



THE VOICE OF BELIZE'S PROTECTED AREAS



NEWSLETTER

The official newsletter of the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations

Member Spotlight!

SEA increases youth marine conservation awareness through education & experience

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APAMO members conduct a self-assessment on organizational capacities

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APAMO Contributes to Horizon 2030!

In taking a pro-active role in contributing to the National Development Plan for Belize: Horizon 2030, APAMO hosted a Horizon 2030 Visioning Session on February 22, 2010 facilitated by Mr. Osmany Salas. Other environmental organizations were also invited to attend this important visioning session. This session provided an opportunity for APAMO members and other organizations from the environmental sector to provide their vision for Belize in the next 20 years.

Mr. Salas set the stage for the visioning session by conducting an environmental scan that included political, economical, social, and technological factors. He provided a summary of current sector policies, documents, and reports. An in depth review and discussion of the 2005 Country Environmental Analysis and the BAS Environmental Agenda (2008) was also conducted. The main concept extracted from these documents provided a basis for the visioning process.



An individual exercise was carried out that assisted the group in identifying the elements of a national vision followed by a group exercise focused on hashing out these elements. Extensive discussions

APAMO Visioning Session Horizon 2030



Mr. Edilberto Romero, PFB



Mrs. Lisel Alamilla, YCT
Janet Gibson, WCS
Mr. Julian Lewis, FGGL



Grant Writing Workshop
Hyacinth Ysaguirre, STACA
Vanessa Grajalez, APAMO
Cindy Joseph, RDEDG

APAMO continues to focus on capacity building for members. On March 16th APAMO hosted a Grant Writing Workshop to assist members in grant development. The workshop was conducted by Peace Corp Volunteer Christen Eure and Manissa Pedroza who have over 15 years of grant writing experience combined.

Ms. Eure and Ms. Pedroza provided the group with important information on successful grant writing such as, understanding your funding source and knowing your organization's mission, vision, and operating expenses. They discussed the importance of setting goals and designing measurable objectives as well as a feasibility analysis, and the importance of a thorough budget. Ms. Eure and Ms. Pedroza worked individually with members to provide technical assistance.

Mr. Leonel Requena from COMPACT also provided an excellent presentation on both the GEF Small Grants Program and the COMPACT Grant Program. Mr. Requena was available to answer questions and he provided helpful tips on successful grant writing. Overall the workshop was a great success.

Horizon 2030 Continued!

resulted in "Major Objectives and strategies" identified to contribute to the achievement of the vision.

The vision for Belize for the year 2030 from the Sustainable Development and Environment (SDE) sector that resulted from the visioning session is as follows:

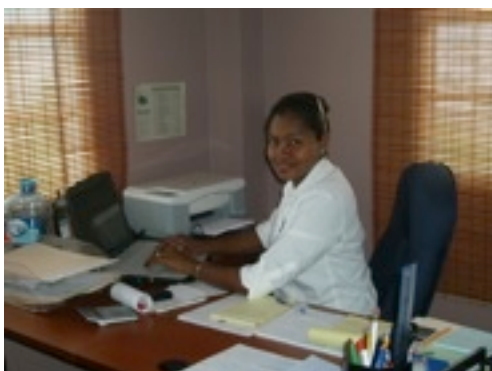
Vision 2030

"Belize is an exemplary model of sustainable development in Central America, with its natural resources forming the core of the country's long-term development strategy. Its natural resource intensive economy has made the country grow rich and has created the best condition for the well being of its citizens. Belize is a safe place with a highly educated population, high standard of living, and high 'happiness index'. There are equal opportunities including access to land and economic livelihoods. Good infrastructure, a sustainable energy plan, sound water management, a well-managed protected area system, and a comprehensive waste management plan contribute to maintaining a clean and healthy environment. With a model justice system in place, Belize is a safe place to do business. Investment capital is available and readily accessible. Government and businesses have a high respect for the environment and are good corporate citizens. Belize has a top-notch education system, characterized by free elementary and secondary schooling, and a high quality and affordable national university education. The future of our children is safe."

