

THE HABIT

No!, not a Nun's hat but a routine or behavior that is repeated regularly and which tends to occur subconsciously. Since March of 2020, we have been forced to give into new habits. Covid-19 took the world on a course of new behaviours; some of which have stressed and enhanced pre-existing day-to-day functions, such as the washing of hands. But others of which were completely novel and uncustomary that they have to be enforced by edicts issued by our Prime Minister, here in Jamaica in order to make them regular practice.



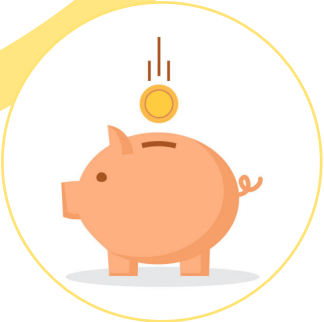
One such is the wearing of masks in public spaces.

Whilst it is being observed by most, many have resisted, whenever it is possible to flout the new rule, that is, as this order is compulsory in almost all established businesses. Therefore, unless, you have been living under a rock all this time, you must have had to wear a mask at some point, in public.

Mask-wearing has now become a habit. Still, only for those who feel the need to comply. So too has the regular washing of hands and standing six feet from others in public. The cultivation of these new habits, brought an end to others, such as greeting friends and family with hugs and kisses on the cheeks. This particularly impacted our society greatly as hugging, touching and fist bumping were an accepted cultural norms when greeting others.

But in everything there is a lesson. So what have we learnt about habits in general? After all, we often hear, 'oh- it's just a bad habit' or 'I really need to develop that habit' or 'I need to kick that habit.'

COVID-19 has taught us, that new habits can indeed be cultivated if what we desire to become habitual is repeated regularly. It could be, keeping our environment clean, getting to work early, eating healthy, exercising or saving money. Whatever new way of life you wish to acquire, it simply takes doing it often enough that it becomes habit.



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"Paving the Way"

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF DELTA, ZETA AND ETA

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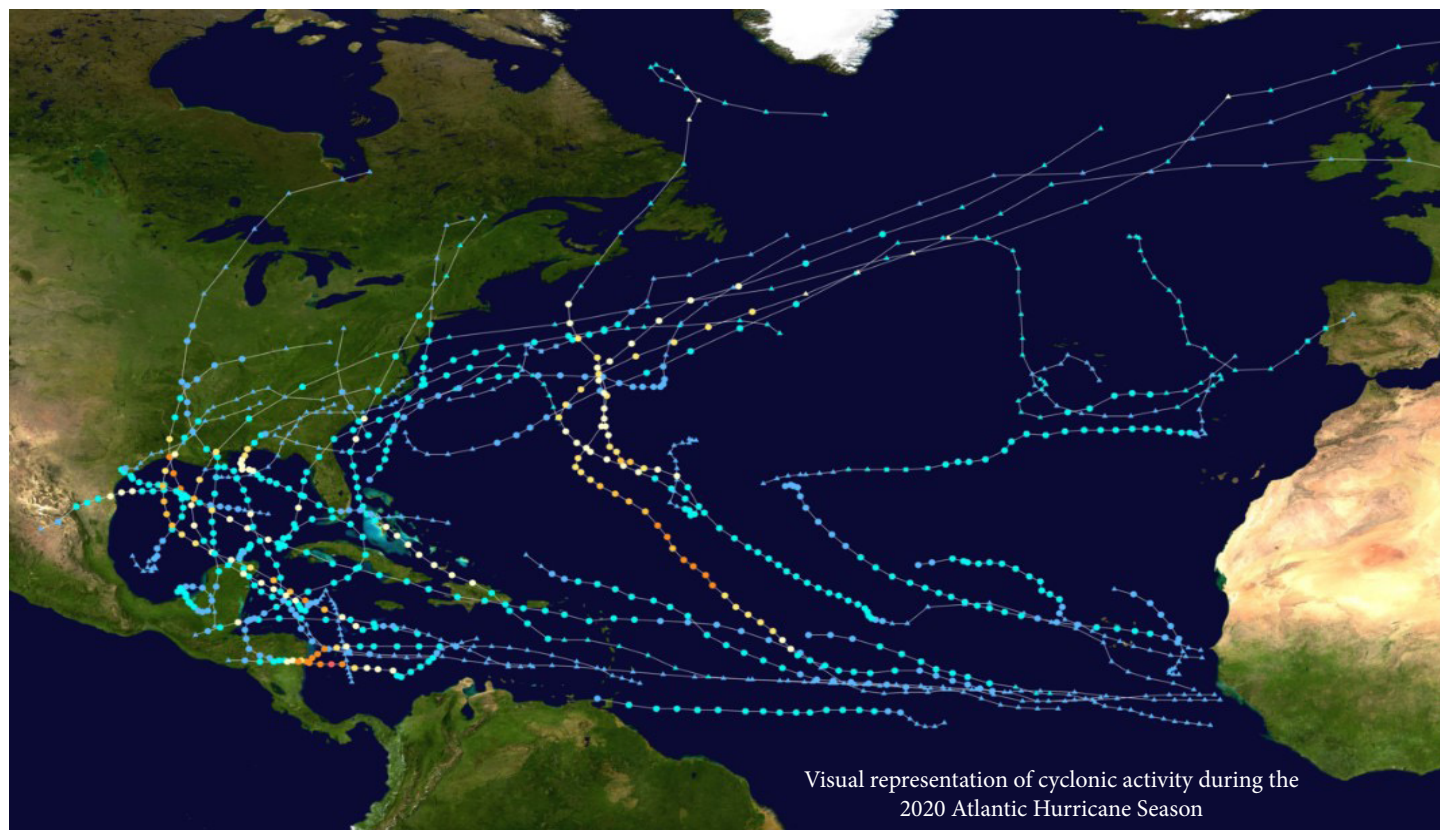
The Habit

