

# Conserving West Indian Whistling-Ducks in the Negril Environmental Protection Area

## Final Review of Action Plan Virtual Workshop

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# Agenda

10:00 Online registration. Please put your name and position in the chat

10:10 Welcome and introductions

10:20 Ground rules

10:25 Update on IWEco project

10:30 Objectives for meeting

10:35 Background – West Indian Whistling-Duck Ecology

10:45 Preparation of Action Plan

11:00 Outline of Action Plan

11:45 Implementation of plan

12:00 Workshop ends.

# Introductions

- Please introduce yourself – state your name, position and the organization you work for.
- Have you ever seen a WIWD? If so tell us briefly about the experience.

# Background

- **Objective of consultancy:**  
Develop a plan for restoration of the WIWD population in the Negril EPA

# About WIWDs

- Erect, brown with speckled sides

IUCN Status: Near threatened

One of the rarest ducks in the Americas.

# Global status and distribution of WIWDs

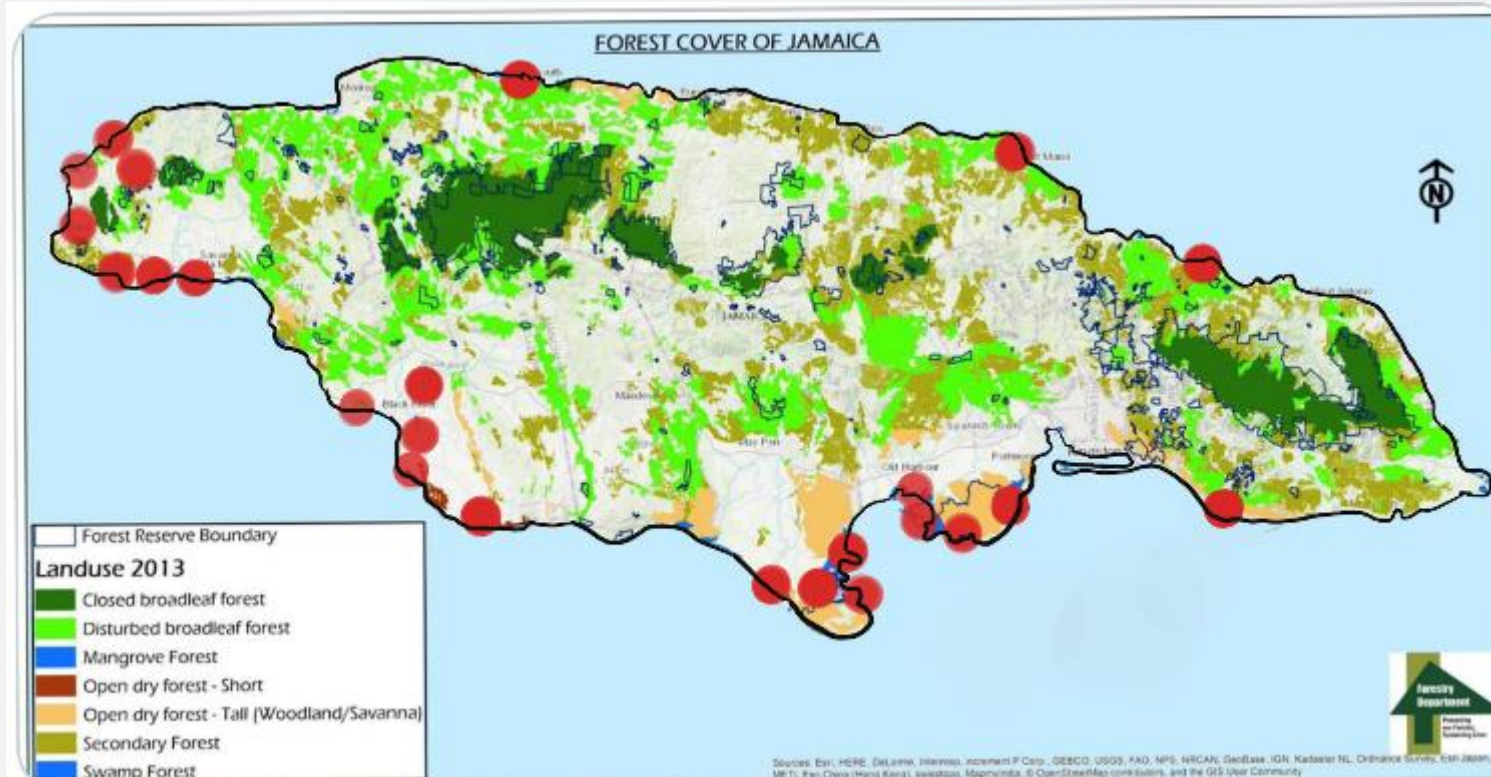
- **Global Distribution:** Greater Antilles and northern Lesser Antilles.
- **Estimated global population:** between 6,000 and 13,000 most of which are in Cuba.
- **Declining** throughout range.



