

Sustainable Finance for Conservation-

The potential of the Blue Mountains

The Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park has been managed by the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust since 1993. This space has displayed high potential for ecotourism but to date this potential has not been maximized. This presentation looks at how ecotourism has been supporting conservation and what the future holds for full realization of the promise of sustainable development.

The Blue and John Crow Mountains

The Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (BJCMNP) is located in the eastern end of the island of Jamaica and includes Jamaica's highest point – the Blue Mountain Peak at 2,256 metres. The park covers an area of 41,198 hectares (101, 802 acres) and incorporates much of the interior of the parishes of Portland, St. Thomas, St. Andrew and a small section of south-east St. Mary.

The park accounts for 4.4% of Jamaica's land surface. The steep mountain slopes form the upper sections of ten (10) of the island's twenty-six (26) watershed management units. The Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park comprises three mountain ranges – the Port Royal Mountains to the west, the Blue Mountains, and John Crow Mountains in the east; divided by the Buff Bay and Rio Grande Valleys on the north side of the ranges.

Surrounded by a buffer zone of 28,494 hectares, the pristine primary forest of the Blue and John Crow Mountains was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015 for its natural and cultural heritage.

Established in 1988, The Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (JCDDT) is a non-governmental organization and charity with a mandate to conserve Jamaica's natural environment.

Conservation needs of the Blue Mountains

The Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park is threatened by several types of land use conversion such as agriculture. Degradation of forests and natural resources is also an issue where negative environmental practices such as slash and burn and river poisoning reduces the quality.

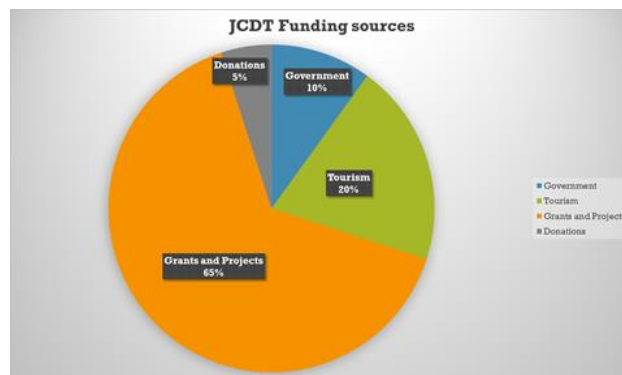
The threats underscore and emphasize the need for conservation action and environmental management. The JCDDT manages the National Park under 7 programmatic focuses:

Programmes & Strategies	Root Causes of Threats Addressed
Natural Heritage Conservation ^[1] e.g. Invasive Species Control	Insufficient "Conservation on the Ground" – need to more actively protect nature Climate Change
Cultural Heritage Preservation ^[2] e.g. Inventory of Sites and artefacts, promoting cultural heritage	Inadequate Cultural Heritage Preservation Limited Environmentally Sustainable Income-Generating Activities
Enforcement & Compliance ^[3] e.g. patrols, interpretive enforcement, signs	Inadequate Enforcement Unclear Boundaries
Public Education and Outreach ^[4] e.g. skills training for local community members, school presentations	Insufficient Environmental Education Limited Environmentally Sustainable Income-Generating Activities
Recreation & Tourism ^[5] e.g. operating Holywell and the Peak Trail/Portland Gap; facilitating sustainable community tourism around the Park	Inadequate Resources & Management Limited Environmentally Sustainable Income-Generating Activities
Monitoring & Evaluation ^[6] e.g. stream and photo-monitoring	Inadequate Resources & Management – need to assess and improve management effectiveness
Governance & Administration ^[7] e.g. Advisory and Co-management Committees; fundraising and financial management	Inadequate Resources & Management Conflicting Policies between agencies and insufficient support of conservation initiatives – need to promote collaboration and coordination

1 - [1] <https://www.jcdt.org.jm/park-management/management-plan/natural-heritage-conservation> [2] <https://www.jcdt.org.jm/park-management/management-plan/cultural-heritage-conservation> [3] <https://www.jcdt.org.jm/park-management/management-plan/enforcement-and-compliance> [4] <https://www.jcdt.org.jm/park-management/management-plan/public-education-and-outreach> [5] <https://www.jcdt.org.jm/park-management/management-plan/recreation-and-tourism> [6] <https://www.jcdt.org.jm/park-management/management-plan/monitoring-and-evaluation> [7] <https://www.jcdt.org.jm/park-management/management-plan/governance-and-administration>

How is this funded?

