

Issue 8

ENVIROFOCUS

Newsletter of the Environmental Protection Department

Celebrating

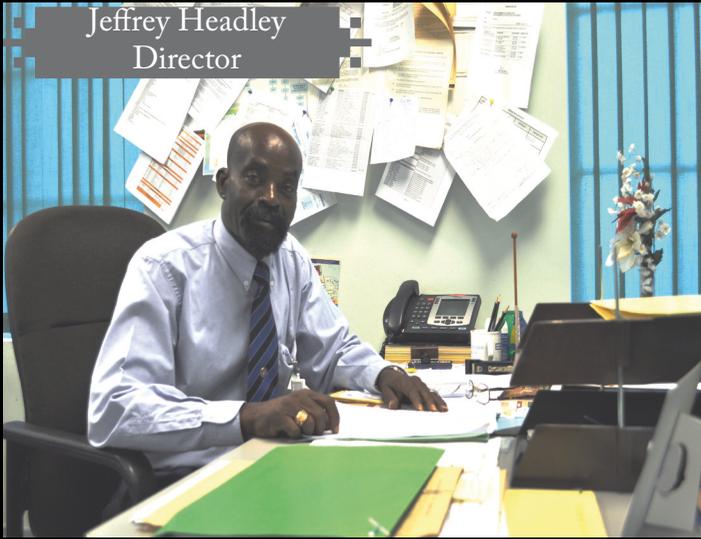
40 Years

Anniversary Edition

March 2011

From the Director...

Jeffrey Headley
Director



As the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) celebrates its 40th anniversary this March, I reflect on the early days of the Environmental Protection Department, which began its life in 1971 as the Public Health Engineering Unit, with a small staff of nine persons. Since then the Department has evolved to address new and recurring environmental issues such as:

- Marine litter and other solid waste management issues;

- Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs);
- Chemical Weapons;
- Increasing levels of groundwater contamination;
- Air and noise pollution;
- Public apathy regarding environmental matters.

Today fifty (50) talented individuals staff the Department and are dedicated to minimizing threats to the environment. However, the Department does not work in isolation. The Department's successes materialized only through collaboration with other government agencies, non-governmental agencies, academia, and the private sector.

In spite of the progress made over the past 40 years, there are still a number of challenges, which must be addressed for the EPD to become the premier regulatory agency in Barbados managing environmental issues. The two most notable challenges are public apathy and lack of appropriate legislation. It is disheartening to see the lack of interest for safeguarding our environment given its importance to our quality of life. Furthermore, without stringent and enforceable legislation there is no impetus for the public to change this attitude.

The Department reaffirms its commitment to overcome these challenges by redoubling its public awareness campaign and lobbying policy makers to enact effective legislation. In doing so, the Department will enable future generations to inherit an environment which is healthy, productive and enjoyable.

I also take this opportunity to commend the staff for the excellent and committed work done during the Department's 40 years. I further encourage them to continue to be effective and efficient in carrying-out the policies and programmes of the Department.

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A Brief Overview

Culloden Farm
The Department's home in
the 1980s



name changed again in 2004 to Environmental Protection Department (EPD) when its functions expanded yet again.

In spite of the name changes, the EPD's mission to promote sustainable environmental practices through control, regulation and enforcement has not waived. The Department strives to ensure that future generations inherit an environment, which is healthy, productive and enjoyable. The EPD is responsible for the monitoring and control of conditions that are likely to affect the quality of the land, air, water as well as the general health and environmental well-being of the residents of Barbados. Existing functions of the Department include:

- Air Pollution Control
- Marine Pollution Control
- Building Development Control
- Noise Pollution Control
- Derelict Buildings and Vehicles Management
- Solid Waste Regulation
- Emergency Response
- Water Quality Management
- Hazardous Materials Management
- Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Interesting fact

The Marine Pollution Control Act was passed in 1998 for the protection of the marine environment from land and sea based pollutants.