This vision can be summarized as follows:

"Based among other things on technological change, human capital development, improved governance, and the highest environmental standards, Belize has made its natural resources the main source of growth and prosperity for the nation."

This session assisted APAMO members and other stakeholders in developing a collective 2030 vision for the country of Belize. The session was very participatory and interactive. Many gained a perspective on not just what they envision for Belize's protected areas in 2030 but for Belize as a Nation.



New Addition to the APAMO Team!

We are excited to announce a new addition to the APAMO team! Mrs. Vanessa Grajalez joined the team in early January as our new Administrative Assistant. Mrs. Grajalez, originally from Orange Walk Town, brings to APAMO expertise in the area of office administration. Her primary role is assisting and supporting the Coordinator and APAMO members. Mrs. Grajalez, is a loving wife and mother of two wonderful boys, Adrian age 7, and Alex age 6. Mrs. Grajalez, indicated that since her employment with APAMO, she has learned a great deal about the organization and the Protected Areas of Belize. She commented "I am happy to be a part of APAMO's excellent team, who work diligently to make a difference in the Country of Belize and it's people." She goes on to express her desire to be an asset to the organization by promoting APAMO's mission and core objectives.

Welcome to the Team!



SEA-Providing Hands-on Experiences for Students at the Southern MPAs within the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System – World Heritage Site”

by Justino Mendez

The Southern Environmental Association (SEA) is a community focused, conservation organization working in southern Belize. According to its mission statement, SEA “is a non governmental organization (NGO) that continuously works towards improving stewardship and the environmental integrity of key marine areas in southern Belize through effective, collaborative protected area management, community involvement and strategic partnerships for the benefit of all stakeholders.” SEA co-manages Laughing Bird Caye National Park (LBCNP) with the Forest Department, Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve (GSSCMR) and the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve (SCMR) with the Fisheries Department. Both LBCNP and the SCMR are part of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System World Heritage Site and the GSSCMR has been recognized by a number of international conservation organizations as a key conservation target.

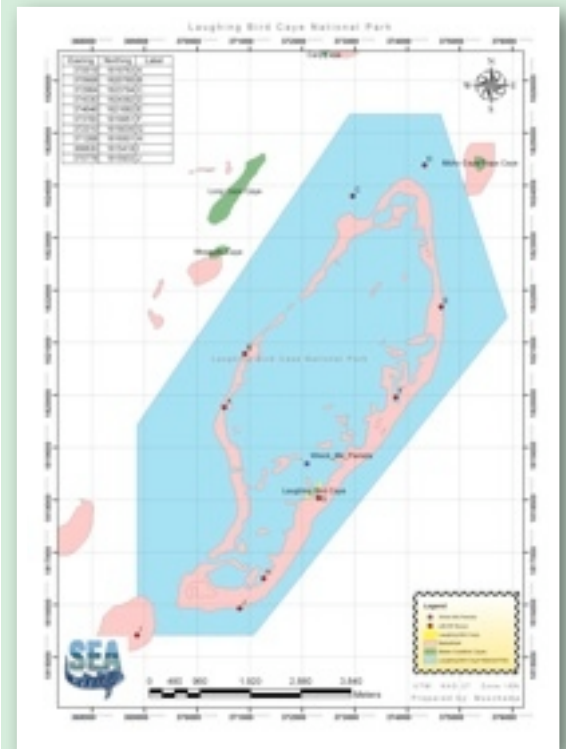
An important part of SEA’s mission is to create stewardship and

improve the management of the (3) three marine protected areas (MPAs) that it co-manages. SEA recognizes that it must develop a comprehensive understanding amongst stakeholders of all ages about the importance of conservation and the realities of MPA management. Over the years there has been a growing incorporation of environmental education and conservation principles into the yearly curriculum for all elementary and high school students. Teachers are frequently looking to organizations like SEA to offer courses or activities that will further enhance these in class sessions.

