



To: All News Editors

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NWC PREPARES FOR DRY SEASON

Urges Customers To Be Prepared

Two months into Jamaica's usual longest December-April low rainfall season and just recovering from the Corporate Area's worst drought in more than 25 years experienced last year, the National Water Commission (NWC) has put in place various measures to mitigate the potential negative effects of not having enough water to distribute to the more than 2 million Jamaicans served by its systems daily.

The NWC, while assuring its customers across the country that every effort is being made to implement a comprehensive drought mitigation programme, is also encouraging customers to be prepared and put in place individual storage capacity.

The NWC recently provided an update on the progress of its various preparation activities to the Minister of Water and Housing, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, at a Drought Mitigation Meeting called with several agencies at the Ministry. Acting NWC President Albert Gordon reported to the meeting that while storage and inflow levels at most NWC water sources were then adequate (and better than at the same time last year) but that the ability to provide adequate supplies of water through to the next rainy season will depend largely on the rainfall experience and the creative water management measures being implemented. Mr. Gordon pointed to the major work being undertaken under the Jamaica Water Supply Improvement Project (JWSIP) and several other activities to better enable the NWC to meet the water supply

needs of customers. He also spoke to the development of larger, more drought-resistant water supply systems to replace existing old and inefficient infrastructure, interconnect more water supply systems for improved manageability and various sewerage projects to protect the underground water supplies.

Among the other short, medium and long-term measures to prepare for the dry season are:

- Measures to access additional sources of water for treatment and distribution;
- Measures to maximize existing sources of supply;
- Measures to reduce losses from the systems and to improve the distribution network;
- Improved capacity to share water from least-affected systems with worst-affected systems;
- Increased trucking capacity with priority to be given to hospitals, health centres, schools, public institutions and communities which are severely affected for prolonged periods;
- Encouragement of significant conservation measures.

Corporate Public Relations Manager, Charles Buchanan, said that “The weather is outside of our control but our capacity to respond will significantly determine how severely our customers and the public are impacted. We are therefore ensuring that the NWC is in the best possible position to respond to any drought eventuality and that we have the ability to supply potable water to meet the daily needs of more than 2 million people across the country.”

NWC is also concerned about the rainfall forecast because drought conditions will not only result in reduced availability of water at its sources and increased demand at the same time, but will also see the costs of operations skyrocketing at the same time that revenues to fund these operations decline. The dry season and less than welcome forecast has already galvanized the NWC to re-double efforts at implementing the short, medium and long-term drought mitigation plan.

“The National Water Commission remains fully committed and is making every effort to put plans in place to manage, regulate and maintain our systems in the very best way possible under whatever conditions develop. But we urge customers to conserve, get storage capacity and continue to cooperate during this potentially difficult, drier-than-normal period,” says Mr. Buchanan.

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