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The operator of a bulldozer, one in an expansive fleet of heavy equipment, which worked untold hours to remove a massive build-up of silt from the Chalky River, St. Andrew during the closing months of 2020 faces the Caribbean Sea at last! The great mound is reduced and a channel is created to drain the River, and bring reprieve to the residents of Weise Road, Bull Bay whose properties were buried in up to 20-foot high sand and silt when the River overtopped its banks during the flood rains which accompanied Tropical Storm Zeta in late October. Tristan Tulloch, one of the National Works Agency's (NWA) site supervisors, was recognized with the CEO's Award for his efforts in leading clean-up efforts.

Roadways across the Island Pounded by 2020 Post Summer Rains



The 2020 Atlantic Hurricane season was the most active in recorded history, producing thirty-one (31) tropical cyclones. Of this number, only one did not develop into a named storm. The season was unusual, also, in the sense that there were two named storms in May: Arthur and Bertha, at least a week before the start of the season on June 1.

It is not short of a miracle that Jamaica was spared a direct hit from any of these cyclonic activities, and many would venture conjectures as to why this was the case. The roadways and infrastructure were not so lucky, however, as rains and winds associated with different storms successively tested them to their limits and beyond.

After weeks of intermittent rains that began at the end of summer, it was not surprising when in October, roadways and drainage infrastructure, in at least ten parishes, started to buckle under the pressure of constant precipitation. The situation was further exacerbated when the rainfall continued, almost consistently, for the next two months, to levels that are rarely seen and can never be adequately planned for.

There were reports of flooding; land and mudslides; failed embankments and breakaways; scouring and worsening potholes. Panic ensued and tempers flared as citizens called on the intervention of the government and its agencies to halt the damage and restore normalcy. Even while chaos and fear consumed the masses, work teams were risking their lives and equipment to clear roadways, sometimes repeatedly over the course of several hours.

While roadways in the Corporate Area were not spared the onslaught of the rains, it was found though that the parishes that reported the most damage was St. Andrew, St. Thomas, Clarendon, St. Mary, St. Elizabeth and St. Catherine. In fact, the Bog Walk Gorge was impassable for several days and traffic had to be diverted onto the almost equally affected Sligoville Road.

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COVID Interrupted Our Custom



The COVID-19 disease represented an exogenous shock to our local education system. The contagious nature of the virus forced government to act swiftly in implementing strategies to curb its spread. One such measure was the closure of schools for month, almost approaching a year now.

This infection prevention measure in particular interrupted the National Works Agency's Southern Region tradition of adopting a basic school and treating students for a day around Christmas time. The three parishes – St. Elizabeth, Manchester and Clarendon normally rotated on a yearly basis nominating a beneficiary school based on a needs analysis. The initiative, which was conceptualized by former Administrative Manager, Mrs. Sonia Cole, the late Regional Manager Leslie Miller and Community Relations Officer Howard Hendriks, and is today continued by Joan Blair and Denton Moore funds the activity through the contributions of staff members, from which gifts and a warm meal is provided to staff and students.

From the very first treat at Plowden Basic School, Manchester in 2007 to their last stop, before COVID intervened, at the Ginger Hill Basic School in North West St. Elizabeth in December 2019, this charity has gifted much-needed resources to what are mainly small, community-run schools for infants in rural parts of the island. Over the years, with the Southern Region's assistance, institutions have had their plumbing challenges addressed and acquired new appliances for their school feeding programme.

While, the team has not kept track of the total sum they have invested in this venture, they are proud of the impact and difference they have made in these agrarian villages through supporting early childhood education. They are hoping they will be able to restart their proud tradition in 2021, but more than this, they wish the little ones, their caregivers and teachers good health in these trying times.

I REALLY DIG MY JOB!



In late October, the NWA had to carry out emergency cleaning exercises on some major drains in Montego-Bay, St. James to mitigate or relieve flooding in a number of communities including the cleaning of the North and South Gullies. In this photograph the outlet of the River Bay Road drain was being de-silted.

