

## **New River Flooding June 2002**

New River is one of the tributaries of the Black River that drains the Black River Upper Morass. The Black River Upper Morass is a flat, wetland area that almost encircles the reach of the river between Newton and Lacovia in the Parish of St. Elizabeth.

Since the heavy rains of May and June the water levels in the Morass has risen significantly, leading to inundation of sections of the road between Santa Cruz and Carmel and between Carmel and Content. These roads were in fact constructed in the swamp. Houses were also constructed in the swamp near by the roads and are also inundated.

In 1982, flood control and drainage facilities were completed for the area in support of agricultural development. This included the upgrading of levees that were constructed along a portion of the Black River in the vicinity of Grass River, by raising the height and extending the length from Newton to the New River confluence. During very high rainfall, water is ponded behind the levees and is discharged to the Black River through a system of steel pipes at each of the confluences (Grass, Island and New River with Black River). The flood control programme at the time envisaged using three sets of pumps at each confluence to pump water from the Morass to the Black River. Sixteen pumps, which are not functioning, are presently located at the Grass River confluence.

Recent study done for the National Irrigation Commission by the Water resources Authority has concluded that:

1. Based on the results of the hydrologic analyses, Pumping from the Grass River at 1600 cfs could significantly drains the Upper Morass.
2. When pumped, the inundated acreages could be reduced by 60% for a 25-year flood, and up to 94% for a 100-year flood.
3. The return pump flows would result in an increase of the top width by approximately 85 feet for the 100year flood below the Lacovia Bridge.

## Layout of Upper Morass Drainage system