In March 1971, the Government of Barbados established the Public Health Engineering Unit of the Ministry of Health and Welfare as a means to preserve the environment. At that time the Unit ensured that, among other things, wastewater was disposed appropriately, in keeping with the prevailing policies and regulations, to minimize groundwater contamination. As the Unit's responsibilities increased to include monitoring of the ground and marine waters, the name was changed to the Environmental Engineering Division. The

A look Back

My most memorable experience at the EPD was sometime during the 1990's when I was working with the Water Quality Section. I was collecting seawater samples at Miami Beach, close to the cliff. I distinctly remember that the water was calm even though it was high tide, which was unusual. I went further out to sea to take the sample than I normally would because there was a lot of seaweed. Just after I swept up my first sample, a mind told me to look back and there careening towards me was a wave twice my height, bare in mind that I am over 6 feet tall. The wave body slammed me and rolled me like a tumble weed in the wind. After having its way with me, it spewed me onto the shore. I felt battered and bruised and had lost all the sample bottles. To my surprise rather than assistance from my colleagues I was greeted by thunderous laughter.

Andrew Deane

Primary Functions

Air Pollution Control

The air quality management functions of the EPD are:

1. Investigating ambient and indoor air quality complaints;
2. Researching ambient and indoor air quality issues and
3. Researching and developing ambient and indoor air quality policies and programmes.



Hazardous Materials Management

The hazardous materials management functions of the EPD are:

1. Identifying hazardous materials,
2. Monitoring the use of hazardous materials,
3. Regulating the disposal of hazardous waste and
4. Developing policies for hazardous materials management.

Noise Pollution Control

The noise pollution control functions of the EPD are:

1. Investigating noise pollution complaints;
2. Researching noise pollution issues and
3. Reviewing and developing noise pollution policies and guidelines.



Derelict Buildings & Vehicles Management

This involves identifying derelict buildings and vehicles and facilitating their demolition/removal and disposal in accordance with the Health Services Act Cap. 44 and Health Services (Collection and Disposal of Refuse) Regulation, 1975. The removal of derelict buildings and vehicles is important as these can provide a home for rodents and vermin and a shelter for illegal activities while causing discomfort to the general public.

of the Department

Water Quality Management

This is achieved by:

1. Continuous monitoring and assessment of all groundwater supplies;
2. Continuous monitoring and assessment of nearshore marine water quality;
3. Investigating, researching and identifying potential sources of groundwater pollutants and
4. Monitoring and assessing all wastewater collection and treatment facilities.

Building Development Control

The Building Development Control functions ensure that all building occupants enjoy a safe and comfortable environment that satisfies national environmental health, construction and land use standards. This involves reviewing applications for residential, commercial and industrial development to ensure adequate layout, amenities, ventilation and waste disposal.



Marine Pollution Control

The main function is the implementation of the Marine Pollution Control Act (MPCA), 1998. This includes:

1. Enforcing the provisions of the MPCA.
2. Developing programmes to prevent, reduce and control marine pollution.
3. Responding to complaints related to marine pollution including emergency response for marine pollution incidents such as oil spills.

Solid Waste Regulation

The solid waste management functions of the EPD are:

1. Monitoring and regulating waste disposal sites operated by Sanitation Service Authority;
2. Regulating solid waste management practices and
3. Developing and advising on solid waste management policies for Barbados along with other key stakeholder agencies.



The Department also plays a role in some emergency response activities such as oil spills and incidents involving hazardous chemicals.

The Department is involved in the implementation of a number of Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Stockholm and Basel Conventions.

40 Years of Achievement

Since its inception, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has made significant strides to preserve the environment and protect human health.

The Department was a Caribbean pioneer in the development and implementation of a routine monitoring programme for marine water. Data from this programme gives an indication of the land-based sources of pollution in need of regulation so that the marine environment is not negatively affected. In fact, data

from this programme contributed to the development of the South Coast Treatment Facility.

To decrease worsening of coastal water quality and harm done to coral reefs, the Department played a pivotal role in the development of the Marine Pollution Control Act. This Act, which became law in 1998, regulates all discharges that may negatively affect the marine environment.



