



IWCAM Project Coordination Unit

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Wondering about the quality of water in your taps? Maybe it's time for an integrated approach to water resources management

Mr. George James, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Physical Planning, The Environment, Housing, Urban Renewal, and Local Government, spoke to the well-attended Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Inception Workshop on Tuesday 12 August in the NIC Conference Room about the importance of an integrated approach to water resources management, one that addresses the impact of activities in the watershed all of the way down to the coral reef.

He highlighted the threats of water scarcity and poor water quality as related to drinking water, food production, and the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

Indeed, Dr. Christopher Cox, Acting Programme Director at the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) had introduced this first workshop on IWRM in St Lucia, pointing out that what you actually get when you open your tap is the result of planning, or a lack of planning, which goes back over many years.

The Workshop was organized by the Ministry for Physical Planning, The Environment, Housing, Urban Renewal, and Local Government; the Ministry for Agriculture, Land, Fisheries and Forestry; and the Global Environment Facility-funded Integrating Watershed and Coastal Areas Management Project (GEF-IWCAM), of which CEHI is one of the executing agencies; the other being the United Nations Environment Programme's Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit (UNEP-CAR/RCU).

Its purpose was to bring different sectors together to help develop St. Lucia's IWRM plan; which is called for in the UN's Millennium Development Goals. This plan is a critical tool to help the nation better manage its natural resources, in a period of increased water scarcity, degraded water quality, and increased climate change and variability - all concerns underscored by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Fisheries and Forestry, Mr. Hubert Emmanuel, in his remarks.

Saint Lucia has made significant progress in recent years with the adoption of the Water Policy by Cabinet, passage of the Water and Sewage Act, and rainwater harvesting activities in the Fond D'Or Watershed.

Perhaps most exciting is the news, which emerged at this Workshop, that full funding is available for the staffing of a Water Resources Management Agency (WRMA), which is under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture. It is expected that the WRMA will be up and running very shortly. Participants were enthusiastic about the WRMA's future role as driver of the process for an IWRM plan for St. Lucia.

Given current events, the workshop also dedicated some time to the very pertinent issue of WASCO privatization. This included discussion of real pricing of water, water efficiency activities, and the need for capital improvements.

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