

Tamara Woodit-Morris – on a mission to sustainably protect the natural and built environment of Jamaica



Mrs. Tamara Woodit-Morris is determined to play her part in sustainably managing Jamaica's natural and built environment through her work with the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA). She is currently the regional coordinator responsible for enforcement, monitoring

and compliance with the environment and planning laws in Western Jamaica (St. James, Trelawny, Hanover and Westmoreland).

Woodit-Morris believes that environmental protection can be achieved through, amongst other things, the ordered development of the built environment, sustained use of natural resources and informed urban and regional planning. An ardent continuous learner raised in Old Harbour, St. Catherine, Woodit-Morris had a fascination with animals. This was nurtured and encouraged

by her father, Joseph who was a farmer and jockey.

From very early, she understood the importance of respecting and sustainably using resources in the environment. The floods in her community and the resultant impact on lives and livelihood inspired her enrolment in the University of Technology's, Bachelor of Science Urban and Regional Planning programme, where she graduated with honours. A trained urban and regional planner, Woodit-Morris believes that enforcement chose her.

Mrs Woodit-Morris' career began at the Negril Green Island Area Local Planning Authority (NGIALPA) as a Planning Inspector in 2010, where she processed building applications to ensure that the designs conformed to the Building Code. She went on to join the NEPA as an Environmental Officer in 2011, becoming an Enforcement and Compliance Coordinator in 2013.

Woodit-Morris cites human resources management, stakeholder engagement and a willingness to pivot as crucial pillars to navigate as a leader. These are continuously applied in the operationalization of her regional enforcement and monitoring strategy. Recognising the importance of these pillars, Tamara pursued and successfully completed a Masters of Business Administration and a diploma in Executive Coaching, Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

The National Anthem is etched in her memory, with pride of place being, " ... give us vision

lest we perish." For her, idea generation should be encouraged and promoted throughout an organization or unit as this may ultimately allow for a sustainable competitive advantage. A culture of continuous learning and re-learning is embraced by Woodit-Morris through her professional development plan development.

She recently completed training in the profiling of suspects of wildlife crimes with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). A transformational and revolutionary leader Woodit-Morris' supervisors describe her as a transformational, revolutionary leader who is solution-oriented and outcome-driven. Mrs Woodit-Morris led and continues to lead on the overhauling of work processes within the Agency's Legal and Enforcement Division.

Her contribution has resulted in greater efficiencies, and the successful implementation of the regional work plan. Over the past three years, she has been credited with developing new frameworks for recording, tracking, assessing, and reporting on compliance at the parish, regional and national levels. She has also spearheaded several projects and systems to build capacity and strengthen relationships with stakeholders including the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), Jamaica Fire Brigade and Local Planning Authorities.

Continues on Page 7

Environmental Permit & Licence Applications Process



- NEPA - National Environment and Planning Agency
- NRCA - Natural Resources Conservation Authority
- EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment
- ToR - Terms of Reference

National Environment and Planning Agency

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Continued From Page 6



led by Woodit-Morris along with the government partners (JCF and Bureau of Standards) laid 22 charges against individuals and companies in the varying parish courts for breaches of the Order. The quality of the case files submitted to the Court informed the decision of 95% of the defendants to plead guilty, with other matters proceeding to trial. **With boots on the ground, the sky is the limit.**

Woodit-Morris is of the view that while she cannot run like Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce or Usain Bolt, there is a big opportunity for her to contribute to her island home - a small island

developing state, where climate change is a live issue. With that view, she runs with a mandate that the natural and built environment must be continuously monitored to safeguard against breaches that may become deleterious to all.

As a corollary, she seizes every

opportunity to contribute to the finalization of policies and decisions related to urban and regional planning. Recognising how topical development has become in Jamaica, she considers it prudent to leverage her skills as a planner with the practical experience of enforcing to inform the next chapter for development in Jamaica as it regards heights and densities, setbacks, wetland modification, drainage, housing developments and others.

Each day, she chooses to be a leader who is an effective communicator, active listener and relationship builder. Tamara also has a 'boots on the ground' approach and believes that it is important to be present, accessible and lead by example. Tamara credits her success as a leader to her upbringing, where she was taught to 'do good and it will follow you,' mixed with the rigour of having only brothers. This prepared her to effectively operate in an industry once male-dominated.

Woodit-Morris sees her teammates as another key facet of her professional life. She speaks highly of her team and expresses immense appreciation for their hard work, commitment and drive toward achieving the NEPA's mission. She is invested in their development and performance. She firmly believes in both the results and the process for achieving them, which sets her apart and has garnered the respect and approval of her colleagues and the public.



These initiatives significantly impact the Agency's achievement of a key performance indicator for enforcement actions taken. Jamaica banned the use of single-use plastics on 1 January 2019 with the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) (Plastic Packaging Material) Prohibition Order, 2018. A team

Continued From Page 5

BLOSSOM'S GEMS

True respect for all: We need to be more positive in our speech especially when we talk to our youngsters; we have to ignite a fire in their belly of what's possible and be that role model that will inspire them to do great things. I am also passionate about working with the seniors and I have 'adopted' a few at church.

Sustainable lifestyle: I believe in 'growing what I eat and eating what I grow' so there's always something in my garden that can be used to prepare something for my family, comprising my husband Delroy and children Danielle and Joshua.

It gives me sheer joy to be

able to do this. I really enjoy making the best use possible of my little plot of land for now.

Angel in the details: It's the little things we do and say, it's the smile, it's the howdy that starts a conversation, it's being able to make people comfortable



myself and husband Delroy and children Danielle and Joshua. Enjoying a day at the beach