

THE VOICE OF BELIZE'S PROTECTED AREAS



The official newsletter of the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations

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APAMO MAKING A GLOBAL IMPACT

APAMO Hosts Social Event at 2009 World Conference for Responsible Tourism.

During the month of October, Belize took center stage in promoting responsible tourism and sustainable practices around the world by hosting the 3rd World Conference of Responsible Tourism at the University of Belize from October 19th-23rd. The conference organized by the International Center for Responsible Tourism or ICRT was formally opened by the Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, and Culture, The Honorable Manuel Heredia. Minister Heredia pledged this government's commitment to promoting a Master Plan for Belize that includes a National Tourism Policy that is responsible, sustainable, and conservation directed.

The Responsible Tourism Conference increased global awareness by discussing many issues affecting tourism development in Belize, Caribbean Countries, and the Central American regions. These issues included tourism's environmental impact on; marine and coastal areas, local economic development, cruise tourism, tourism on climate change, and the impact of homes and condominium development on local communities. There were also discussions on tourism planning and preparing for pandemic and other natural disasters.

The Association of Protected Areas Management Members has long voiced the importance of the relationship between the tourism industry and the critical need to appropriately manage Belize's protected areas.



We have moved!

The APAMO office has moved from #1 Eyre Street to our new location at 828 Coney Drive, Belize City. Our new office is situated on the third floor. APAMO has grown over the past two years and the need for additional space was evident.

The move was not without minor challenges but we appreciate your patience's during our move. We invite all of you to drop by and see our fantastic new location.



APAMO Goes on the Air!

APAMO is making its television debut with an exciting new DVD titled "Protected Areas of Belize". APAMO launched the first of what is hoped to be a series of educational documentaries that describes Belize's protected areas and their importance to "our way of life." The documentary was launched at the APAMO hosted social event during the 3rd World Responsible Tourism Conference in October. Audiences gazed on the 7 minute documentary that highlighted Belize's protected areas in all of its splendor and glory. The documentary also discussed the dangers of poorly managing these areas and how detrimental it can be to those areas if left unmonitored. The purpose of the video was to create an increased awareness for all citizens of Belize and create the sense of urgency for them to get involved now in their local communities. The message is a call for all to "Protect protected areas...as they protect our way of life."

The documentary "Protected Areas of Belize" will continue to be aired on National Television.

APAMO's united voice was again heard by many who attended the Responsible Tourism Conference. APAMO members were at the fore front promoting its mission and Belize's National Policy on Responsible Tourism. APAMO in collaborations with Counterpart International, and the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund, hosted a Social Event that featured APAMO members and its partners.

The Social Event began with an introduction from Mr. Yashin Dujon, Technical

Officer representing the Ministry of Tourism. Mr. Dujon's opening remarks were followed by a warm welcome and a persuasive presentation by our own Mrs. Celia Mahung, Executive Director of T.I.D.E. and Secretary for APAMO. Mrs. Mahung illustrated APAMO's Mission and Core Objectives as "advocating for and contributing to the sustainability and proper management of Belize's protected areas for the benefit of all stakeholders."

Mrs. Mahung described the importance of APAMO's work and how the organization will continue to take a lead role in driving policies such as the National Responsible Tourism Policy and others that will impact Belize's protected areas.

Ms. Natalie Palacio, Programme Assistant for APAMO introduced the guest presenter representing Counterpart International, Mr. Mario Del Cid, Director de Proyecto Alianza para el Turismo Comunitario, Counterpart International – Guatemala. Mr. Del Cid provided a

slide presentation on CPI and its alliance with APAMO. He described CPI's alliance with APAMO as a commitment to work with the Government of Belize by seeking an integrated approach for planning and management of the tourism industry with a central focus on biodiversity conservation, as a key element. Mr.

Del Cid was followed by our own distinguished member, Mrs. Anna Dominguez Hoare, Executive Director of B.A.S. and Vice Chair of APAMO. Mrs. Hoare spoke on APAMO's National Responsible Tourism Policy initiative. This initiative is to create one inclusive policy that guides tourism development with the integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Ms. Hoare spoke for members collectively and emphasized the importance of

understanding the relationship between conservation and tourism. Mrs. Hoare stated,

"APAMO members feel strongly that if planned and managed properly, Tourism can significantly contribute to sustainable socioeconomic development and environmental conservation in Belize. However, unsustainable tourism developments can result in severe consequences with irreversible damage on the natural and cultural environment including biodiversity – the very same resources the industry depends on."