SEA, in collaboration with the Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation Programme (COMPACT), implemented a project in November 2009 entitled, “Providing Hands-on Experiences for Students at the Southern MPAs within the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System-World Heritage Site”.

The overall goal of this project is to raise awareness in students and community members about the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, especially the World Heritage Sites, in particular Laughing Bird Caye National Park and Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve, through “hands-on” learning experiences. Additionally, the project also seeks to build public awareness about the role that managers play in ensuring the proper protection of the broader reef system. Through this project SEA, in partnership with COMPACT, is promoting the protection, conservation and sustainable use of the resources of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System-World Heritage Site

Laughing Bird Caye National Park



by community groups, community based organizations.

The project directly targets students, principals, teachers and parents from eight stakeholder communities that SEA works with and supports, namely Hopkins, Sittee River, Seine Bight, Placencia, Independence, Monkey River, Punta Negra and Punta Gorda, which include two (2) secondary schools and eleven (11) primary schools. SEA identified and selected a cadre of 65 adults to be trained as "field directors" from within the 8 southern coastal communities that it serves. These "field directors" have received in-house marine educational training in five modules: 1) Laughing Bird Caye National Park & Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve 2) Coral Reef Ecology 3) Fisheries Management 4) Threats to Reefs and 5) World Heritage Sites of Belize. This has been supplemented with field instruction, which will enable them to lead student field trips. In addition to learning and teaching about the Belize Barrier Reef, these adults have also been trained in a variety of valuable skills such as First Aid and CPR skills.



Mr. Samuel Chi, Principal of Bethel Seventh Day Adventist School in Punta Gorda, receiving Certificate of Completion in Emergency First Response from instructor Mr. Carlton Young Jr.



Ernease Cuevas, teacher at St. Stephen's Anglican School in Monkey River, receiving training in CPR from Mr. Carlton Young Jr., a Certified

The services of Certified Emergency First Response Instructors of the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) were used to facilitate training within each individual community. This training was a major milestone in ensuring that field directors are equipped with sufficient knowledge about primary and secondary emergency responses that could be used in the event of accidents during field trips out to the cayes. All field directors received a PADI Emergency First Response Certificate that is valid for the next two years. The direct inclusion of 65 adults from the target communities will further enhance community participation in MPA management as well as further SEA's capacity building programs. At the end of this project local community members and students will have developed key skills and received the training necessary to support MPA management and to further future development of environmental programs and community projects.



Small Group Training



Small group discussion of teachers and parents during in-house field directors training held in Independence

Laughing Bird Caye



(Field directors receiving a tour of Laughing Bird Caye National Park from SEA park ranger Jamal Martinez as part of their field training in support of their implementation of future student field trips at the National Park)



Toledo Institute for Development and Environment

From Fisherman to Head Ranger!

Carlos Ramirez, better known as “Cash”, is currently the Head Ranger at the Port Honduras Marine Reserve. The Reserve is co-managed by the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) and the Belize Fisheries Department.

Cash has been working with TIDE for over five years. He resided on Head Caye for most of his life and was originally a



fisherman, along with his brothers and mother, an unusual occupation for a woman in Belize. Cash recalls that fifteen years ago there was significant

exploitation of the natural resources in the region. He described what is now considered illegal fishing, over fishing, using gill nets, and a large number of boats. However, when TIDE was in its early stages of development as an organization, he had friends who began to work with this organization. They discussed with him the work that TIDE was doing and about the importance of a establishing the reserve. This was the pivotal point in Cash's life when he decided to work for TIDE as a ranger leaving his fisherman days behind and now focusing on and dedicating himself to the protection and conservation of the resources within the Port Honduras Marine Reserve as well as educating others on the importance of the reserve—a decision he does not regret.

“...being a ranger is great – I know what I am doing and I love what I am doing.” Cash states that he really enjoys his work, but it can be very challenging dealing with people who live in and around the reserve. He is expected to enforce the law and that can create conflict but he “...is there to enforce the law as well as to educate the people about the laws.”

