

ABSTRACT

An Assessment of the Chemical Quality of Water in the Upper Rio Cobre St. Catherine, Jamaica

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The Rio Cobre, which serves as a source of domestic water and irrigation to farms on the plains of St. Catherine, has been a cause of concern. Residents report occasional dying of fish in the river, discoloration of the water, unpleasant smell emanating during certain periods. There is also fear among users of domestic water from this source as to its safety, as it relates to the use of chemicals in agricultural and industrial operation upstream from where the supply is obtained.

A study was done utilizing records of tests carried out by the St. Catherine Health Department, Environmental Control Division of the Ministry of Health; Natural Resource Conservation Authority and Centre for Nuclear Sciences, UWI, during the period 1982-1987 and analysis by the researcher in 1993.

Detailed review of data for 1982 and 1986 was carried out, using the parameters that were available during the period. The study had its limitations primarily as it relates to the data available. The parameters used were inadequate to make conclusion as to the safety of water from this source.

The results clearly showed that the Rio Cobre is vulnerable to pollution and that the area in the vicinity

At the major mining area influences the composition of the water.