# Status and distribution in Jamaica

✧ Early 2000s  
Estimate:  
>500

✧ 2021  
Estimate:  
150 – 300

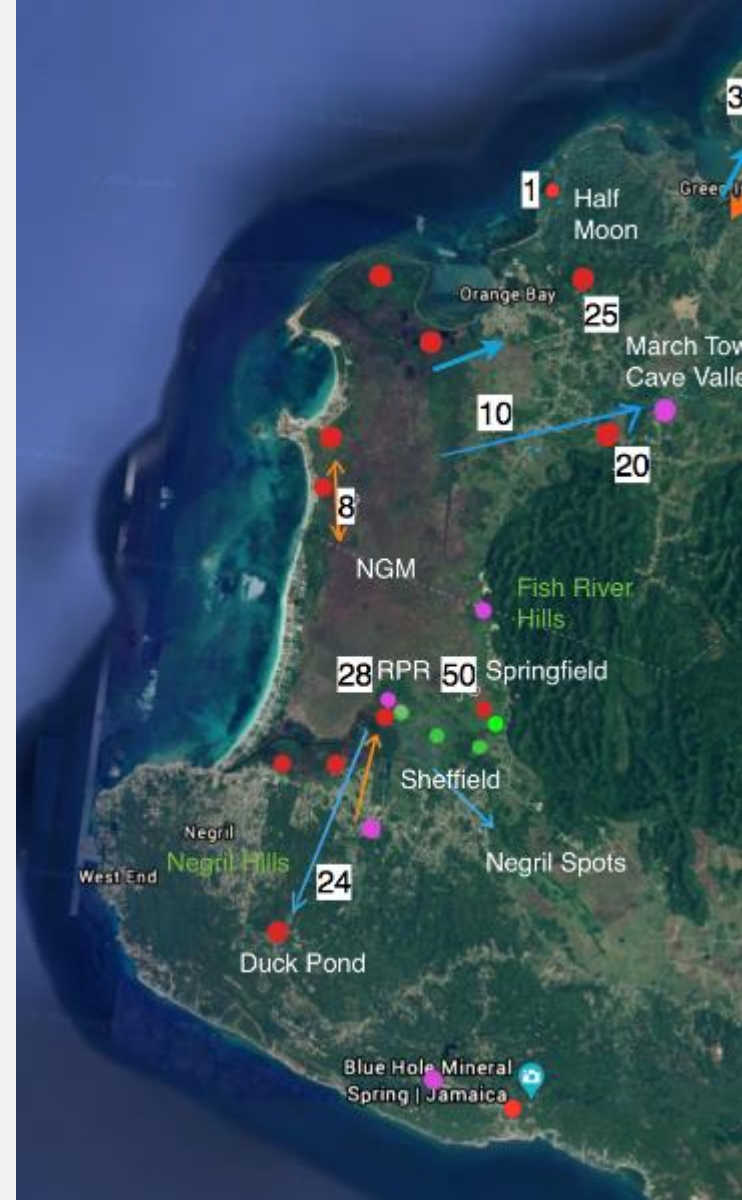


Red dots show some recent records of WIWDs



# Feeding and roosting

- **Day:** roost, feed and squabble in shady places
- **Dusk:** fly to feeding grounds
- **Night:** feed on plants in open grassy areas and ponds
- **Dawn:** Fly back at dusk