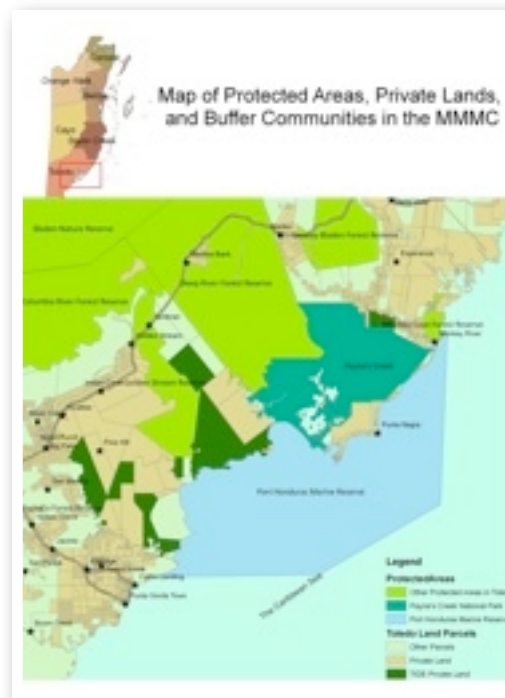
Rangers spend two weeks on and one week off duty. A typical day begins early in the morning and involves cleaning up the island. The main activity is patrolling in the no-take, preservation zones. “That is our priority, our target, the conservation.” The preservation zone is completely restricted except in the event of an emergency. The conservation zone is where people are permitted to visit and snorkel. The rangers also stop on West Snake Island to pick up the garbage and use the tower to observe if there are vessels in the area. They will also stop vessels to check licenses and for illegal or undersized fish, lobster or conch, while on patrol. Patrols are also conducted at night.

“Two boats and four rangers on duty, we do what we can and we do a lot. Some days we might see four boats and we cannot monitor all four at one time.” The TIDE Rangers try to be creative. They will set check points, or will shadow a boat staying with it wherever it moves until the crew becomes frustrated and moves out of the area. In addition to patrolling they also help with research and monitoring in the Reserve. Most of the rangers are trained SCUBA divers and boat captains.

TIDE Rangers also promote education by using maps and informing fisherman and others regarding the rules, regulations, and laws of Belize's protected areas. Cash “... likes to be in the boat, doing patrols, talking to people and educating people.” He reports that he feels that TIDE's efforts are working for the reserve - sharks are returning – the black-tipped and the hammerhead shark; the number of turtles

are also increasing and nests have been seen at West Snake Caye and Punta Ycacos.

“I know that TIDE does a whole lot of work on the land, but my focus is the sea and Port Honduras Marine Reserve.” Looking into the future, Cash would like to see the Port Honduras Marine Reserve have a significant increase in fish of all sorts, fish that attract tourism. He estimates that it will take five years of good management, increased staff, and boats along with one larger boat that allows TIDE Rangers to be on patrol for longer periods of time. He also stated that he would like to see a permanent Ranger stationed at the West Snake Caye. Cash would also like to organize local fisherman to assist in the management of the areas in and around the reserve. He would like to help local fisherman determine what areas they feel is most important to protect, research, and improve. Cash believes strongly that the fishermen in southern Belize have a good attitude toward conservation and will work collaboratively to ensure the future of the Reserve.



POLICY POWER !

On February 24th, 2010 APAMO hosted a validation workshop on the working draft of the National Policy on Responsible Tourism. The development of this policy started in August 2009 and involved a series of both group and one on one consultations with stakeholders in the tourism industry from around the country as well as stakeholders from civil society and the public sector. This workshop provided an opportunity for stakeholders to provide any final input into their vision of Belize National Policy on Responsible Tourism. Over 60 concerned stakeholders and important guests including the Minister of Tourism, the Honorable Manuel Heredia Jr. attended this validation workshop.