Financial Sustainability is the foundation on which the important conservation work is built. This means, financial resources need to be available to cover core, operational expenses and it needs to be consistent to support long term conservation and research.



Most of the core, operational needs such as accounting, salaries, management cannot be typically covered with project funding. Moreover, project funds are finite in nature and cannot be budgeted for regular recurrent expenditure. Tourism can be used to support recurrent conservation expenditure along with some of the government funds and donations.

These limited funds pose a challenge in terms of conservation effectiveness and the available resources to carry out what is needed.

Solutions

In order to solve this problem, conservation managers have to seek more funds to sustain operations and improve conservation effectiveness. Some of these possible solutions include:

- Carbon Trading- monetizing the service of reducing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Such projects are in exploratory phases in Jamaica.
- Government policy- lobbying for more funds to be allocated towards environmental management.
- Ecotourism- monetizing mountain experiences and products. This is a market solution that could address the problem of inadequate management funds.

Ecotourism- To provide recreational opportunities for local and international visitors, using ecotourism principles to generate income and support for the BJCMNP.

Potential

No work has yet been done to assess the economic potential of tourism in the Blue and John Crow Mountains. Tourism however has been trending towards “off the beaten path”, community and mountain tourism. We see this now being reflected in the interest that we are getting from tourists. We estimate that tourism in the Blue Mountains can contribute at least 50% of the budget needed for conservation and management, and this does not account for the economic potential within communities. Tourism in Blue Mountain communities can be a viable pathway to sustainable development.

Product

JCDT operates two main recreational areas. The Holywell Recreational Area is the main one. It offers five hiking trails, three cabins and spaces for picnicking and camping.



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Holywell Nature Walks

Things to Do Last Updated: 18 July 2022

Surrounded by a riot of tropical plants including Jamaica's national tree, the Blue Mahoe, Holywell has five walking trails to explore with just enough difficulty to make it fun. These nature walks are suitable for children and senior citizens.

[Read more ...](#)



Blue Mountain Peak Hike

Things to Do Last Updated: 22 June 2020

The Blue Mountain Peak Trail is the route to Jamaica's highest point, which sits at 2,256 metres (7,401 ft). The trail covers a distance of 9.3 km (5.8 miles) over steep terrain and is an intense 4-hour hike to the summit.

[Read more ...](#)



Bird Watching

Things to Do Last Updated: 15 September 2020

The Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park is one of the largest migratory bird sites in the Caribbean. Warblers, falcons, merlins and kingfishers are among the 120 species that retreat to our tropical forest each year to escape winter. The migration of northern birds begins in October and ends in April of the following year. As the northern birds return home, the forest prepares to welcome southern migratory birds on their winter break from March to September. Migratory birds join Jamaica's 29 endemic birds in

The Blue Mountain Peak trail leads to the highest point in Jamaica, the Blue Mountain Peak (2,256m). Along the trails are cabins at Portland Gap.



JCDT also works in local communities to develop their tourism products.

Products:

- Park admissions
- Tours
- Accommodation- Cabins and Tents
- Merchandise

Sales & Marketing Strategy

- Identify the right market
- Develop a strategy to reach your market- social media, tour partnerships
- Pay attention to sales conversions

Product Development and Operations

- Trail Development
- Staffing and Training
- Tour design

Challenges & Pitfalls

Operations management can be challenging and expensive especially when the processes are not well defined. Preventative maintenance is key.

Over tourism- an influx of visitors can change the quality of the resource. Constant monitoring is needed to ensure that neither the natural or cultural components of the tourism product is depleted.

Social Exclusion- we can develop the tourism product and seek to monetize to the point where the people we serve can no longer afford these experiences.