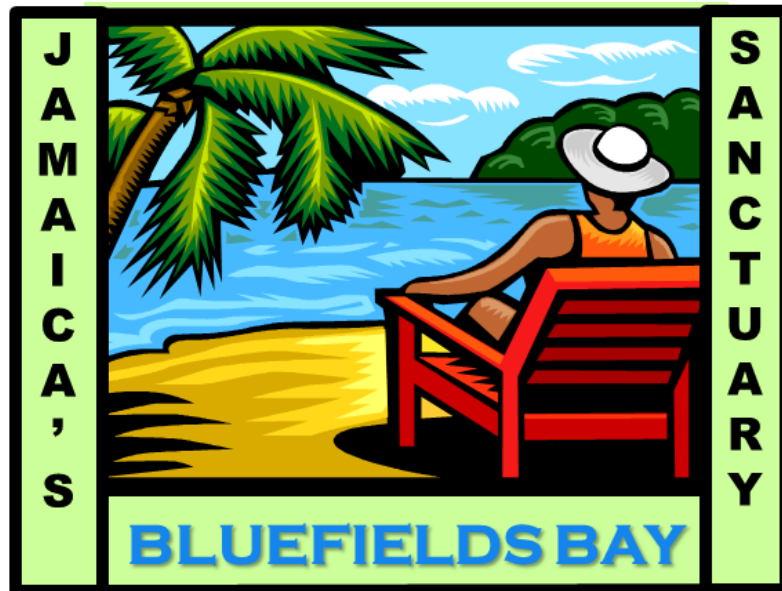


# **BLUEFIELDS BAY AREA: CHARTING ITS TOURISM DESTINY**



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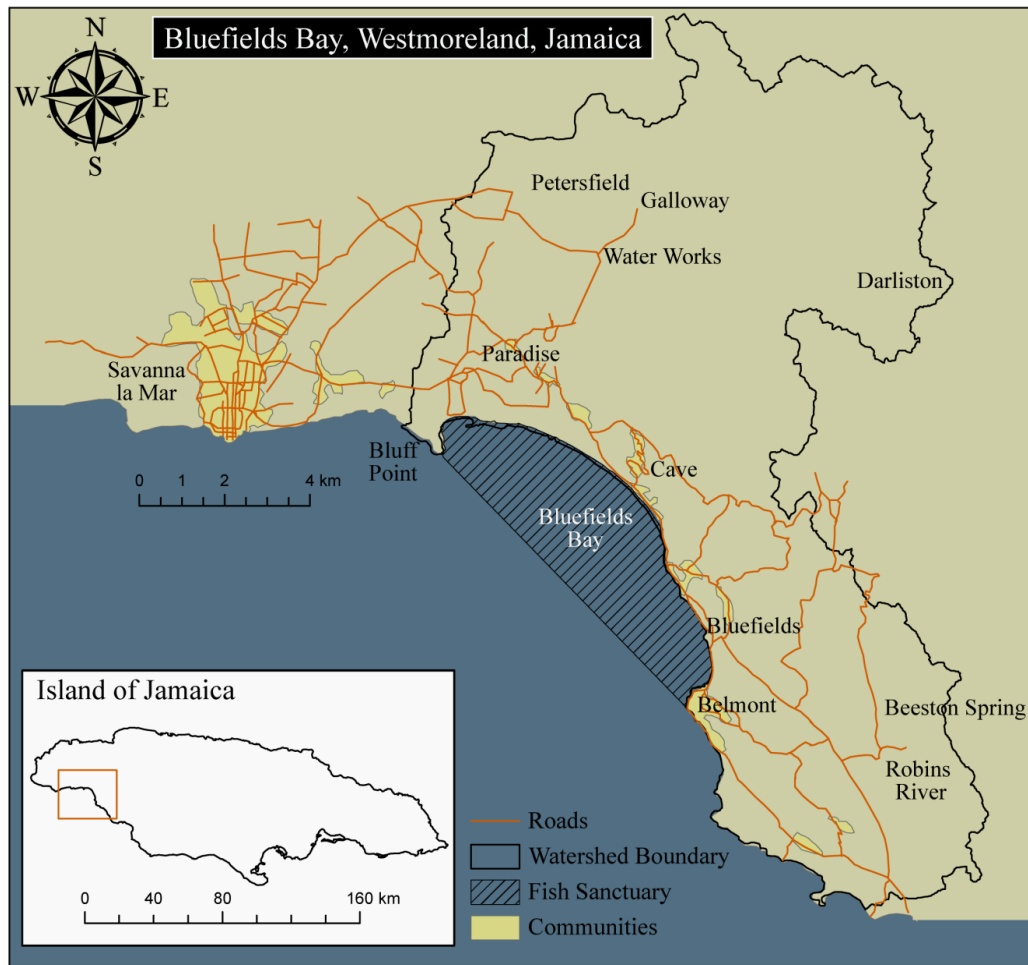
**Bluefields, Jamaica  
January 8, 2013**