Impact of 2020's Tropical Storms out West ... continued from page 3

There was also much damage to property as a result of flood rains. The Riu Hotel, in St. James, was most notably affected with significant flooding resulting in damage to the property as well as to motor vehicles which were parked at the resort.

The flood rains of 2020, also highlighted a major problem, that of improper garbage disposal practices. It was alarming to see the level of domestic waste which was washed down in a number of drains, blocking waterways and reducing the effectiveness of drainage systems.

The National Works Agency work teams were kept busy

throughout the period ensuring that roadways were reopened within the shortest possible time and that drains, gullies and silt traps were cleaned. Effort was also placed on effecting emergency repairs to the affected sections of roadways to provide for a safer commute by road users. Additionally, the NWA took a proactive approach to the matter of flood mitigation through implementing a number of programmes targeting critical drains and gullies across the region. Additionally, some programmes were aimed at the construction of additional drainage features along critical road sections across the region including the Elegant Corridor in St. James.

Impact of 2020's Tropical Storms out West

The year 2020 was definitely one for the books as the island faced the challenges brought on by a global pandemic as well as one of the most active Hurricane Seasons in recorded history. The year overall, was unusual to say the least, damage associated with flood events was not confined to the Hurricane season as areas such as Negril, as early as January 2020, suffered the devastating effects of storm surges, severely eroding a section of the West End roadway. This level of activity continued and intensified even before the start of the Hurricane Season and was seemingly a precursor of what was to come as the 2020 North Atlantic Hurricane Season was the most active in recorded history.

Indeed, the 2020 Atlantic Hurricane Season saw above average activity with 13 of the named storms developing into hurricanes, six being major systems. Such was the level of activity that, for only the second time in history, the Greek alphabet was used to provide names for storms.

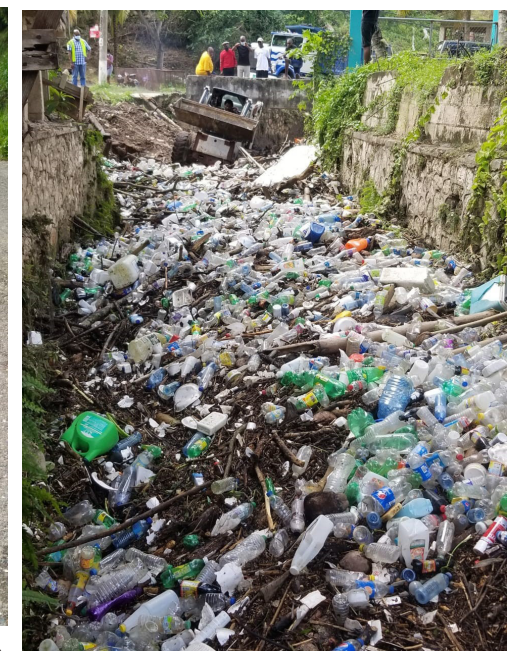
While Jamaica did not experience a hurricane, the island was ravaged by a number of tropical storms, including Delta, Zeta and Eta. The months of October and November were particularly challenging, with a number of successive storm events causing major damage to the roads and road infrastructure in the Western Region. Several roadways were severely scoured, others undermined and several others blocked by large boulders, washed down silt and debris. Among the roadways which were most severely impacted were the Joe Hut in Southern Trelawny; the Tucker to Retirement roadway in St. James; sections of the Flint River to Cascade roadway in Hanover; and the West End roadway in Negril, Westmoreland.



The NWA Team works to clear a section of the Blue Diamond Gully, in St. James, which was blocked by debris in the aftermath of flood rains in October 2020.



A view of a section of the Thompson Town (Wire Fence to Warsop) roadway in Southern Trelawny which was severely damaged following flood rains in November 2020.



The NWA clears a blocked section of the Chelsea Gully in St. James, which overtopped with plastic bottles and debris in October 2020.

WHEN IT RAINED



The flood rain events brought on by consecutive tropical storms in Delta, Zeta and Eta which affected sections of the island between October 4 and November 7, often times without any sign of letting up, left behind distinct instances of major infrastructural damage along sections of the island's road network, more so in rural parts of East Rural St. Andrew and Kingston. Some of the most affected locations were and still is Gordon Town Road which broke away at Stand Up Hill as well as, massive unending landslides along Irish Town Road, which required repeated clearing and the expending of resources.



\$500 Million Upgrade for Community Roadways in the West

"We want roads!" That has been the cry of many residents who often lament the poor state of roadways in their communities. The National Works Agency (NWA) has been seeking to address these cries through a robust Maintenance of Secondary Roads Programme, which targets several parochial roadways in need of repair in communities across the island.

In 2020, the Western parishes of Trelawny, St. James, Westmoreland and Hanover saw a total investment of just under \$500 million in their road infrastructure. Among the roadways which benefitted were the Laughton Town to Lorrimers roadway in Trelawny; the Lagoon View Walk in St. James; the Cold Spring to Thompson Town roadway in Eastern Hanover; and the Goodens River to Glasgow roadway in Westmoreland.