# Nesting

- Nest in large trees or shrubs in wetlands, gardens or forests
- Rear chicks in freshwater ponds up to 1.2 km from nest site



# Steps leading to action plan

- Literature review
- Field surveys
- *WIWD Population Assessment Report*
- *WIWD Habitat Restoration Report*
- Strategies workshop
- *Strategies report*
- Action planning workshop
- *Action plan and budget*
- Final workshop
- *Final report`*

# Field surveys - GSM Tracking



# Key informant interviews

**HELP US SAVE THE WHISTLERS!**

ONE OF THE RAREST DUCKS IN THE WORLD WITH FEWER THAN 4000 LEFT!

THEY ARE ONLY FOUND IN THE NORTHERN CARIBBEAN

WEST INDIAN WHISTLING DUCK A.K.A WHISTLER

**HAVE YOU SEEN THEM?**  
The number of West Indian Whistling Ducks in Jamaica are declining. The IWEco project is working to conserve them in the Negril Environmental Protection Area

**NEGRIL IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THEIR SURVIVAL**

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

**PLEASE LET US KNOW:**

- WHERE AND WHEN YOU SAW OR HEARD WHISTLERS (DATE, TIME OF DAY). INCLUDE A PHOTO IF POSSIBLE
- WHAT THEY WERE DOING (FLYING, NESTING, FEEDING, HANGING OUT)
- HOW MANY YOU SAW OR HEARD

PLEASE SEND YOUR REPORTS BY WHATSAPP OR TEXT TO 876-804-3821 OR 876-776-1801

# Habitat and threats assessment and point counts





# Findings:

## Status of WIWDs in Negril EPA



- Found in most wetlands and freshwater ponds
- 2016: 150-200 in 2016
- 2021: 30-100 WIWDs
- Many knowledge gaps

# Major threats

- **Habitat loss and degradation**
  - Conversion of wetlands for development and agriculture
  - Drying of wetlands and freshwater ponds due to drainage, agriculture and increased frequency of drought, climate change
  - Invasive plants in freshwater and wetland
  - Pollution
- **Predation**
  - Invasive predators
  - Illegal hunting for mainly for sport, egg collection
- **Lack of protection for wetlands**
- **Lack of education and awareness**
- **Lack of capacity - government/NGO**