Concluding the event, APAMO launched an exciting new video that describes Belize's protected areas. The audience enjoyed viewing this seven minute video simply entitled: "Protected Areas of Belize" which included breath taking scenes of Belize's landscape and marine areas. The message is a call for all to "Protect protected areas ... as they protect our way of life".



Mrs. Celia Mahung

Forest and Marine Reserve Association of Caye Caulker



*CC Youth Environment Club
offloading LFT seedlings for
planting. (Photo by Ellen McRae)*



*Community Participation in
planting. (Photo by Ellen McRae)*

At-Risk Habitat Restoration Project!

by Ellen McRae

The Forest and Marine Reserves Association of Caye Caulker (FAMRACC), an APAMO member, is a Community Based Organization designed as a consortium of representatives from interested community groups and NonGovernmental Organizations (NGO) chapters on Caye Caulker. We are the designated co-managers of the two Reserves, Caye Caulker Forest Reserve (CCFR) and Caye Caulker Marine Reserve (CCMR). This project funded by the PACT Foundation focuses on the restoration of natural habitats within the CCFR.

Project Background

A site visit conducted in 1995 by multiple Government departments (Fisheries, Forest, Planning) in addition to the Siwa-ban Foundation showed interlocking growth of basin mangrove and littoral forest with heavy representation by Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*)-planted in the 1930s-40s. These coconut trees were so tall and densely situated that they prevented native littoral forest growth. Littoral forest/thicket (LFT) is one of the rarest habitats in the country, currently under intense development pressure.

Additionally, Hurricane Keith (Category 4-30 Sep-2 Oct, 2000) provided roughly 12 hours of Cat. 4 winds with Corozal Bay-originated storm surge, killed many fringing and interior mangroves in CCFR. Mangroves are also under heavy development pressure. For these reasons our management plan (McRae, 2004) recommends the restoration for these habitats.



(Photo by Ellen McRae)

"Damage from Hurricane Keith Sep-2 Oct, 2000 killed many fringing and interior mangroves"

Therefore this project (2007-8) targeted the restoration of these natural habitats within the CCFR. Activities included a survey of CCFR to ascertain pilot Experimental Forest sites for both habitats; preparation for LFT plantings, collection of seedlings and propagules, and plantings.



Early successional plantings-Oct 08



Early successional plantings-April 09



Early successional vegetation-spread of Ageratum-August 09

Monitoring trips were made to determine plant condition. Preliminary results showed for LFT plants, dehydration from the dry season as well as ant, crab and lizard predation, as well as damage from falling coconut leaves had resulted in high mortality. Secondary and tertiary plantings proved more successful, especially at LF1, where primary successional vegetation growth, mainly Ageratum (*Ageratum littorale*) has proven successful.

Initial Red Mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*) plantings suffered 100% mortality in first and second attempts. The Riley Encasement Method® (REM) was used and proved a far more successful methodology than unmodified plantings (some 58% after ten months-FAMRACC, Unpub, 2009). Approximately 150 seedlings and propagules were planted in the first phase.

An important component of this project that contributed to its success was significant community participation.



Red Mangrove Seedling REM

In early 2009 we received a small Support Grant from PACT Trust to assist with minimizing the effects of the dry season. Biweekly waterings early on sustained at least some of the plantings through the heavy dry season, although we were unable to commence this activity as was preferred. We were able to conduct a mangrove planting (6 Sep 09) of approximately 500 new propagules and seedlings using REM. Data has not as yet been compiled as to their success, however it is in progress as part of our newest initiative, a second PACT Foundation grant having the following characteristics:

PACT Foundation Project

1. Plantings sufficient to double our current forest site.
2. Students from local schools will take ten trips to the site
3. CCFR will increase signage to improve visibility.
4. A website that will promote visitation and responsible tourism for Caye Caulker.
5. An addition of a Park Ranger, and a Project Manger

2010 should be an exciting year for FAMRACC, bringing CCFR up to the level where tourism visitation can begin to experience the exciting habitats and experimental plantings of the Reserve, with the ultimate objective of upgrading CCFR's status to Wildlife Sanctuary, which is more in line with its purpose in protecting at-risk ecosystems and biodiversity. A proposal to expand monitoring in the area of CCFR is currently in progress.

For more information on our members and the protected areas they manage please view our website at www.apamo.net

Policy Power!

APAMO Promotes Responsible Tourism!

Belize's tourism industry continues to play a significant important role in the economy and development of the country. The Government has indicated that it is committed to developing this industry in a responsible manner that is environmentally sensitive, supports the protection of the country's cultural and natural resources and provides tangible benefits to the people and local communities of Belize.