Notwithstanding previous efforts on developing various policies either directly or indirectly related to tourism in Belize, it was recognized that a clear policy on responsible tourism was critically needed as a central guide for making decisions in the future regarding Belize's tourism development and marketing the country as a responsible tourism destination. More importantly, the Government of Belize with the assistance of the IDB is currently engaged in a Tourism Sustainable Development Project of which one component calls for the development of a national tourism master plan. It is recognized that such a plan should have a clear policy on responsible tourism as its foundation to guide recommendations for tourism development. To this end, the Ministry of Tourism partnered with APAMO to develop a national policy on responsible tourism for Belize. This was made possible with the financial support

from Counterpart International through the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund.

The National Policy on Responsible Tourism does not disregard nor is it intended to replace the previous policies for Belize; instead, the purpose is specifically to: clearly define responsible tourism, provide a foundation for the development of a national tourism master plan and the future marketing of Belize as a responsible tourism destination, provide a framework for the collaboration of stakeholders in developing tourism in a responsible manner, and promote best practices among those involved in tourism development and management.

Belize's policy declaration on responsible tourism states:

The Government of Belize shall support and engage in responsible tourism as its preferred approach to the management of Belize as a tourism destination in order that the integrity of Belize's natural resources and biodiversity be sustained, that there be equitable distribution of the economic benefits derived from tourism, that the local culture and communities involved in tourism activities be respected, and that visitors to Belize act in an appropriate manner that respects the natural resources and cultural heritage of the country. This shall be achieved by managing tourism as a shared responsibility requiring the support of and partnership among the public sector, private sector and those involved in and benefitting from the management of the country's protected areas and natural resources.

The Ministry of Tourism is a key partner and has been closely involved throughout the process providing critical input and feedback on the policy. The Minister has indicated his support for this policy. However, once the policy is officially submitted to GOB, they will need to vet to

ensure that the policy does not contravene any existing agreements.

Validation Workshop for the National Policy on Responsible Tourism



APAMO remains committed to doing its part to ensuring the Policy is adopted and implemented. It is also important that the policy is accepted and promoted by all stakeholders.



PROJECTS IN PROGRESS!

CURRENT STATUS OF BELIZE'S PROTECTED AREA'S

With a wide range of increasing pressures and threats that include climate change, unsustainable extraction practices, increasing development impacts, and impacts from tourism, effective management of these protected areas is becoming more and more urgent if Belize is to continue to maintain its natural resources for critical environmental services, sustainable use, economic contribution to the Nation, and to meet its international commitments.



Mrs. Yvette Alonzo, APAMO

APAMO, recognizing the importance of conducting management effectiveness assessments as a critical tool to increase the effective management of our protected areas as well as to improve the overall standards of Belize's protected areas, spearheaded the preparation of a report on the Status of Protected Areas in Belize 2009. This was made possible with the support from the Oak Foundation, the Protected Areas Conservation Trust, Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund and USAID through The Nature Conservancy.

This assessment looks at the management effectiveness of Belize's National Protected Areas System, represented by sixty-eight national protected areas and eight private protected areas, including the eight Marine Reserves and eleven spawning aggregation sites, managed under the Fisheries Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. It also covers the forty-nine protected areas administered under the Forest Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources, as well as the seven Crown Land Bird Sanctuaries, identifying strengths and weaknesses of the system as a whole.

The assessment was conducted through a series of workshops and meetings, held between May and August, 2009, with representatives from the two management authorities and all co-management agencies. Site-level self-assessments were completed by protected area representatives for each of the terrestrial and marine protected area, to enable evaluation of the status of biodiversity within individual protected areas and across the protected area system. Information was also collated from protected area reports and management plans, and through meetings with specific protected area managers, staff and stakeholders, to address identified information gaps.

The data has been used to provide an overview of the state of protected areas in Belize today, with recommendations for improving future management effectiveness across the system. A series of individual protected area reports has also been produced, providing the assessment results per protected area, with site-level recommendations for use by protected area managers to assist in adaptive management.