# Loss of habitat: Drought and fire



# Loss of habitat: Coastal development

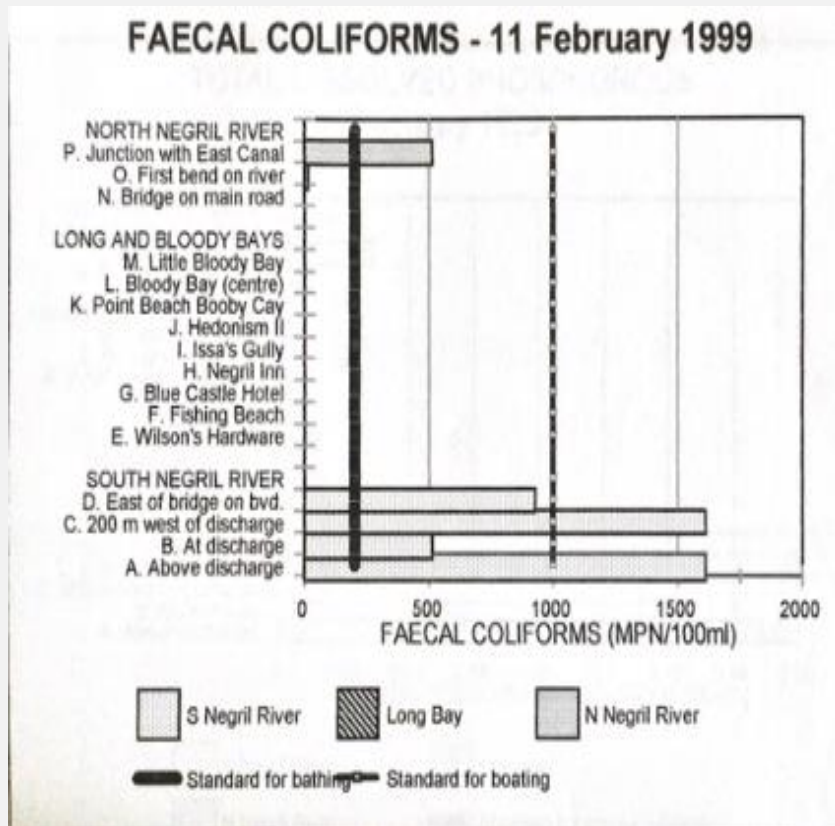




# Loss of habitat: Agriculture (ganja)



# Degradation of habitat: Pollution





# Degradation of habitat: Loss of large nest trees

- Timber, agriculture
  - Reduced natural regeneration
- 
- An aerial photograph showing a vast tropical forest. The forest is densely packed with trees, many of which are tall palm trees. There are several large, irregularly shaped cleared areas scattered throughout the forest, indicating areas where trees have been removed for timber or agriculture. In the background, a large body of water is visible, possibly a reservoir or a lake, surrounded by more forested land. The overall scene depicts a landscape that has been significantly altered by human activity.

**Degradation of habitat: Invasive alien plants that occlude ponds**

# Predation: Invasive alien predators

- Predation of WIWD eggs, chicks and adults by mongoose, cats, dogs, and rats.



# Illegal duck hunting

# Strategies workshop

- Agreed a vision for WIWD in the Negril EPA
- Reviewed threats
- Developed a conceptual diagram for WIWDs in the Negril EPA
- Identified priority conservation strategies for WIWDs in the Negril EPA.

# Action Planning workshop

- Reviewed strategies
- Identified objectives and actions

# **Vision developed by stakeholders**

**A sustainable future for the Negril EPA where  
West Indian Whistling-Ducks and wetlands  
flourish in harmony with economic prosperity  
and quality of life.**

# Goal for WIWDs in the EPA

- To restore **WIWD** populations in the Negril EPA to **at least 100 individuals by 2026** (of which at least 50 will be at the RPR) by conserving all **life stages** through **habitat restoration, habitat protection, education and enforcement.**

# Main strategies

- RPR
  - Increase freshwater habitats
  - Control predators and hunting
  - Increase awareness
  - Promote ecotourism
- Other wetlands
  - Rewet and rewild
  - Increase protection of habitat
  - Increase compliance and support through education and awareness
  - Reduce pollution
  - Economic valuation of wetlands
  - Build capacity and sustainable funding
  - Monitor impacts and revise strategies accordingly

# **WIWDs need the RPR. The RPR needs WIWDs.**

- Only place in Negril
  - To see WIWDs in the day
  - To manage, monitor and study WIWDs
- Most visible and watchable wildlife species at RPR.



# Increase breeding success

- Install nest boxes
- Protect ducklings from predation by mongooses through trapping
- Increase chick-rearing habitat by maintaining open water (removal of invasive plants)

# Provide secure feeding and loafing habitat

- Continue supplemental feeding
- Increase aquatic habitat by creating a mosaic of ponds and channels with varying depths
- Maintain and enhance herbaceous and swamp forest habitats
- Control cows, cats, dogs and rats
- Exclude illegal hunters

# Increase awareness of WIWDs at the RPR

- Ensure WIWDs and other species are present and can be seen by visitors
- Feature WIWDs in signage and in the visitor centre
- Train tour guides to interpret WIWDs
- Provide WIWD activities for kids

