

The Voice of Belize's Protected Areas

# 2011 Annual Report







## 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.

## 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.





## Message from the Chairman

Dear Friends and Supporters:

APAMO is now celebrating five (5) years of existence since its formal establishment.

True to its mission, APAMO has continued to advocate for and contribute to the sustainability and proper management of Belize's protected areas for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Through the course of the past five years, we have made important steps forward but we have also experienced important activities freezing to a "stand-still" and at times even going backwards as is the case of the APAMO proposed co-management framework and co-management agreement template. This "freezing" and "backward steps" have been due to bureaucracy and decisions made at the Government level that have stalled progress in many initiatives over a prolonged period of time.

However, APAMO kept forging forward and putting the pressure on the Government of Belize. After two long years and constant pressure, we saw the then National Protected Areas Commission replaced with the National Protected Areas Technical Committee and funding coming from the Global Environmental Facility through the United Nations Development Programme for the Strengthening National Capacity Project that is implementing important

components of the National Protected Areas System Plan.

Since then APAMO has participated in the deliberations, and national committees and have seen progress in important areas affecting protected areas especially during the 2011 fiscal year. I am glad to report that we are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

APAMO has been able to influence the co-management agreement to a point that is acceptable to the co-managers and we expect that the co-management agreements will be signed in 2012. This will provide the co-managers and added assurance and clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the co-managers and the authorities responsible for protected areas. APAMO continues to work on the protected areas fees and hopes to be able to influence the outcome to a manner that is conducive to the financial sustainability of protected areas and that it does not affect co-managers in a negative manner.

The Association has also been involved in reviewing and influencing the rationalization exercise to ensure the integrity of protected areas. All indications are that this exercise is going in the right direction. The most critical issue is the proper legislation that will bring coordination and ensure the proper management of the protected area.

Already a draft-legislation has been developed and APAMO has engaged a legal counsel and its members to advise on this in order to ensure that there are adequate provisions for co-management, the integration of private protected areas, and for the proper management and protection of Belize's protected areas.

We have also made great progress on the Association secretariat itself. Our staff has grown to a team of five consisting of the Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, Project Officer, Development Officer and the Financial Manager.

This increase in staff will allow APAMO to provide better services to its members especially in organizational and financial management, to improve its fundraising activities and to improve its advocacy and lobbying activities in order for APAMO to achieve its goals. During this year, we have made significant progress in strengthening the capacity of the small organization members in the area of board development, organizational development, accounting and financial management through training and hands-on mentoring. The result of this has been better management on the ground, the development of strategic plans, board manuals, and improved financial management and reporting. This in turn has enabled these small organizations to access additional funding to improve the on-the-ground management and protection of their respective protected areas.

However, it is not time to let down our guard. Belize is experiencing an unsustainable foreign debt that has become better known as the “super bond”. The country is also burdened by high levels of unemployment and poverty. These pressing national issues make our protected areas more vulnerable as there is an urgent interest in accelerating development to address the socioeconomic needs of the country.

The issue of oil exploration is a perfect example of this where the Government of Belize wants to explore and drill all over Belize including in the offshore and in protected areas.

APAMO will continue with its efforts to keep the offshore and protected areas within the National Protected Areas System Act off limits to oil exploration and drilling.

The work of APAMO as the voice of the protected areas is therefore critical in ensuring the integrity of protected areas, in preventing de-reservation, and in ensuring the financial sustainability and proper management of Belize’s protected Areas.

Our accomplishments in the past and in the year 2011 would not have been possible without the support and collaboration of many people. I therefore give thanks to the Executive Council, the member organizations and their staff for their tireless efforts and support given to the APAMO Staff. Sincere thanks also to our donors especially the Oak Foundation, the UNDP-Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Programme, and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust. Your continued support will enable APAMO to reach its ultimate goal – ensuring the integrity and proper management of Belize’s protected areas for the benefit of all. I invite you to learn more about our work on this annual report and to write us if you need further information.

Yours in Conservation,



Edilberto Romero  
Chairperson, APAMO  
Executive Director, Programme for Belize



## Message from the Executive Director

Dear Partners and Friends,

I am pleased to present to you our 4<sup>th</sup> annual report. 2011 was busy, as we actively participated in implementation of the National Protected Areas System Plan which is important to us as this should establish a solid foundation for a comprehensive and representative protected areas system; one that is effectively and efficiently managed.