The projects involved drainage improvement, the reshaping and asphaltting of the targeted sections of the roadway as well as patching and local rehabilitation. Additionally, in the case of the Lorrimers roadway in Trelawny, a defective culvert was replaced, thereby improving drainage along this particular stretch.

These projects have greatly improved driving conditions along the targeted sections and have been welcomed by residents.



Lagoon View Walk, St. James: A view of a section of the Lagoon View Walk roadway which was rehabilitated at a cost of \$28 million under the Maintenance of Secondary Roads Programme.



Riley, Hanover: A view of a retaining wall which was constructed along a section of the Riley-Bushmouth roadway in Hanover. The wall was completed as part of a \$26 million contract to repair a section of the Riley - Bushmouth roadway.

SURVEYING THE DAMAGE

In mid-November Minister Everaldo Warmington who has portfolio responsibility for Works in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation toured sections of St.

Catherine and St. Elizabeth, which did not escape entirely unscathed from the passage of the tropical storms, to take a first-hand look at how the parishes' infrastructure held up.



Photos 1-3: Minister Warmington looking at a road in North East St. Catherine with Member of Parliament Kerensia Morrison
Photo 4: Minister Warmington looking at a damaged section of the road from Maggotty to Elderslie with Member of Parliament for North East St. Elizabeth J.C. Hutchinson

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It Poured Cats and Dogs, Boulders and Silt



It took a lot of work, patience and repeat visits to break the back of this mammoth landslide along the Irish Town Road, to provide relief to persons who were marooned in Newcastle.

When it began to rain in the southeastern section of the island late last year, it poured. Weeks upon weeks of incessant rainfall made farmers, who previously prayed for water to irrigate their parched fields, curse the heavens. However, no one wanted the downpour to cease more than weary motorists who had even more potholes to dodge and the National Works Agency (NWA) who now had to add the growing number of road defects to an already long list.

The North Atlantic Hurricane season was relentless and appeared determined to exhaust itself in 2020, churning out one named tropical storm after another with Laura, Delta, Zeta and Eta wreaking havoc on the country's road network, as much as in Kingston, St. Andrew, St. Thomas and Clarendon as elsewhere.

As first responders, the NWA is required to get to any location, once summoned, to assist with restoring access along roadways following a natural disaster. The Agency accumulated extensive mileage in doing so during the major events of late last year. From Weise Road in east rural St. Andrew, to the ill-fated scene which unfolded in nearby Shooters Hill, the

NWA team and equipment removed hundreds of truckloads of material from roadways, cut narrow paths to marooned villages and drained submerged communities by desilting major drains and rivers.

When asked how many hours he believed his team committed to clean-up and relief efforts post the events, Dwight Clayton, who manages the NWA's Kingston parish office confesses he honestly could not tell. He says he would however safely add upwards of four hours to every workday for each officer, plus their weekends which was primarily reserved for getting road patching material to work crews, clearing roadways and desilting drains. Regional Manager for the NWA's Southeast Region, Damian Townsend puts it at some 5000 extra man hours that was committed to the effort by his teams across Kingston, St. Andrew and St. Thomas.

While Tropical Storm Laura tried Mr. Townsend the most, in Mr. Clayton's mind, none of the events distinguished itself as being the most testing. For him, it was the fact that they were so close together, which presented the biggest challenge. "It was just continuous rainfall," he lamented, "whenever we responded to one event, the next event just came and washed out our efforts."

The team across the Southeastern region however responded and continues to work with the resources available to them to mitigate any hazard that still exists along the road network as a result of the impact of the year-ending flood rains. According to Mr. Townsend the magnitude of the impact paired with the limited resources available served to protract the period of clean-up and recovery. However, Kingston's parish manager assures that despite these challenges, he and his team have managed to make steady progress in repairing the worse-affected sections of roadways.

Areas that had fallen into major disrepair including a section of Bell Road, Spanish Town Road (between the overpass off ramp and Development Road), East Queen Street, Chesterfield Drive, sections of Mannings Hill and Waltham Park Roads, Roseberry and Arcadia and Washington Boulevard in the vicinity of Duhaney Drive have so far been addressed. Some roads in Downtown Kingston, including a section of Orange Street, which are in need of repair, are slated for attention under the upcoming Fourth Quarter Patching Programme, which forms part of the NWA's routine maintenance activities.

Preparation have already begun in some of these areas in anticipation of the start of works. In his estimation, Mr. Clayton believes that his Kingston team responded well to the challenges although they did appear insurmountable at times whilst they were in the eyes of the storms.