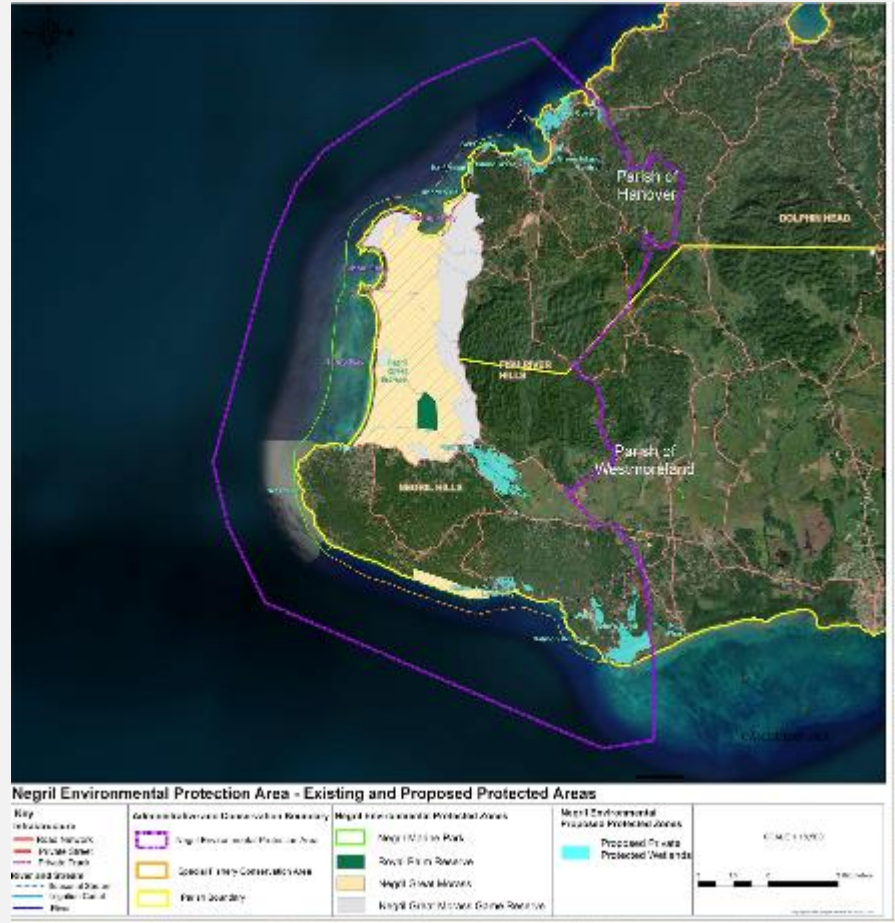
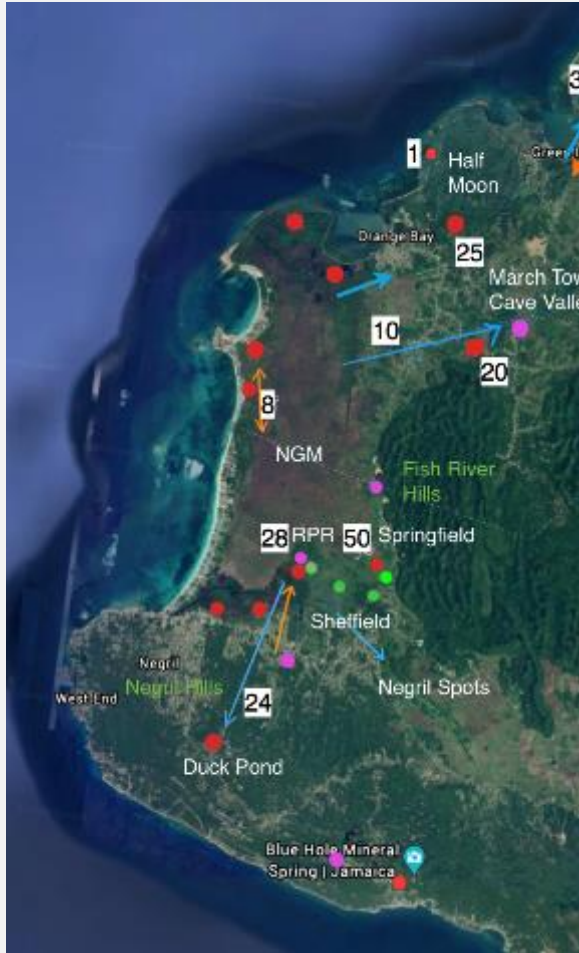
# Monitor and study WIWDs at RPR

- Distribution and habitat use - GSM tracking
- Population numbers, composition of groups, individual survival - Banding)
- Presence or absence - Passive acoustic monitoring
- Covariates – water levels, rainfall, temperatures etc.

