

MCA-L Undertakes Project to Preserve Crawfish Population in the St. Paul River



(Monrovia-Sept 13, 2019) The Millennium Challenge Account-Liberia has announced it is undertaking an environmental project that will help avert the decline in the population of prawns, locally known as crawfish, in the St. Paul River on which the Mt. Coffee Hydro Dam is built.

MCA-L Director of Environment and Social Performance, Paul Kennedy, made the disclosure at a recent retreat of the country's Environmental Sector Working Group in Kakata, Margibi County, where he chronicled the efforts MCA-L has undertaken to ensure that the lives of project affected people are improved after projects are implemented by the agency.

Mr. Kennedy said MCA-L wanted to ensure that the dam's impact on the wildlife was minimized, so the agency ordered a study of the various species of fish and other animals in the St. Paul River. The study suggested that the dam would cause a decline in the river's prawn population.

The prawns migrate between fresh water and saltwater to lay eggs during the rainy season and if nothing is done, the dam could block the river prawn migration. This can result in increased rates of schistosomiasis infection, which is spread by freshwater snails that the prawns eat.

The World Health Organization estimates in 2016 that 206 million people required treatment for this disease.

To avoid an outbreak and a need for drug treatment, Kennedy said MCA-L is building a prawn passage to allow the prawns to successfully migrate and lay their eggs.

Additionally, to mitigate the impact of the construction of the hydro dam on the surrounding community, Mr. Kennedy said contractors not only took steps to manage erosion and waste management, but they also built improved community roads, a health clinic, hand pumps, and provided electricity to communities that were previously not connected to the grid.



Participants of the Environmental Sector Working Group retreat.

Mr. Kennedy also told the retreat attendees of MCA-L's construction of a US\$16 million raw water intake pipeline for the Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation (LWSC). The new pipeline will improve water quality to those people served by the LWSC municipal water system. The current location of the intake pipe allows salt water from the ocean to enter the water system during the dry season when the St. Paul River level is low.

Besides the improvement to water quality, the project will also reduce the associated cost of electricity to pump water to the water treatment plant. LWSC will save approximately US\$780,000 annually in the cost of electricity to pump water because the new pipe will allow water to flow using gravity.

"For environmental due diligence, it is incumbent upon any company or organization that is conducting a project to make sure that they do livelihood restoration, so that people are better off than when you met them," Kennedy noted. "So we're implementing projects and monitoring and providing oversight to our contractors and our consultants to ensure that they are keeping in line with what we're told to do by the compact."

MCA-L's work with the water pipeline is just one of the many ways Kennedy says the agency works to ensure strict adherence to the Environmental Protection Agency Act.

Mr. Kennedy asked the country's Environmental Sector Working Group to ensure they place premium on improving the lives of residents of communities that are impacted by development projects.

He said many construction projects in communities are likely to affect the communities through air pollution, noise, traffic or affect their livelihood and therefore project implementers had a duty to protect community members against adverse effects.

The Environmental Protection Agency's retreat took place from Sept. 5-6 and allowed the various organizations and government agencies working within the environmental sector to share progress reports of work within the sector and promote knowledge sharing.

Organizations as varied as the Forestry Development Authority, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of Mines and Energy, the Liberia Maritime Authority, the United Nations Development Programme, and Conservation International were present.

Mr. Kennedy provided an overview of the compact's activities, noting MCA-L's contribution of 40 percent of the US\$347 million spent to reconstruct the Mt. Coffee Hydro Power Plant and build supporting infrastructure.

About MCA-L: *In October 2015, the Government of the United States of America, through its development agency, Millennium Challenge Corporation, provided a grant of US\$257 million to Liberia. MCA-L is an independent, legal, and autonomous agency of the Government of Liberia created by the legislature to administer the compact projects, which address the lack of access to reliable and affordable electricity and inadequate road infrastructure. Learn more about MCA-L at www.mca.gov.lr.*

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