Placencia Consultation

As such both the Ministry of Tourism and APAMO agreed that a clear policy on responsible tourism be developed as a

central guide for making decisions in the future regarding Belize's tourism development and for marketing and branding Belize as a responsible tourism destination.

During this past quarter APAMO members hosted several consultations of over 100 stakeholders who discussed current policies and the need for a Responsible Tourism Policy. The development of this policy is not intended to revert or negate the work of previous policies for Belize; instead, the purpose is specifically to:

- Inspire best practices for all role players involved in tourism development and management in Belize;
- Clearly define for all those involved what is meant by the term "responsible tourism";
- Provide the foundation for the development of a national tourism master plan and future marketing and branding of Belize as a responsible tourism destination;
- Provide a framework for collaboration of stakeholders for developing tourism responsibly; and
- Provide examples of local best practices to demonstrate putting policy into action.



Keri Robison and Natalie Palacio

Peace Corps Comes to APAMO

You all may have noticed an extra pair of hands around the APAMO office lately. Her name is Keri Robison and she is our new Peace Corps Volunteer who officially joined the APAMO Team October 26th, 2009. Mrs. Robison will be spending the next two years providing support to APAMO staff and members. She comes with an expertise in organizational development and institutional strengthening. Some of the projects she will be working on include developing policy and procedures, capacity building for members, and assist in the institutional strengthening of APAMO.

During these past few months, Mrs. Robison has spent her time getting to know the organization and its members. She is also learning about Belize's diverse culture, the various languages spoken, and especially the wonderful varieties of Belizean food.

(Continued page 6)

Peace Corps Continued

APAMO's Natalie Palacio has been helping Mrs. Robison learn Kriol and showing her all the wonderful aspects of Belizean culture. Mrs. Alonzo and Ms. Palacio have also been teaching Mrs. Robison about the diverse plant and wildlife that reside within Belize's Protected Areas. They have expressed with great passion the critical issues that threaten these areas along with the dire need to take action against these threats. Mrs. Robison will learn a lot over her next two years under the instruction of these two individuals.

Over the past few months Mrs. Robison has also been working on the APAMO newsletter and to put procedures in place that will support its continued distribution. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide networking opportunities for members and to increase communication between members and other organizations. The newsletter will also provide critical information regarding conservation issues, ongoing projects and other APAMO activities, to donors, stakeholders and the general public.

Over the next few months Mrs. Robison will assist with updating the website and visiting members. She hopes to get out and meet with members to discuss how APAMO could better support their efforts. Please feel free to stop by and say hello to our newest member of the team!

Policy Power Continued!

This initiative developed out of a gap analysis of tourism policies conducted by APAMO in 2008 which was presented to the Ministry of Tourism and accepted in

October 2008. Since then, APAMO has been in dialogue with the Ministry of Tourism to advance the development of a specific policy on responsible tourism for Belize. Both agencies agreed and with the support of Counterpart International, this initiative was made possible. Counterpart International is a non-profit organization whose mission is to strengthen local capacities and the institutions that directs policies on sustainable development.

The policy is expected to be finalized by January 2010 and will be presented to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation for endorsement. It will be presented in a user-friendly

format accompanied with an action plan to promote the policy in order that stakeholders be fully aware of the vision for Belize's tourism development and cognizant of the role they play in meeting this vision.



Belize City Consultation



San Ignacio Consultation



San Pedro Consultation

Advocacy in Action !

APAMO Members in Action!

In July of this year, The Ya'axche' Conservation Trust alerted the public to the illegal campsites and bulldozing activity being conducted by the Hydro Maya facility on the Bladen Nature Reserve. Considered the crown jewel of Belizean protected areas, Bladen Nature Reserve (BNR) co-managed by YCT, is a 100,000 acre, pristine natural forest in southern Belize and currently enjoys the status of a Nature Reserve, the highest level of protection a protected area in Belize can have. It is considered to be one of the most biodiversity-rich, and topographically unique areas within the Mesoamerican biodiversity "hotspot." BNR's role in watershed protection within the area is also important as it protects the upper waters of the Monkey River watershed, preserving the quality of the water draining onto the Belize Barrier Reef 26 km to the east. This water system additionally provides water for local communities and large agricultural areas on the coastal plain.

The developers have a concession agreement signed by the Prime Minister, Hon. Dean Barrow for the construction of a dam along the Rio Grande River. Research work has already begun by the company. Residents of San Pedro Columbia are against the building of a hydro dam. In November of 2009 a committee was appointed by the San Pedro Columbia Villagers to address these issues and to lead the advocacy initiative. A team of committee members including Mayan leaders from the village accompanied by the BDF and forestry department hiked into the reserve to observe firsthand the damage that had occurred in the area.