**WIWDs need the RPR.  
The RPR needs WIWDs.**

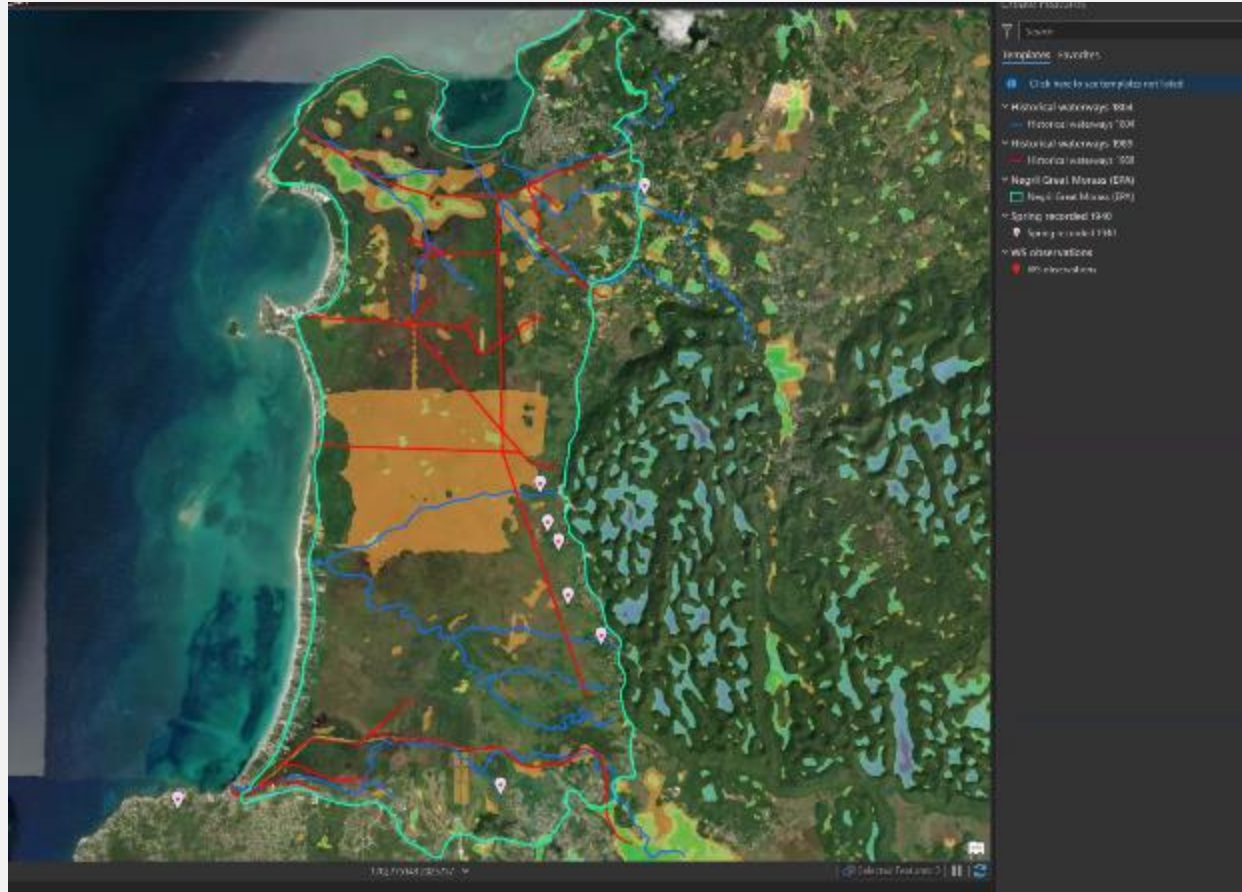
- How can we develop a shared plan for conservation at the RPR?

