

JET Celebrates Goat Islands Being Declared A Wildlife Sanctuary

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In this January 25, 2014 photo, a fishing boat rests on a sandy beach of uninhabited Little Goat Islands.

The Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) is celebrating the decision by the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) to declare the Goat Islands in the Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA) as a wildlife sanctuary for endemic and endangered species.

JET says the decision was communicated in a letter from the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) yesterday.

As a consequence of the declaration, NEPA has entered into a co-management arrangement with the UDC to manage the Goat Islands, which they will also establish as a Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO's Biosphere Programme.

In 2014, the Goat Islands was thrust into the spotlight following the announcement that the Portia Simpson Miller administration had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Chinese interests to construct a transshipment port at the site.

However, due to vigorous opposition from JET, along with managers of the PBPA, the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (CCAM), and others through a Save Goat Islands campaign, those plans were scrapped.

In ailing the decision, outgoing JET CEO Diana McCaulay says the Goat Islands are a special part of Jamaica's heritage and is home to endemic species such as the Jamaican Iguana.