They found significant impacts to both natural and archaeological resources in the area. Pristine areas of the forest were cleared on slopes, creeks were blocked, illegal resources used, and unauthorized road development. These activities are of particular concern due to the international biological importance of the area which has been listed as a national focal site for biodiversity conservation.

Once the team completed their assessment they presented their findings to community leaders and local citizens in San Pedro Columbia Village on December

APAMO GA gets into Advocacy!



During this past month APAMO members attended their General Assembly Meeting on Tuesday, November 17th at the Pelican Beach Resort in Dangriga. Ms. Debra Lewis facilitated a workshop on the definition and purpose of advocacy. APAMO members were asked to review the proposed advocacy plan and make recommendations. During the workshop APAMO members were asked some difficult questions regarding the need for advocacy and at what point an organization gets involved in advocacy. Ms. Lewis discussed the five phases of advocacy and how those phases are ongoing. APAMO members learned how to identify effective methods of advocacy and the various degrees of an advocacy plan or strategy. APAMO members also learned strategies on how to match the appropriate advocacy level with the appropriate situation. Ms. Lewis in collaboration with APAMO board members developed APAMO's advocacy goals and objectives. The general members provided feedback on various goals and measurable outcomes. Members also provided ideas on the types of activities that would help APAMO advocate for its goals and mission. There were many great ideas discussed which will be incorporated into APAMO's advocacy plan of action. The implementation of the advocacy plan will begin in 2010. Members provided positive feedback regarding the workshop.



13th. During this community meeting the team discussed their findings, expressed their concerns, and prompted community members to formulate recommendations that would be submitted to the Government of Belize.

The recommendations from the San Pedro Columbia community leaders and villagers was a call for the Government of Belize to revoke the 15-year concession granted in December of last year to the Belize Hydroelectric Developer and Management Company Limited for the development of the hydro potential of



Belize's majestic Rio Grande Basin. The villagers voted on and passed a resolution asking that Prime Minister Barrow address these issues or they would be forced to conduct a peaceful protest.

The committee, villagers, community leaders, and citizens along these buffer areas continue to call for a response from Prime Minister Barrow but to date the GOB has not made a statement or elected to meet with committee members. The company had also created a road which subsequently facilitated access for wildlife hunters and xaté palm harvesters – both banned in the reserve.

APAMO has written to both the Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment supporting the request being made by the Columbia River Forest Reserve Bladen Nature Reserve Committee to revoke the concession agreement granted to the Belize Hydro-electric Development and Management Ltd (BHD).

APAMO considers that this type of development is not appropriate for this highly ecologically rich and sensitive area. The Bladen Nature reserve may be one of the last pristine areas in Belize. The negative effects of the Challio Dam and the Hydro Maya Dam on both the Macal and San Miguel rivers are already visible. The rivers are no longer pristine and clear, there is greater siltation, increased erosion all of which do not only have negative environmental impacts but negative social impacts as well. We have yet to see the benefits of lowered electricity rates as a result of these dams. Instead, the outcomes have been unmitigated environmental and social impacts on the people of the Cayo and Toledo districts; hence we need to look at other more environmentally friendly options.

We recommend that the government conduct a renewable energy study and implement the most feasible and environmentally friendly options. Destroying part of our most pristine and highest protected nature reserves is not, in the least, the progressive way to go.

APAMO calls on the government to reconsider the concession granted to BHD and to engage in meaningful consultation with all the key stakeholders in any future developments that will have impacts on our environment, protected areas and our people.



Horse Grazing in the Reserve!

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS !

APAMO's Assists with Belize's National Development Framework!

The Ministry of Economic Development, Commerce and Industry has embarked on the development of Belize's much needed and called for - National Development Framework: Horizon 2030.

Funded by the International Development Bank (IDB) and expected to be completed by August 2010, this framework will provide a common vision to guide the development and establishment of long-term development goals and objectives for Belize. It is expected to provide the overall context for the preparation of medium term development strategies and programs to achieve this vision over the next 20 years and to identify priority areas, programs, projects, and services to support the achievement of the country's development goals and objectives.

The consulting firm hired to prepare Horizon 2030 is Barnett and Company which includes Dr. Carla Barnett (lead Consultant – Strategic Planning Consultant), Mrs. Adele Catzim Sanchez (Social Development Consultant) and Mrs. Dorla Humes (Results based management Consultant).