# Protect WIWD habitat in the EPA



# Management of the NGM

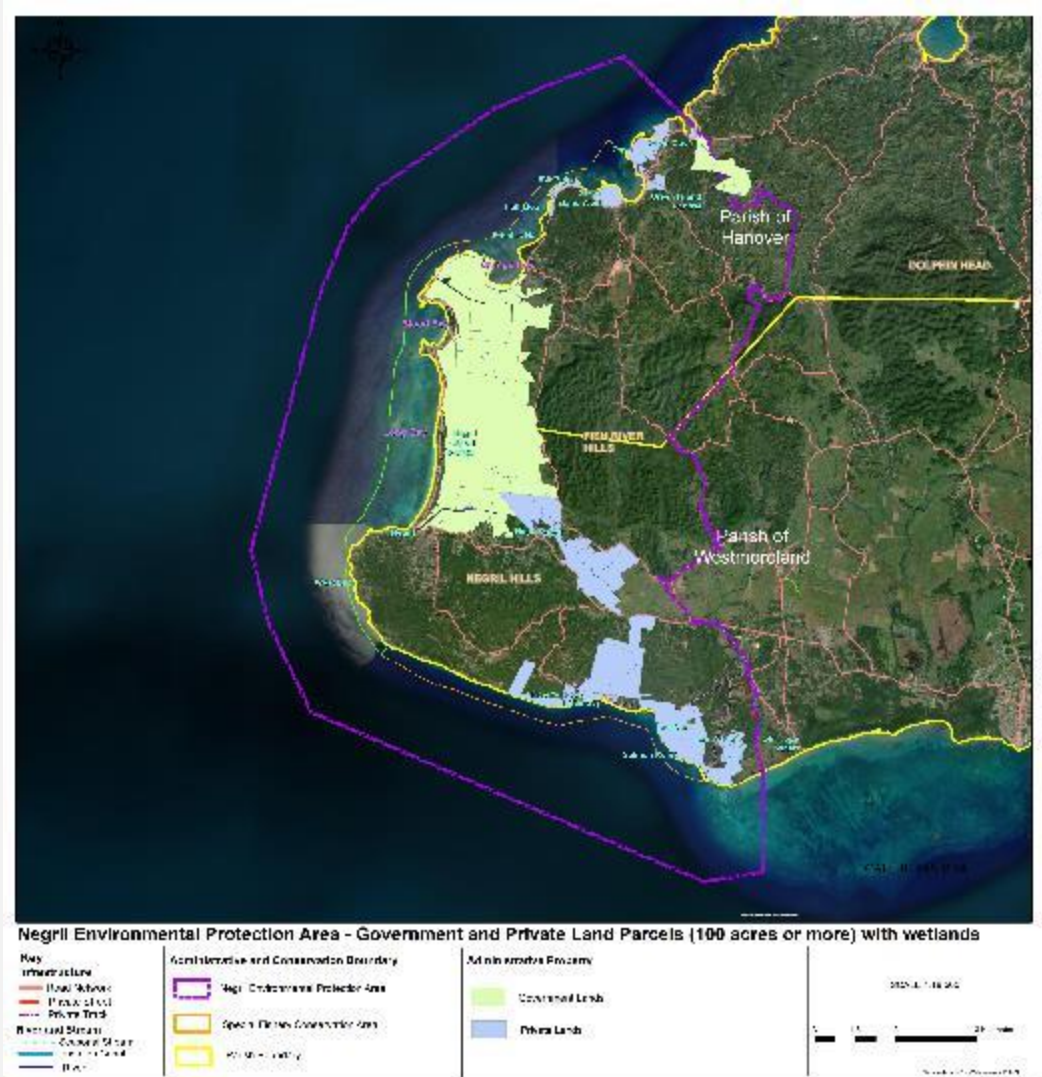
- **Rewetting**
- Increased water levels
- More ponds and seasonally flooded areas
- **Rewilding**





# Protection of wetlands

- Expand protection of wetlands
- Explore Ramsar designation
- Expand NGM Game Reserve
- Explore demonstration project at Davis Cove
- Encourage private landowners to protect wetlands and WIWDs on their properties