He Moved Earth

And when it stormed and rivers swelled
 And mighty channels overflowed
 And water, silt and stone displaced
 Us from our homes, haunts and roads
 He moved earth
 To clear a path for our safe return
 To once more get us moving
 To shore up old weathered banks
 To prevent properties from toppling
 He moved earth
 Little man, big river
 Dwarfed by the channel's yawning sprawl
 Still the big rigs faced a mammoth task
 But he was there through it all
 He moved earth
 Uncounted hours dedicated
 Around and off the clock
 He remained steadfast to the task
 Even as Delta, Zeta and Eta mocked
 He moved earth
 Workers towed, silty sand carted
 He stayed on the ground
 Solutions for challenges innovated
 To repair the river's toll
 He moved earth!

Employee of the Year CITATION

Mr. Tristan Tulloch

For his efforts in spearheading the desilting of the Chalky River, in Bull Bay, East Rural St. Andrew, a most urgent task to protect life and property in adjoining volatile communities, site supervisor, Tristan Tulloch was honoured with the CEO's Award at the close of 2020. It was indeed a final quarter fraught with challenges in the form of three consecutive tropical storms and flood events which caused extensive damage to the island's road infrastructure, particularly in southeastern river-side communities including Bull Bay, Shooters Hill and Weise Road.

Mr. Tulloch, who works out of the Regional Implementation and Special Projects Directorate, accounted for umpteen additional man hours required to clear and clean roadways and community such that life and residents chiefly of Weise Road, St. Andrew, who lives adjacent to the heavily-silted Chalky River, could return to some level of normalcy following the passage of tropical storm Zeta in late October 2020.

His accomplishments were captured in a citation done in poetry.



The Year After

The night before
 I called your phone
 There was no answer
 No sweet baritone
 Chuckle or pensive moan
 Maybe you were drifting
 Heavenly-bound
 Anguish reverb through the night
 Brinkley woke up with candlelight
 Weepin' and wailin' their
 princess is gone
 While the sun is rising in the early morn
 The news spread across the nation
 Even international news and radio stations
 Cold
 You were as cool as Hampton breeze
 Like an innocent child, you kept that smile
 Holding onto the pain inside
 We could not understand why
 It was a COVID-19 March afternoon
 The bells of Lititz Moravian chime
 Like a bridge over troubled waters
 You lying there
 Roses and flowers surround
 you in baskets
 With your eyes to the sky
 Such a sweet sweet angel
 Nevia love, we miss you so
 much
 We are still here in shock,
 crying
 The year after

New Market Submerged ... continued from page 14



NWA's Community Relations Officer, Howard Hendriks, retelling the history of flooding in the area for journalists.

The **ROADSTER** accompanied a team of journalists on a tour of the submerged location. It was déjà vu for Community Relations Officer for the Southern Region, Howard Hendriks, who led the tour party. He remembered as a six form student of Munro College the historic June 1979 flooding of the area.

In the hills north of New Market, a usually dry water course called Hog Hole, was engulfed with gushing water which made its way through pasture land, crossing New Market into Montego Bay and submerging the main road up to ankle length. Residents feared that if there were more rain in Trelawny or the Cockpit Country, the Hog Hole Water might have overwhelmed New Market as it had done in 1979 and most recently in the flood rains of Tropical Storm Nicole in late 2010.

The 1979 flood had led to the creation of the village called Lewisville, named after the late Member of Parliament Neville Lewis, for the evacuation and relocation of New Market residents. It was built upon a hill above the watery town complete with a high school, police station, a market and other social amenities. However, with time, the flood waters receded and some residents returned to New Market, which is an important transit point for those travelling between St. Elizabeth and northeastern Westmoreland, eastern Hanover and St. James.

According to Vincent Samuels, President of the Beersheba Old Students' Association, there are seven rivers flowing under the Old New Market Square. During the floods of 1938 and 1979 the entire Old Market Square, from Paynes Town, Kepp, New Savannah, Carr District and Long Ground was completely inundated. He stated that in 1979 the Jamaica Public Service and the Old Market buildings were submerged and were not visible until the lake receded six months later.

New Market Submerged

The National Works Agency (NWA) announced in November 2020, following heavy rains, that rising water in the community of New Market, St Elizabeth had resulted in the main road to Carmel, in neighboring Westmoreland being impassable. The main road was blocked for days, submerged by overflows from the Two Sisters Pond, located on the outskirts of the business district. They NWA encouraged small vehicles travelling towards Darliston through Carmel to use the alternate route through Kilmarnock. Meanwhile, larger vehicles were advised to use the road from New Market through Leamington to get to Darliston.

Many residents were not really happy when the Meteorological Office broadcast that there was a good chance of more heavy, persistent rain in November after being battered by torrential rainfall in October. There was the fear that many people could be forced from their homes and businesses due to flooding. In October, water from the Two Sisters Pond merged but did not get high enough to block the road and the water gradually receded. However the November rains in New Market made national headlines.



As far as the eyes could see, the New Market main road, the route to Carmel, Westmoreland was inundated with clear water from gorging springs for weeks in November 2020.