The process will include broad based national consultations, the consultants will be meeting with all national stakeholders country wide, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations, civil society, academia, media, development partners, and most importantly, the people of Belize, to get input and feedback on main issues and challenges and what it is that we want to achieve as a country.

This cross-sectoral approach will ensure that the issues that will be discussed will not be confined to traditional economics but will cover all aspects of Belizean society. They will also take into account international obligations such as the MDG.

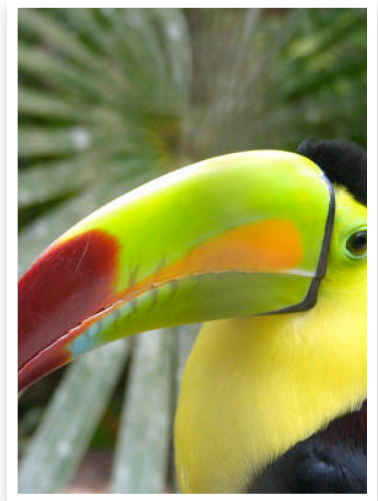
The Horizon 2030 process will also take into account policies, plans and programmes which have been completed or are under preparation. Performance targets and monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be developed to ensure that implementation is successful.

The intent is to have all major political parties sign on to the end product not only government but also the PUP, PNP, VIP to ensure continuity and adoption even if there is a change of government.

A communications strategy will also be developed to ensure every Belizean is aware of the framework to ensure ownership. Since the timeline is tight timely input and feedback from stakeholders at every stage will be critical.

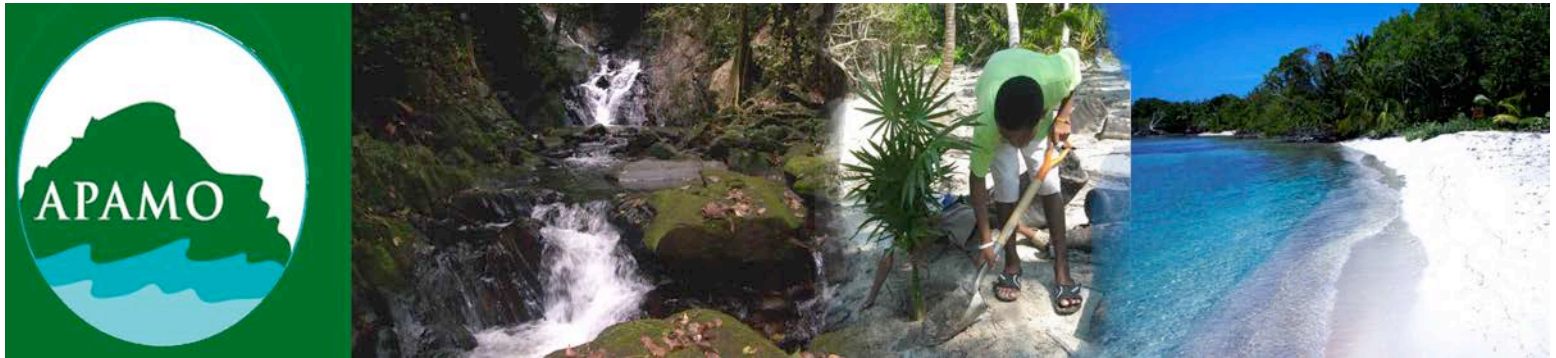
A Horizon 2030 Steering Committee has been established to provide oversight and direction to the Horizon 2030 process.

The committee will provide feedback to the Ministry of Economic Development which serves as the Secretariat for the Horizon 2030 process and most importantly approve the content of documents to be released.



This committee which comprises of 33 members brings a wide cross sector team of individuals with expertise in major aspects of their nation's development. APAMO has a seat on this committee and is represented by the Coordinator. As such she will be providing updates on the process and asking for your input as the process develops. Drafts of the framework will be shared with members for their input.

APAMO's participation in this process is very important to ensure that protected areas are an integral part of the country's sustainable economic, social and environmental development. You are encouraged to provide any issues that you consider need or should be considered in our National Development Framework – Horizon 2030.



Our Mission!

“APAMO is an association of non-governmental protected areas management organizations that advocates for and contributes to the sustainability and proper management of Belize’s protected areas thus ensuring benefits for all stakeholders.”

Our Vision!

“APAMO, Belize’s foremost association of committed protected areas management organizations, contributes to and advocates for the maintenance in perpetuity of a well managed and functional protected areas system that plays an integral role in national development, and contributes directly to the well being of communities and the nation.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

You can help by getting involved or sending donations to the address bellow or viewing our website

www.apamo.net

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