheduled to commence by mid-June, 2015 and it is expected that all 20 VIDPs will be installed by the end of September 2015.

IV. Enforcement

Two key enforcement entities have a permanent presence on the Pedro Cays. These are the JDF Coast Guard and the Marine Police. The other enforcement partners, the Fisheries Division and NGOs (that is, the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) and the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (CCAM)) have temporary presence that may range from a few days to up to 2 weeks depending on the objective of the operation.

In order to ensure an acceptable level of compliance, enforcement activities on the Pedro Cays have been significantly increased. Among other things, the enforcement team has been bolstered with increased frequency of presence of officers from the Fisheries Division. Two officers from the Fisheries Division will be present on the Cays for 8 consecutive days every quarter. In addition, arrangements are far advanced for enforcement personnel from the CCAM (that is, the NGO that will replace JET) to be assigned to the Pedro Cays.

To date the increased vigilance from enforcement partners has led to improved compliance with fisheries related laws (see section V below) as well as several apprehensions of fishers illegally fishing in the Southwest Cay Special Fishery Conservation Area (SCFA).

V. Control of Population Density

In recognition of the problem associated with large population densities, since 2010, the Fisheries Division had taken steps to reduce the number of persons licensed to operate from the Pedro Cays. The number of persons and vessels licensed to operate from the Cays has been progressively reduced from 600 fishers and 120 vessels in 2010 to 262 fishers and 89 vessels in 2014. Despite these efforts, the problems persisted due to the influx of unlicensed fishers operating illegally from the Cays. In order to stem this problem, it was decided to increase vigilance in removing unauthorized person from the Cays. Joint enforcement activities (JDF Coast Guard, Marine Police, Fisheries Division and NGO Partners (Jamaica Environment Trust (JET))) during the period have met with some success. As a result, a mark decrease in the number of unlicensed fishers operating from the Pedro Cays has been reported and several fishers have been apprehended fishing illegally in the Southwest Cay Special Fishery Conservation Area.

VI. Establishment of a Comprehensive Management Regime for the Pedro Cays

In recognition of the highly complex and multidisciplinary nature of the problems that cut across the portfolio responsibilities of several Ministries, Cabinet established an Inter-Ministerial Committee in October 2014. This Committee is comprised of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries as Chairman and the Permanent Secretaries from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Security, and the Ministry of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee met in January 15, 2015 to assess the status of the Pedro Cays and determine the way forward. The Committee reviewed the status of the initiatives aimed at addressing the proper management of the Pedro Cays and focused in particular on the solid and human waste management problems.

Four (4) Technical Committees have been established to provide guidance to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Inter-Ministerial Committee. These Technical Committees will focus on five (5) critical areas with a view to assessing the current status, identifying gaps and recommending suitable action to ensure the proper management of the Pedro Cays. These areas are:

(a) Solid waste management – among other things, this Committee will immediately address the solid waste removal problem;

(b) Human waste management - among other things, this Committee will monitor and assess the human waste management initiatives and ensure timely and successful completion;

(c) Population density - among other things, this Committee will assess and, where necessary, make recommendations to address problems associated with or enhance the current system (i.e., licensing of fishers to operate from the Cays and enforcement activities to remove unlicensed fishers) to control the population density on the Cays; and(d) Governance - among other things, this Committee will assess and make recommendations aimed at clarifying the role of relevant entities with respect to the management of the Cays and to establish an efficient mechanism to oversee the day-to-day management of the Cays.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee will provide a follow-up report to Cabinet by the end of the first quarter in FY 2015/16.

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