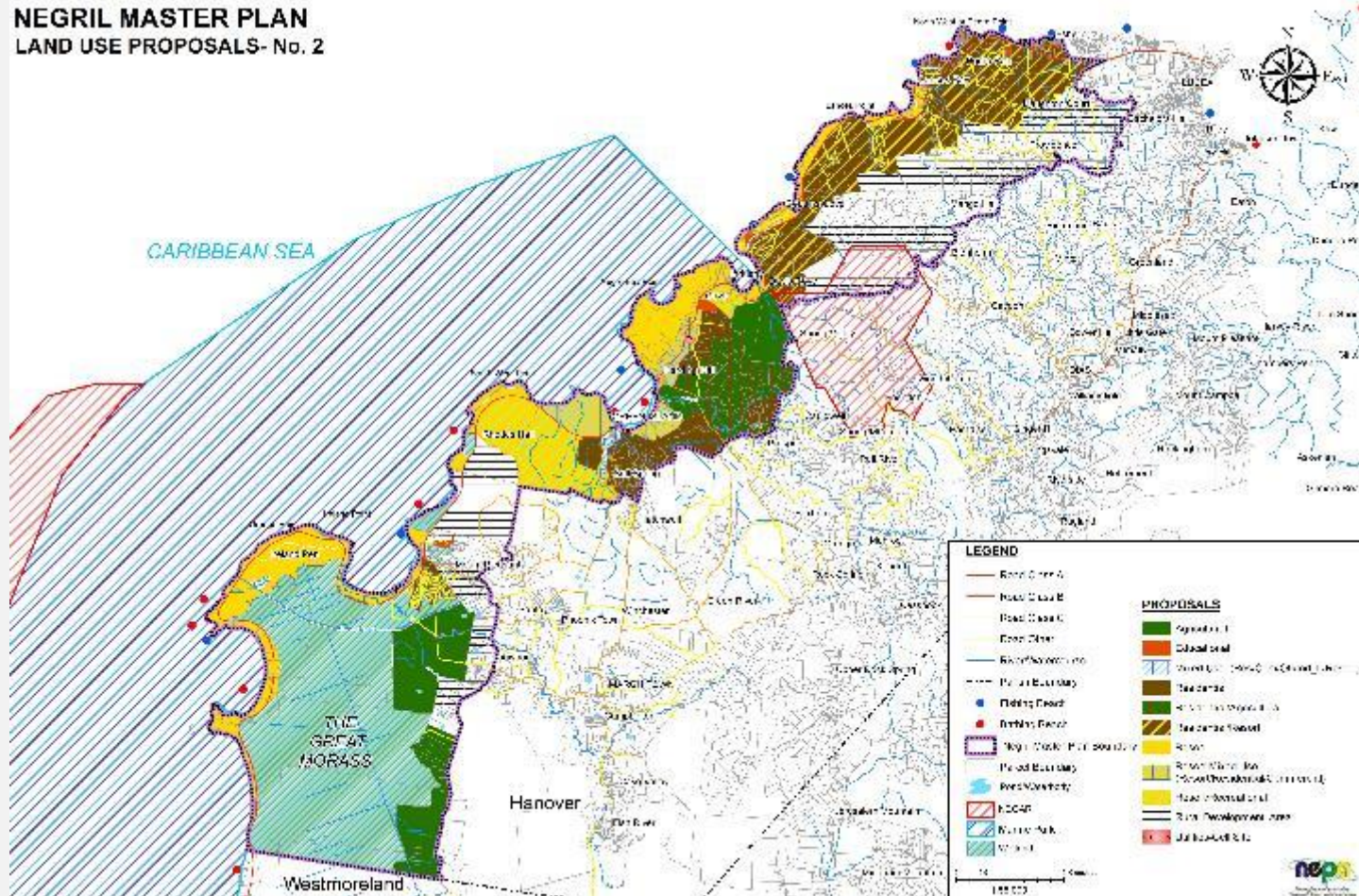
# Development control and planning should protect WIWD habitat

- New Negril Master Plan

- Updated Negril & Green Island Area Development Order

- All wetlands, freshwater ponds and riverbanks need protection

- Some wetlands are zoned for development



# Education and awareness

# Whistler says... ***"I could be a flagship for conservation in Negril!"***



- Would conservation in Negril benefit from having a WIWD mascot?

# Capacity and funding

- Support capacity building for government agencies and Negril NGOs to enable them to increase their role in enforcement, education and monitoring
- Identify long-term sustainable funding for WIWD and environmental conservation in Negril.

# Implementation

- What can we do to support implementation?
- Who should do it?
- What should be done first?

**Any questions?**