

Goat Islands declared a wildlife sanctuary

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The Jamaican Iguana which is found on Goat Islands

GOAT Islands in the Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA), which then Government in 2014 announced would become a Chinese-run transshipment port, has been named a wildlife sanctuary for endemic and endangered species, including the critically endangered endemic Jamaican Iguana (*Cyclura collei*).

The Jamaica Environment Trust (JET), which yesterday hailed the decision by the Andrew Holness-led Government, said the decision by the Urban Development Corporation was communicated in a letter from the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) to JET on December 13.

A JET release said NEPA has entered into a co-management arrangement with the UDC to manage the Goat Islands, which they also wish to establish as a biosphere reserve under UNESCO's biosphere programme.



Sections of Goat Islands

In its letter to JET, NEPA also welcomed the decision by the UDC and stated its intention to engage with JET and other stakeholders in developing and implementing its plans for Goat Islands, which include its development as an ecotourism attraction.

In 2014, the Goat Islands came under threat following the announcement that the Jamaican Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with Chinese interests to construct a transshipment port at the site. JET, along with managers of the PBPA, the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation, and other stakeholders launched a 'Save Goat Islands' campaign objecting to the proposal, and called for the decision to be revoked.



Sections of Goat Islands

In 2016, Prime Minister Holness announced that the Goat Islands was no longer being considered for the transshipment port, and committed to protecting the area.

“We are elated to hear this news,” said Suzanne Stanley, incoming CEO of JET. “The Save Goat Islands campaign has been one of JET's greatest successes to date under Diana's leadership, and this is a great note on which to celebrate her retirement.”

Meanwhile, Diana McCaulay, who retires as JET's CEO at the end of this month, said, “The two Goat Islands are a very special part of our Jamaican heritage, as is the Jamaican Iguana. I

look forward to visiting Jamaica's newest wildlife sanctuary in the near future, and congratulate the Government of Jamaica for this long-awaited decision.”