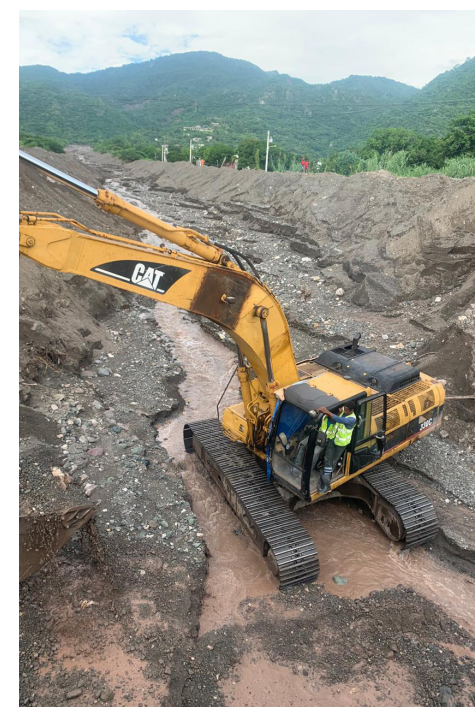
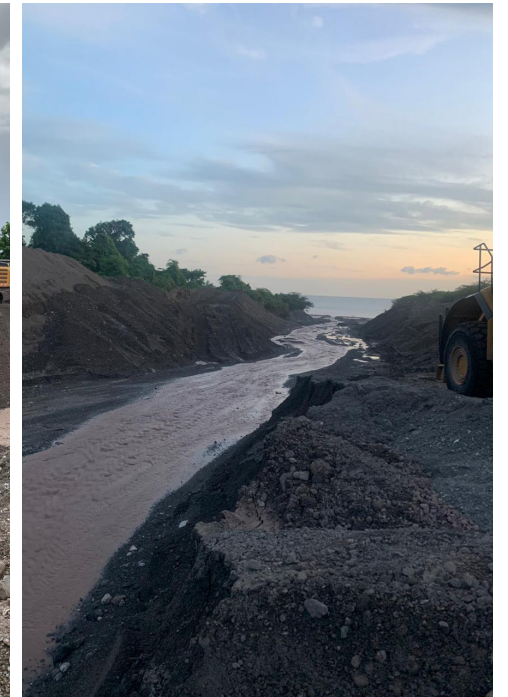
The flooding in New Market attracted a number of onlookers, some of whom waded in the knee-high water to snap photo keepsakes.

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EARTH-MOVING

October 2020 ended with various NWA teams in many far-flung, landslide-prone areas as well as in the bed of the Chalky River in Bull Bay, St. Andrew trying to clear a path to the sea. The river is one in a sequence of four major channels which empties into the Caribbean Sea along the East Rural St. Andrew coastline. As observed during an early September visit as part of surveys for the planned expansion of the

Chalky River Bridge under the ongoing Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project (SCHIP) the river channel was heavily-silted. Instructions were issued right then for it to be cleaned, but shortly after, the rains came and washed away those plans and with it tonne loads of dirt and sand downstream.



Measured Progress

The joint measurement of works completed over a specified period on a project by the main or sub-contractor and the Engineer's Representative is a very necessary part of the checks and balances of any road construction project.

The process however, can be very involved and time-consuming, especially on expansive projects such as the Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project (SCHIP), which will ultimately span the 140-kilometer stretch from Harbour View, St. Andrew to Port Antonio, Portland.

Andrew Evans, Project Principal of engineering firm SJE Consultants Limited, which is overseeing the SCHIP says joint measurements are important as they promote transparency, accuracy, removes subjectivity from the process and allows for the identification of defects in works where all parties can agree on a consensus as to the way forward.