APAMO supported its members in advocating for greater governance and financial sustainability for Belize's protected areas. APAMO also invested significant efforts in strengthening its members, particularly the smaller community based organizations to meet their obligations as co-managers.

We have an important role to play in ensuring that protected area managers have access to support and information to empower them to sit at the table with those making important decisions about our protected areas so that these are given the necessary level of importance and support required for their effective and sustainable management.

Carrying out our mission and mandate is not easy. The country's current debt situation, makes it even more difficult to safeguard our protected areas from threats due to short-term thinking, lack of effective planning and unsustainable development.

There is a sense of urgency within the conservation community as our protected areas remain threatened by oil exploration and by the fact that they are managed on unrealistic budgets that are less than is needed to ensure that our long-term conservation objectives are met.

APAMO continues to seek innovative ways to demonstrate that the livelihoods and well-being of all Belizeans require healthy ecosystems which are supported by protected areas and that, over the long term, the degradation of our protected areas will inevitably result in a poorer Belize affecting each one of us. We will continue to hold ourselves accountable to our vision of serving as Belize's foremost Association of committed Protected Areas Management Organizations. We will continue to contribute to and advocate 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. We cannot do this alone and will therefore continue to work closely with our members, foster stronger partnerships in government, the private sector, communities and the general public.

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to APAMO's achievements. We thank our donors, who, as a result of their confidence and generous support enabled us to continue serving as the Voice of Belize's Protected Areas. We also thank our members, our Executive Council, our staff, our partners and friends in conservation, for helping us to ensure the long-term protection and effective management of our protected areas.

We invite you to keep supporting and working with us to conserve our protected areas and the invaluable services they provide which are critical to our wellbeing and to the sustainability of the Belize's productive sectors. Together we can undertake the challenges our protected areas face and will continue to face, finding win-win solutions.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Yvette Alonzo".

Yvette Alonzo  
*Executive Director*



# About APAMO

## *The Voice of Belize's Protected Areas*

The Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO) is Belize's leading network of non-governmental conservation organizations, dedicated to conserving irreplaceable natural resources within our protected areas. We embrace ways of improving the effective management of our protected areas for the benefit of the people and the nation of Belize. In essence, APAMO serves as guardian of protected areas by advocating for and contributing to their effective management, by strengthen the capacities of its member organizations, by keeping developers in check and by calling on the government to fulfill their constitutional obligation to protect natural resources for the common good.

APAMO's thirteen (13) member agencies are responsible for the management and co-management of eighteen (18) terrestrial protected areas and eight (8) marine protected areas representing close to 860,000 acres (350,000 ha) or 50% of all co-managed protected. While Belize has done well in declaring ninety-five (97) protected areas with various degrees of protection status and has developed a National Protected Area Policy and System Plan, of which APAMO serves as a key partner in its implementation, the integrity and existence of these areas are

increasingly threaten by unplanned and unregulated development, unsustainable natural resources extraction, inadequate finances to effectively manage these areas, oil exploration and extraction, and climate change impacts.

The protected areas management organizations have joined forces to effectively address these challenges and build on opportunities to improve the management and secure the integrity of Belize's protected areas. APAMO serves as the unified voice that advocates for and contributes to the sustainability and effective management of Belize's protected areas. Well managed and financed protected areas will enable Belize to maintain its natural resources and environmental goods and services such as clean water, clean air, for economic and social contribution to the nation and people of Belize and helps the Government of Belize to meet its international commitments. APAMO strives to be "The Voice of Belize's Protected Areas" In advocacy and lobbying, policy, financial sustainability, networking, capacity building, and in improving standards for protected areas management.

*"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success" Henry Ford*

## APAMO's Core Programs

**In order to achieve its mission, APAMO's work is focused on the following core areas:**

1. Advocacy and lobbying,
2. Policy
3. Financial sustainability
4. Networking
5. Capacity building
6. Improving standards for protected areas management

This 2011 'year in review' report captures the highlights of APAMO's four major program areas: 1) Institutional Management and Strengthening, 2) Membership, 3) Protected Areas Policy and Advocacy, and 4) Strategic Data and Information. Through dedicated efforts, APAMO continues bridging the gap in its mission for sustainability and proper management of Belize's protected areas thus ensuring benefits for all stakeholders.