Mrs. Zoe Walker

The Assessment also looks at the biophysical indicators for both terrestrial and marine protected areas, highlighting those indicators of particular concern, and impacts (pressures and threats) across the national protected areas system.

This assessment is designed to provide information on strengths and weaknesses at the system level, to guide future investments in strengthening of protected area management effectiveness. The overall assessment does not seek to compare one individual protected area with another, nor



rate individual protected area managers on their management effectiveness. However, as a self-assessment, it relies on the integrity and knowledge of the individual assessors when completing the assessment form. As the information outputs are also valid at site-level, a series of sub-reports have been produced to facilitate input of the assessment into the adaptive management process at site level. It is important to recognize that the National Management Effectiveness Assessment Tool, as it currently stands, focuses on whether processes are in place, and less on whether these processes are being effectively implemented or are achieving the desired objectives. The results of the assessment clearly support the observation that the two (processes and outputs) do not necessarily go hand in hand. This shortcoming is being addressed in the revision of the assessment tool.

A validation workshop on the first draft of the report was carried out on the 24th of February where over 50 participants attended from the private sector, civil society and public sector. This proved to be very interactive and productive validation with stakeholders providing input and recommendations to improve of the report. The second draft is currently being reviewed before it is finalized and presented to the government, co-managers and other stakeholders to use to as a guide for improved protected areas management and prioritizing.

Creative Capacity Building!



Ellen McRae and Mr. Aguilar FAMRACC
Meet with APAMO staff

One of APAMO's core objectives and strategic goals is to assist with the capacity building of our members. During this past quarter the APAMO Peace Corps Volunteer has been working closely with several APAMO members, particularly the smaller Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to conduct a self assessment that will identify areas to strengthen within their organizations. APAMO staff along with the Peace Corps Volunteer utilized a modified version of the Evaluative Thinking Assessment Tool to conduct the self-assessment with 6 of APAMO members. This tool developed by Burner Foundation(2004/05) is based on the Capacity Assessment Tool created by McKinsey and Company and published in Effective Capacity Building Nonprofit Organizations (2001).

The Evaluative Thinking Assessment Tool utilized for the APAMO member's self-assessments focused on specific indicators of evaluative thinking for a critical subset of organizational capacities.

Organizational Capacities

- Mission
- Strategic Planning
- Governance
- Finance
- Leadership,
- Fund Development/Raising
- Staff Development
- Human Resources
- Program Development
- Evaluation

This tool provides a type of reflective practice that incorporates a method to systematically collect data on the organization in order for that organization to make informed decisions based on that data. Basically, this tool was designed to identify areas within an organization that can be strengthened and how to go about prioritizing those areas. It is also designed to facilitate discussion about these areas that are important for the development and sustainability of a healthy organization.



Ms. Cindy Joseph, RDEDG

These self-assessments conducted by APAMO members will be utilized as a baseline on which to build from over time. Over the next quarter, APAMO staff and Volunteer will begin collaborating with our Members to design a plan that will assist our members in developing those identified areas. We are looking forward to working with our members and assisting them in strengthening their organizations which in turn will assist in improving standards overall for increased, more effective management of Belize's protected areas.



Mr. Terrance Salam, FMFB



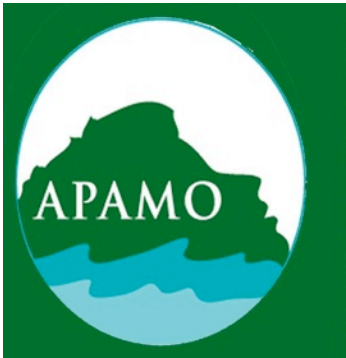
Mr. Julian Lewis FGGL
APAMO staff



Vanessa Grajalez,
Yvette Alonzo, APAMO
Mr. Heredia, FOSC



Mrs. Joseph, CBSWCG
APAMO staff



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 below or viewing our

website www.apamo.net

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 PLEASE VIEW OUR WEBSITE AT**
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