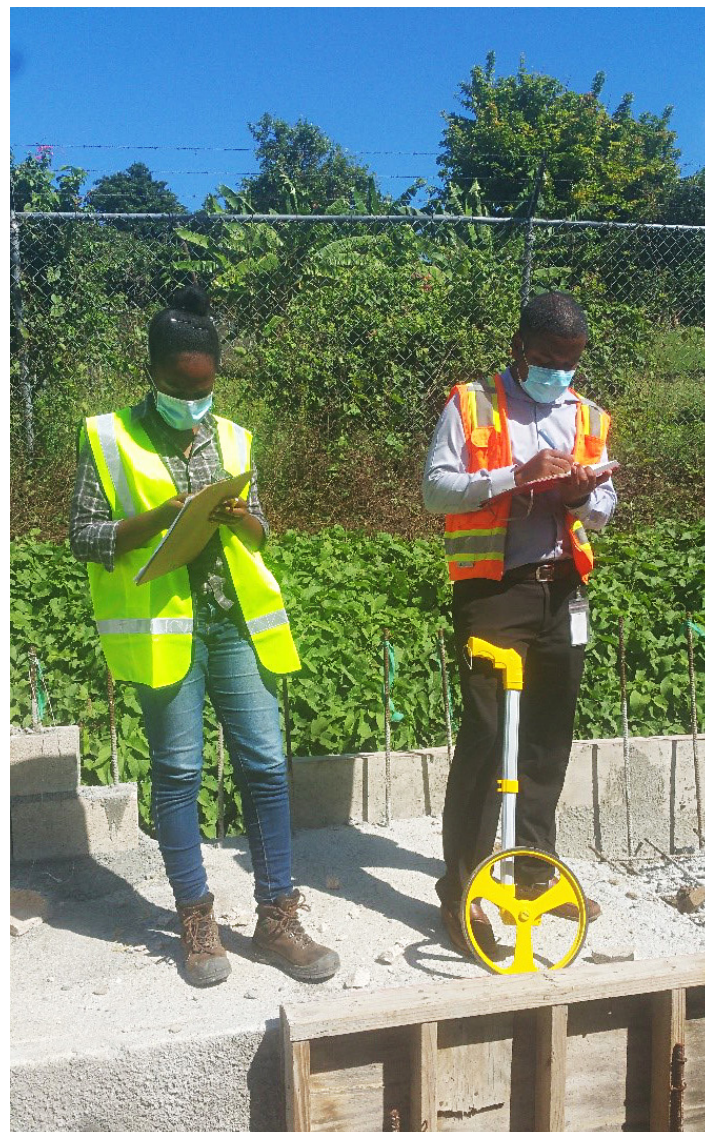
He explains that since both parties have to agree on the works which qualify for payment, it reduces the likelihood for conflict arising between parties when an Application for Payment is made.

Measurements are used to assist in generating an Application for Payment which the Sub-Contractor submits to the Main Contractor on a scheduled basis. As these contract packages are being implemented over periods as lengthy as 16 months, the periodic payment towards the contract sum is important in guaranteeing a steady cash flow for the contractor.

A joint measurement exercise can take up to five days to complete according to Mr. Evans, depending on the type of work being measured. Concrete works such as retaining walls and kerbs and gutters may take a little bit longer.

Mr. Evans points out that joint measurements may not always go smoothly. Sometimes there are disagreements about the quantity of work completed in a given period; as well as the tendency to disaggregate works which are incidental to an activity, for example a separation of trench excavation works from pipe installation works. The contractor and resident engineer also frequently differ on the percentage completion of work items and in fact, the overall project.

While the general progress made towards the end of the year under SCHIP was not significant, due to the intervention of COVID-19 and the spate of year-end rainfall events, critical works completed along various contract packages over the



National Works Agency (NWA) engineer, Troy Marshall (right) meets with Moesha Henry (left), an engineer of N.F Barnes Construction and Equipment Ltd. to measure concrete works completed on sections of Package 4, between Church Corner and Prospect, St. Thomas.

period have greatly improved travel for residents of several communities.

In the final months of 2020, a quadruple cell box culvert located at Coley along Contract Package 14 which stretches from the Morant Bay Roundabout to Georgia was completed, providing safer passage for residents who had to brave the imperiled ford through a section of the Yallahs River, during last year's flood rains.

The approach roads were quickly backfilled and compacted following the passage of Tropical Storm Zeta, restoring the customary route to the remote communities of Trinityville,

Continued on page 9

Roadways across the Island Pounded by 2020 Post Summer Rains ... continued from page 2



Flooded roadways in Cross Roads (St. Andrew), Folly, Portland and Bull Bay, St. Andrew

In the weeks since the rains have ended, much have been achieved in the way of restoration. Several hotmix patching and drain cleaning activities have been undertaken across most parishes. Almost all roadways have been reopened to vehicular access, except in areas where the road has severely failed, such as was the case at Industry Village along Gordon Town road. Temporary restoration has been carried out islandwide and permanent solutions for other affected areas are being planned or undertaken.

Overall, it can be safely surmised that many persons are not anticipating rainfall any time soon. The fragility of the infrastructure, though being remedied, continues to show up, and much is needed to be done even as we enter a new year, a new cycle. Of course, plans are in place and the race is now on to implement as many infrastructural remedies as possible before the next Atlantic Hurricane season starts in June.



Left: Roadway at Industry Village (St. Andrew) blocked by landslide Right: Morant Bay to Wilmington roadway, St. Thomas made impassable by landslides and washed down silt

Gorgeous Beach!

In excess of forty truckloads of material were removed from the Bog Walk Gorge, when the Rio Cobre overflowed its banks and converted the roadway into a near perfect swimming beach covered with pristine golden sand. The challenge was most tyres do not grip sand well and so when the River washed up copious amounts of the material during Tropical Storm Zeta during the last week of October 2020, the roadway had to be closed temporarily. The NWA literally had to break rocks to have the Gorge reopened in record time.



Measured Progress ... continued from page 8



The torrential rainfall expedited the construction of the new bridge at Coley.



A view of the five-tier cyclopean masonry retaining wall at Cedar Valley.