# Bluefields Bay Area: Charting its Tourism Destiny

## Program

- 9:00 Bob Pavlowsky, MSU and Wolde Kristos, RAJ- Welcome and Introductions  
9:15 Ministry of Tourism (TPDCO)- “Requirement and standards for licensing by Jamaica Tourist Board”  
10:15 Break  
10:30 Linnea Iantria, MSU- Presentation of Geotourism Development Plan  
12:15 Lunch  
1:15 Iantria, MSU- SWOT Analysis and Review of Plan  
1:45 “Tourism Visioning Session” led by Iantria and Kristos  
2:45 Next step?  
3:00 Adjournment

### BLUEFIELDS BAY AREA AND WATERSHED BOUNDARY



## **Introduction**

Bluefields Bay is located on the lesser developed south coast of Jamaica. It is a place of great natural beauty, small villages, native cultures and traditional crafts. This is a place where Jamaicans can come to reconnect with the country's past, where high rises and mass market tourism has yet to intrude on this pastoral countryside

The south coast affords an opportunity to protect some of the country's important coastal lands, when many areas of the coast have been dramatically impacted by mega hotels and resorts and valuable habitats have been lost.

The Bluefields Bay Area of Jamaica is a unique position to take advantage of the growing trend in nature based tourism. There is an established birding and nature based tour operation, and, to date, there has not been damaging development. The establishment of the fish sanctuary is a positive step toward protection of the area.

The challenges will be in financing for projects that will not destroy the character of the region. Challenges will also be in establishing and developing suitable accommodations that reflect the region's nature based focus, while providing quality amenities. In addition, the community needs to have a vested interest in the success of the tourism product and entrepreneurial efforts need to be encouraged.

We recommend the following tourism development plan:

Phase I - Expand and develop student study tourism, develop Voluntourism projects, upgrade accommodations, food/beverage and attractions and develop nature-based and artist tourism

Phase II - Expand nature based tourism programs and develop eco-lodges

Phase III - Develop sailboat marina

"Jamaica's Sanctuary" would be a brand identification that would bring you through all three phases of tourism development. The area could control its own destiny by being pro-active with development from a pro-environmental perspective and also would have development locally based and benefit local citizens

There is opportunity for responsible tourism development in the Bluefields Bay Area and that opportunity is now, before property is purchased for mega-hotels and before the residential development permanently scars the landscape.

We highly recommend a formal Tourism Plan, approved by the community and by the Jamaican government. The plan should be strategic and look at 2, 5 and 10 year goal setting.

If a Tourism Plan is not immediately considered, the Bluefields Bay area will become just another mass market destination. There will be a destruction of habitat, culture and tradition, and those things cannot be resurrected. We hope that the Bluefields Bay community will take advantage of its window of opportunity.

## SWOT Analysis

### STRENGTHS

What is it that is special about Bluefields Bay?

- Secluded Yet Accessible
- Seclusion that effectively separates it from the "mass market tourism" that is found on the north and far west sides of the island.
- No high rise hotels or large resort developments
- Nature has been left alone to flourish without fear of adverse development
- Friendliness of the Community
  - The only way that a tourism product can sustain long-term development is to have the support of the local population, and this seems to be available in Bluefields Bay.
- Environmental Strengths
  - High levels of biodiversity as well as the presence of several at-risk species
  - Beautiful Views of Mountains
  - Many different forms of agriculture
- Sunsets
  - Most of the area faces west which allows beautiful views of sunsets over the bay
  - This geographical feature is extremely important to tourists as a sunset view is considered a major attraction for a hotel, bar or restaurant – it evokes a certain atmosphere that can be capitalized
- Fish Sanctuary
  - The largest fish sanctuary in Jamaica
  - Helps protect marine life and offer snorkeling and scuba diving opportunities
  - Return of natural predators to the Bay
  - Can lead to development of marine associated activities
  - Just outside the sanctuary there are excellent swimming, boating, fishing and diving sites
- Maritime History
  - Captain Bligh of "Mutiny on the Bounty" fame brought the breadfruit tree to Jamaica, and some remain in the Bluefields area
  - Captain Henry Morgan and the British Fleet is another of the maritime historic strengths of the region.
  - The fleet was docked in the area and underwater anchorages have been identified on the seafloor.