The EPD, with invaluable assistance from government agencies and the local petroleum industry, spearheaded the development of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, which Cabinet approved in 2002. This Plan provides for coordinated response actions by agencies of the Government of Barbados and the local petroleum industry to protect the terrestrial and marine environment from the damaging and polluting effects of oil discharges.

Other noteworthy achievements include:

- Development of a National Implementation Plan for the Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) which aims to minimize the chances of POPs affecting persons in the community.
- Development of a Noise Pollution Policy in 2001 to define the future management of environmental noise pollution.
- Receipt of a bronze award for its participation in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), which is a policy framework for international action on chemical hazards. SAICM strives to ensure that by 2020 chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize adverse impacts on the environment and human health.

Another look Back

Having worked at the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) for over 25 years, I can say that I have enjoyed my work and appreciate the progress that EPD has made.

I started working as a Draughtsman/Technician before being promoted to Building Development Officer in the Building Development Control Section. I have watched EPD grow from obscurity to a Department of some prominence in spite of the many challenges it faced. This growth has brought about specialized functions and a greater complement of staff with diverse academic and professional qualifications.

The staff at the Department is one of major reasons that I have enjoyed my work over the past 25 years. I find the staff to be very caring, willing to improve and eager to learn. I enjoy interacting with the staff whether we are discussing local or world issues, sports or entertainment.

As the Department moves into the future, my wish is for the people of Barbados to protect and show appreciation for the environment.

Michael Small

Planned Activities

To commemorate its 40th anniversary the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has planned a number of activities. Most of these activities aim to increase public awareness about the EPD and environmental protection.

Activities include:

- An exhibition in the city;
- Re-launching of the Department's website;
- Press releases in the local media; and
- Educational bus rides.

More information about these events will be provided through the local media.

Did you Know?

Seven (7) members of staff have been with the Environmental Protection Department for over twenty (20) years.

These stalwarts are:

- Jeffrey Headley - Director
- Sylvan Catwell - Chief Building Development Officer
- Kenneth Barrow - Senior Building Development Officer
- Andrew Deane - Building Development Officer
- Stephen Forde - Building Development Officer
- Michael Small - Building Development Officer
- Muriel Forde - Clerk/Typist

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has made a considerable contribution to the development of Barbados over the last 40 years. While we recognise and celebrate this milestone, we are very aware of the changing socio-economic environment in which we live and the challenges that are yet to be faced in our mission to protect the environment on which Barbados depends.

The EPD has therefore embarked on a strategic planning process, which will provide the framework to guide the Department into the next 5 years and beyond. The strategic approach will focus on the following broad areas: understanding our environment; environmental protection for a wholesome life; resource efficiency; and compliance through communication, education, partnerships, and shared responsibility.

It is intended that scientifically sound research and investigative activities will be the cornerstone of the work done by the EPD in the future. Information and data collected will be used to better understand how ecological systems function, their interactions and how human activities affect either positively or negatively on the environment. The findings of research will be used as the basis for decision-making as it relates to EPD regulatory functions.

Environmental protection and the reduction of the release of pollutants to the air, water, and land

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contribute to the overall goal of improving the quality of life of Barbadians. As a result, another focus will be the development of legal instruments and enforcement systems to ensure that environmental protection criteria are met and that sustainable practices are ingrained throughout all levels of Barbadian society.

In regards to resource efficiency, the EPD has also committed to continuous staff development to ensure that the best skills are employed, and the most efficient procedures, methodologies, and equipment are utilised in the evaluation of environmental pollution and the management of environmental resources.

A critical part of the Department's functions will be seeking compliance through communication, education, partnerships, and shared responsibility. The EPD is well aware that education, active involvement and empowerment of a range of stakeholders will be essential to effecting attitudinal change towards sustainable development. The Department will therefore continue its efforts to build partnerships and encourage voluntary compliance and environmental stewardship towards continuous improvements in environmental performance.



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