

# From Ridge to Reef

## Overview of USAID/Jamaica's Bilateral Environment Program

Eighty percent (80%) of Jamaica's land surface is described as hilly or mountainous with an upland surface extremely vulnerable to land degradation, erosion and pollution. Coastal waters are impacted by silt and nutrients which in turn damage coral reefs. Thus, the overexploitation of coastal resources — including the conversion of forests to other uses and the indiscriminate disposal of waste in industrial and urban areas — impact negatively on both the island's terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

This link between upland watershed and coastal activities and practices, and their combined impact on the quality of Jamaica's prized coastal waters, is the focus for USAID/Jamaica's integrated Ridge to Reef Program.



*Water Quality Monitoring is conducted along the coast through CWIP, and in rivers through R2RW.*



*Car washing is a major environmental issue threatening river water quality throughout Jamaica.*

### Current Program

To achieve the objective of improved environmental quality, the Ridge to Reef Program has promoted better technologies, policies and capacity-building for environmental management through three projects:

- Ridge to Reef Watershed (R2RW) Project;
- Coastal Water Quality Improvement Project (CWIP-II); and
- Environmental Audits for Sustainable Tourism Project (EAST-IV).

These projects attempt to mitigate environmental problems in both the upper and lower watersheds to achieve positive impacts on the coastal zone. Beneficiaries of program activities include communities and resource users throughout the target watersheds and coastal zones, the Government of Jamaica, private sector entities, and non-governmental and community-based organizations. The USAID/Jamaica Office of the Environment also undertakes a number of smaller initiatives, including grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in environmental management, and collaborative activities with other U.S. Government technical assistance programs.

### Ridge to Reef Watershed (R2RW) Project

The R2RW project interventions focus on reducing hillside deforestation, pollution and soil erosion through integrated approaches which address natural and man-made causes of land and water quality degradation in two target watersheds.

The project utilizes a participatory approach to identify and prioritize interventions, and has established extensive stakeholder and community consultations to achieve local ownership of the project. R2RW has effected significant improvements in watershed management practices at the community level through the establishment of watershed management committees and their associated task forces. At the national level, the project has been instrumental in establishing mechanisms for more effective communication, coordination, and implementation of watershed management through the facilitation of the National Integrated Watershed Management Council (NIWMC) and the strengthening of the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) Sustainable Watersheds Branch.

#### The USAID Water Team

[www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/environment/water/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/environment/water/index.html)  
[www.sdp.gov](http://www.sdp.gov)



The project has also worked closely with NEPA's Compliance and Regional Services Division to improve monitoring and compliance of activities within watersheds through public awareness campaigns and sensitization of the local judiciary to the effects of environmental crimes.

### **The Coastal Water Quality Improvement Project (CWIP)**

The CWIP activity promotes sound environmental practices through integrated coastal zone management, including activities that promote wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal across all sectors of society and across all levels of government.

The accomplishments of CWIP have been exemplary. Community groups have been energized to voluntarily undertake a wide array of environmental projects, including water quality sampling, advocacy regarding the design and management of wastewater treatment systems, and managing local, small-scale environmental projects such as solid waste management improvement and recycling projects. Meanwhile, regulatory agencies and resource managers have been empowered to better manage coastal zone resources in more transparent and accountable ways.

At the end of Phase One, the GOJ and stakeholders requested continued assistance in coastal zone management to build on the outstanding achievements of CWIP. As a result, CWIP-II has now been initiated with an additional focus on developing integrated management approaches to address coastal water quality issues in Jamaica over the long-term.

CWIP-II has two specific objectives:

- To develop an integrated parish-level environmental planning and management process in Portland Parish (on the island's northeastern shore). This would result in increased capacity by Portland organizations to lead and influence more sustainable planning and management approaches, with an emphasis on strengthening the Parish Council and the Parish Development Committee.
- To develop a Blue Flag beach and marina certification program for selected pilot sites, supported by a national water quality monitoring program. This would result in the successful establishment of a Blue Flag National Coordinating NGO, and certification processes initiated in designated pilot sites.

### **Environmental Audits for Sustainable Tourism (EAST) Project**

The Environmental Audits for Sustainable Tourism (EAST) activity promotes improved environmental management practices in the tourism and manufacturing industries in the areas of Ocho Rios, Negril, Montego Bay and Port Antonio through the adoption of a corporate environmental management system (EMS). Through a series of environmental audits, the project has garnered invaluable insights for hoteliers, hospitality training institutions and a number of manufacturers in identifying and implementing environmental best management practices.

The project has been successful in:

- Conducting environmental audits, including 36 audits in the tourism sector (including hotels and attractions) and five audits in manufacturing entities that supply the tourism sector;
- Developing and facilitating implementation of the "green" curriculum at Runaway Bay HEART Hotel and Training Institute as well as two training courses for the hotels and attractions sectors;
- Convening a Green Hotel Conference and Educational Symposium in 2002 to facilitate the exhibition of "green" goods and services and expansion of eco-consciousness in the hospitality training curriculum;
- Providing institutional support towards the development of Runaway Bay Institute as a center for education in sustainable development; and
- Developing a model for improved environmental practices which is being adopted regionally and globally (e.g., in the Caribbean, South and Central America, Egypt, and Fiji).

For the remainder of the project, EAST will primarily focus interventions on:

- Facilitating the transfer of lessons learned from the first phase of the project to other businesses in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean through USAID's Regional Environment Program;
  - Working with tertiary institutions (e.g., HEART and University of West Indies) to include best management practices in tourism education curricula; and
  - Developing and implementing a pilot plan for Port Antonio/Portland as a model for a green tourism destination program.
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