The reinstated roadway at Cedar Valley which was completed in less than two weeks, was being used ahead of the Christmas holidays

Cedar Valley and New Monkland, where a number of critical works were being completed to reclaim sections of roadways that have been eroded by the Yallahs River over time.

One such is wall construction works in Cedar Valley where in early December 2020, during an attempt to remove temporary fill material to facilitate the completion of a masonry retaining structure, a section of the road embankment failed, cutting off access for residents who lived beyond that point.

Negotiations to create an alternate route through a private

property proximate to the roadway did not materialize quickly enough, forcing the contractor to fast-track his work programme to finish the 45-meter long retaining wall. The works which started on December 10 was completed just in time for Christmas Eve.

Though the contractors on SCHIP fell behind the scheduled time for completion, Mr. Evans says they have made satisfactory progress and gives them a rating of 8 out of 10 for the quality of work done thus far.

Finding a Way around Gordon Town

SAVAGE PEN ROAD – A MUCH ANTICIPATED ALTERNATIVE

When the Gordon Town Road broke away on Saturday, November 7, 2020, there was panic and uncertainty as residents of the area realized that the route, most travelled, was now inaccessible. Questions started coming about what happens in cases of emergencies, deaths and other unforeseen and, often not thought about, circumstances. Almost simultaneously, surveys of the damage were being done and prospective alternatives sought with decisions being made about short-term as well as long-term, safety and viability of the route.

Of course, Gordon Town Road and its environs are historically susceptible to flood damage and are known for breakaways and landslips. This is because the mountainous terrain has long been unstable being characterized by hillsides and precipices with narrow and winding roadways in between, and in many instances become more destabilized when it rains. In fact, over the course of the last decade, several retaining wall projects and other rehabilitative efforts, costing millions of dollars, were undertaken along Gordon Town Road and the neighbouring Irish Town Road, to stabilize the roadways.

It was not a surprise to many, therefore, when reports of major landslips, and inaccessible roadways became fixtures of the daily news following weeks of rainfall, especially in the mountainous terrain of Gordon Town. When a section of the road broke away, leaving residents stranded, the authorities quickly moved to identify alternative routes to Gordon Town and by November 13, 2020, an official announcement was made that a safer route around the breakaway was via the Irish Town or Newcastle Road which passes through Silver Hill Gap, Content and Guava Ridge. As part of that announcement it was revealed that Savage Pen Road, which is 1.6 kilometers in length and locate much closer to the breakaway, would be reconstructed to accommodate traffic and, subsequently, be an alternative while plans are made to repair Gordon Town Road.

Almost immediately following that announcement the National Works Agency (NWA) was bombarded with calls from irate residents, stakeholders, "well-wishers", and apprentice engineers who



Left: Residents watch in awe as the hillside along Gordon Town Road falls onto the road even while clearing is in progress.



Right: Gordon Town Road completely blocked by debris following rains on November 7, 2020



Savage Pen Road being transformed from a mere footpath into a two-lane roadway.



Finding a Way around Gordon Town ... continued from page 10



Works progressing along Savage Pen Road despite challenges



Savage Pen Road being paved with asphaltic concrete



had complaints, fears and suggestions about why the proposed alternative route was not viable. The most common of which were that it was a much longer route, lighting was poor, and not every person drove a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Taking all concerns into consideration, work began in earnest on the Savage Pen parochial road in the hope of having it completed and open to traffic by the end of 2020. The rehabilitation of Savage Pen Road, however, proved to be quite a monumental task. The roadway which was not much more than a mere footpath was riddled with impediments in the form of encroachments such as old vehicles; building materials being stored in the thoroughfare and being extremely narrow in sections and hilly in others. This created challenges for not only the work teams but often the heavy equipment that fell prey to its unpredictable nature.

By the end of December 2020, much was done on the roadway as the new projected completion date of mid-January loomed. Working against nature in some instances, work crews have had to find ingenious ways around challenges, such as the equipment needed to build the road not being able to access the roadway because it was too narrow, too uneven and sometimes too slippery due to rainfall. For a period, double loading had to be employed just to get the material needed to construct the roadway to the work site. Double loading is where the material is transported to a point and unloaded from that transport to another vehicle that is more conducive to the terrain, for the rest of the journey.

Despite the challenges, however, much has been accomplished on the roadway. Activities include the clearing of impediments, such as trees, the widening of the thoroughfare and the shaping of the roadway. Material was also transported and compacted in layers to create more stable sub-base and base layers. The final layer of pavement is being done with asphaltic concrete.

These activities are being done in stages as the road is being built to allow for the transport of material, to continue the construction, while ensuring that the safety of all involved in the process is prioritized. It is projected that, barring unfavorable weather which is no stranger to that location, the roadway can be substantially completed before the end of January 2021. Residents and stakeholders continue to wait with bated breath for the completion of the much-anticipated piece of roadway as do all the teams involved in the construction of this shorter alternative that is the Savage Pen Road.

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