## **Bluefields Bay Area: Charting its Tourism Destiny**

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### **WEAKNESSES**

What characteristics place your destination at a disadvantage relative to others?

- Lack of Planning
  - Strategic plans are needed for encouraging the drivers of a tourism economy
- Additional financial support is needed to achieve tourism goals
- A concentrated effort to define the tourism focus of the area has not been done
- Efforts for tourism development are fractionalized
- Basic Difficulties
  - Removed from more developed tourist destinations
  - Positioned outside of the “tourism bubble”
  - Less \$ introduced by tourism industry
  - Lack of many basic amenities that even more intrepid travelers require
  - Relatively small resident population
  - Operates in a low wage economy
- Operational Practices
- Environmental education needed
  - Observed cases of trash being dumped into the ocean
  - Tourists are much more “eco-aware” today. Those who would be target market for Bluefields fall into this category and would immediately be turned off by some of the environmental practices
- Fish Sanctuary vs. Developments
  - Large residential development underway on mountain located directly above the fish sanctuary
  - Has the potential to damage the area and the fish sanctuary

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

What is out there that will provide an opportunity that will bring in more tourism revenue?

- Student Travel - Study Away Programs are a growing trend and can be utilized by Bluefield’s Bay to draw in student travelers.
  - Universities see many benefits to Study Away Programs
  - Voluntourism also very popular with students
  - Meeting Rooms and Classrooms
    - As the number of student travelers increases, the need for infrastructure where students can learn also increases.
    - Bluefield’s Bay can create meeting rooms and classrooms for these students to help draw them in.
- Nature Activities - There are many nature activities available to attract visitors to Bluefields Bay:
  - Birding
  - Hiking
  - Nature walks
  - Sailing
  - Diving
  - Exploring coral reefs

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### **THREATS**

What elements in the environment could cause trouble for your destination?

- Study Away Students
  - There are many reasons why a student may be deferred from choosing a destination to study in Jamaica
  - Usually issues of safety and availability of drugs are the most common reasons
  - A change in university policies making Study Away programs too expensive
- Destination Competition
  - Many other beach locations around the world have exquisite villas, fine dining, pristine beaches, high class service, and plenty of beach activities.
  - Bluefields Bay must find a way to stand above and beyond these other locations, even when offering some of the same attractions, or they will lose tourists.
- Lack of Planning
  - Bluefields Bay lacks planning when it comes to:
  - Watersheds and water supplies.
    - Water quality of the rivers flowing into Bluefields Bay
    - If unregulated, these things can harm the fish sanctuary, the water quality in the bay, and the coral reefs, among other things.
- Lack of Environmental Education
  - There is a lack of environmental education for the general public.
  - If locals do not understand the importance of environmental protection in their own community, there will be no one to explain its importance to tourists.
  - Locals must lead by example
- Protection of the Fish Sanctuary
  - Destructive fishing practices and over-fishing was threatening Bluefields Bay's fish population, so the fish sanctuary was created to allow fish populations to regenerate.
  - If the government takes away this protection, the fish population will again be threatened, which will affect local cuisine being offered in restaurants, and in turn affect tourism potential.
- Development on the Hill
  - This development really threatens tourism to Bluefields Bay for several reasons:
  - The development's infrastructure is unstable
  - When it rains, debris and runoff from the development wash down the hill and pollute the water
  - Threatens the fish sanctuary
  - Damages the coral reefs
  - It is causing large amounts of environmental destruction
  - If left unfinished, it will leave a huge ecological scar
  - It is an eyesore for both visitors and locals

### CONTACTS

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See the “Bluefields Jamaica” link at <http://oewri.missouristate.edu/> for an overview of other OEWRI projects in the Bluefields Bay Area.

