



To: All News Editors

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WATER CRISIS WORSENS

Planned & Unplanned Disruptions to be Expected

Well Development Project Temporarily Disrupted By Violence

The National Water Commission is reporting that the already dire water supply situation affecting much of the Corporate Area of Kingston and St. Andrew is threatening to get even worse as the continued absence of rain is causing the inflows into the most critical water supply systems to dwindle even further.

While some mainly northern areas of the country are unaffected by the drought, the water shortage is already the worst to affect the Corporate Area in more than 20 years. Many other Caribbean countries are similarly struggling with an El Nino induced period of prolonged below-normal rainfall.

According to the National Water Commission, the cumulative effect of very limited rainfall in most southern parishes over several months has resulted in as much as a 90% decline in inflows from some rivers and springs. Whereas the percentage decline is greatest on the smaller systems serving mainly rural communities, the total decline on the larger systems serving urban areas is also very alarming – especially because of the number of persons impacted daily.

Each day, the Hope Water Supply System is now receiving over 3 million gallons of water less than what it needs, the Hermitage/Constant Spring Water Supply System is short by 12 million gallons and the Mona Water Supply System is short by 8 million gallons of water.

Because of these dwindling supplies and despite the scheduled water restrictions imposed, some areas have not and will not be able to receive piped water supply. As a result of the worsening water situation, some customers who were previously receiving scheduled piped service will experience a worsening of their water supply experience. According to the NWC it can only provide the water that it collects from these sources and so some customers will experience severe shortages in some areas, regardless of the distribution regime that is put in place.

NWC is appealing to the public to understand that, by its very nature, the very limited supplies of water available cannot and will not be equally available everywhere and that both planned and unplanned disruptions are very likely during this period.

Regrettably, the NWC further explains that depending on their location, elevation, the layout of the distribution network, the extent of the impact of the drought on the particular water source serving them and the customer demand in a particular area, some customers will experience no water conditions or low water pressure even during the hours that the water facilities are putting out all the water they have available. This is primarily because of the nature of water supply distribution and the fact that the systems will not be able to operate at optimum while receiving only a fraction of the required volumes of water to distribute and because of the time it takes to charge the water supply mains in various areas.

It is also to be noted that water supply systems being operated under these sub-optimal drought conditions are prone to more frequent leaks, air pockets and other blockages, water discolouration, electrical, mechanical and other problems. NWC is therefore constantly trouble-shooting to keep the systems in operation in the best way possible.

The National Water Commission is also reporting that its attempts at drilling or rehabilitating additional wells as part of the drought mitigation programme have met with mixed results. Whereas the Beverley Hills Well, Well H, Government Park Well and other wells being developed or rehabilitated under the Kingston Metropolitan Area Water Supply Project are being introduced into the system, some other previously considered wells have proved to be either contaminated or are much more challenging to bring back into operation than was previously hoped. The drilling

and development of the Hampstead Well and Tank in the Mountain View Avenue area is still underway, despite being temporarily disrupted by the recent outburst of violence in the area. Within the next two weeks the NWC expects that other wells being developed will be put into operation.

While the NWC continues to monitor the inflows into its sources on a daily basis and will seek to advise the public of all planned changes, wherever possible, it is to be recognized that the situation is very dynamic and includes issues outside of the Commission's control.

Customers are nonetheless assured that the National Water Commission will continue to use all resources at its disposal to provide the very best service possible under these dire conditions.

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