



*For Immediate Release*

**Jamaica's Coalition for Forests calls for local government attention to forest conservation and management**

**Kingston, January 21, 2024** – Jamaica's Coalition for Forests is calling on candidates for Councillors and Mayors in the upcoming Local Government Elections on February 26 to champion and deliver forest conservation and management as key to supporting strong, sustainable and resilient communities in Jamaica, and to partner with civil society to deliver local socio-economic development.

The Coalition is comprised of 27 civil society organisations (CSOs) which are actively engaged from national to local levels in forest conservation, management and restoration in Jamaica. According to Mr David Walters, Executive Director of the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (JCDT) which serves as convenor of the Coalition, "We all depend on forests, it only makes sense that we all come together to make the best decisions for their preservation. This is not an issue of environment versus development, rather it is an existential issue."

The Coalition wants Councillors, Mayors, Municipal Corporations and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to increase support for forests as a critical resource across the 228 electoral districts in Jamaica. Improved forest conservation and management is part of sustainable land use for key economic sectors such as tourism, agriculture and fisheries. Forested watersheds are important to ensure the sustainable supply of potable water to all, including urban centres and tourist destinations such as Kingston, Falmouth, Montego Bay and St. Andrew. Forests also play a key role in resilience to natural disasters, including hurricanes and other extreme weather, for example through preventing landslides and soil erosion and protecting coastlines from storm surges. Forests deliver climate change mitigation for Jamaica through removal and storage of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Forests also support nature-based jobs and provide increased earning opportunities for constituents.

According to the Coalition, local government should partner with CSOs as a cost-effective way to deliver results for their Municipalities and the communities they serve. A recent study by the Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency (STEA) showed that in 2022, JM\$1.23 million of grant funding was provided to STEA and Local Forest Management Committees (LFMCs) for reforestation, awareness raising and sustainable livelihoods in the Cockpit Country. The volunteer in-kind contribution by STEA and the LFMCs was valued at JM\$8.86 million. What this confirms is that for every dollar invested



*Community members conduct reforestation on Exhibition Hill, Portland. Credit JCDT*

in supporting local organisations' work on forest conservation and management, several times this amount is contributed by CSOs and the community. Investing more in the work of local organisations makes financial sense to get the most impact for local socio-economic development.

Coalition members will continue to engage with Councillors, Mayors, Municipal Corporations and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to discuss priorities outlined in their newly published Briefing Book for Local Government.

The Coalition's work is being supported under the project *Building civil society awareness and capacity to engage in participatory budgeting and financial management for the forest sector in Jamaica* with support from the European Union (FED/2021/428-620). This project is being implemented by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), in partnership with the Caribbean Coastal Area Management (C-CAM) Foundation and the Jamaica Conservation Development Trust (JCDT). The use of participatory budgeting approaches with the forest sector in Jamaica is being piloted with the hope that this can be expanded to other sectors and countries across the Caribbean to enhance inclusive environmental governance.

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For more information on this project and work of the Coalition for Forests, see:

<https://canari.org/green-economy/jamaica-participatory-budgeting/>

For more information about the Coalition for Forests' messages see their [Briefing Book for Local Government](#).

**About CANARI:** The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working across the Caribbean for 30 years, including in Jamaica. Our mission is to promote and facilitate stakeholder participation in the stewardship of natural resources in the Caribbean. Our work focuses on Biodiversity and Ecosystems, Equity and Justice, Resilience and Participatory Governance. For more information on CANARI, see: <https://www.canari.org/>.

**About C-CAM:** The Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (C-CAM) was established in 1997 to promote coastal conservation in Jamaica. C-CAM promotes sustainable development and conservation of the natural environment in the Portland Bight Protected Area. The organisation's approach to natural resources management is based on the maximum involvement of communities through co-management based on the best available scientific and social information. For more information, see <https://ccam.org.jm/>.

**About JCDT:** Established in 1988, The Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (JCDT) is a nongovernmental organisation and charity with a mandate to conserve Jamaica's natural environment. The JCDT's mission leads the organisation to protect and restore forests in the Blue and John Crow Mountains using approaches that facilitate sustainable development in rural mountain communities. For more information, see <https://www.jcdt.org.jm/>.

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