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## 1. Institutional Management Strengthening

In 2011, APAMO moved to a four-person staff, up from a coordinator in 2007. This benchmark testifies to the confidence of donors and the vision of the membership and Executive Council to strengthen the network. APAMO now boasts a Project Officer and a Development Officer for its member-capacity building and development programs. These two technical personnel focus on greater support to its members and improving APAMO's visibility to garner greater support.

'Echo' our quarterly newsletter, highlighting not only the work of APAMO but also of its members were published and distributed to our partners and stakeholders. This is one way we keep our partners and stakeholders informed of our on-going activities, obstacles, success stories, and achievements on a regular basis. APAMO also instituted a Facebook account for weekly updates of our activities. We encourage you to comment and contribute frequently to improve APAMO's work.

In 2011 we were able to dedicate efforts in implementing our financial sustainability strategy, developing, updating and producing our donor and media packets as well as marketing and fundraising materials such as brochures and fact sheets.

APAMO continued to provide oversight and fiduciary management to the large grant secured on



APAMO Staff

behalf of the Coalition to Save our Natural Heritage and to house its 2 staff – the Coalition Coordinator and the Coalition Research/Communications Officer.

With qualified staff, adequate facility and resources, APAMO is poised to better serve its members and protected areas stakeholders.

In order to move to the next level of organizational growth, the network will focus on updating its strategic plan as the current plan expires in 2012. This strategic planning process will aim to lend greater clarity to the network's broad mandate via clearer program prioritization, advocacy and policy development and long term sustainability of the association.





## 2. Membership

The strength of APAMO is its members. Much of APAMO's work is focused on membership outreach through continuously building the capacity of its member organizations, networking, representing its members, and strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones.

There is no doubt that our local conservation NGOs and CBOs have come to play an important role in Belize's conservation efforts by raising external funds from international funding agencies for the management of protected areas, conducting research and biodiversity monitoring, patrols, serving as important channels for the dissemination of information and mobilizing public support for strengthened environmental policies.

For example, Programme for Belize (PfB) got its Carbon Project validated and verified. This will enable them to establish an endowment fund which will contribute to the financial sustainability of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area.

Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA), a grassroots community based organization, co-managers of the Billy Barquedier National Park has proven to be a keen watch dog for the protection of this watershed against unplanned development. This National Park serves an important purpose of protecting the water catchment, safeguarding the water quality for the Steadfast and Alta Vista communities, and for the entire North Stann Creek watershed, while also protecting a scenic and biodiversity-rich area.

However, even though Government has delegated co-management to local conservation NGOs and CBOs for several of its protected areas this delegation of management has not been accompanied with the corresponding financial support nor the necessary capacity building of these organizations. This is recognized in the National Protected Areas System Plan which cites that "the strengthening of the partners to fully and meaningfully engage in co-management is critical". Building stronger grassroots organizations translates into greater political power for Belize's conservation community.



## 2.1 Strengthening Institutional Capacities of Members

In 2011, APAMO continued bridging the gaps for its members in many aspects. APAMO partnered with the Belize Audubon Society and organized and sponsored a three day workshop for all members' staff and their board of directors. This workshop covered areas of priority for our members such as effective communication, coaching for improvement and success, and conflict resolution.

The staff and board of these co-managing NGOs and CBOs have to deal with a variety of stakeholders on a day to day basis including local communities, the resource users, government agencies, donors, scientists among others.

Therefore, APAMO provided the "Effective Communication" course to arm the co-managers with key skills to recognize and overcome communication barriers and prepare barriers and

prepare them for more effective communication with their stakeholders.

The Coaching for Improvement course focused on teaching participants to take charge of improving their performance, altering work habits and developing plans, while the Conflict Resolution course provided the participants with the necessary tools to effectively resolve conflict, enhance productivity and reduce the negative effects and potential costs of conflict when dealing with protected area stakeholders and partners.

One of APAMO's core objectives is to strengthen and build the capacities of its member organizations by providing them with the necessary tools and skills to effectively manage Belize's protected areas. Over 60 staff and board members of APAMO's 13 member organizations participated in this 3 day training which involved practical activities such as role playing and group discussion. The training was facilitated by the Training Director of the National Audubon Society in the USA.



Staff and Board members of APAMO 13 member agencies break out in groups to discuss and prepare on how to deal with a potential conflict within their organizations.

## 2.2 Highlighting Member's Research initiatives

In September, APAMO hosted a national symposium to highlight the work of its members and to build awareness of the various protected areas under the theme: *"Communities and Resource Managers: Bridging the Gap – Engaging Communities in Integrated Resource Management."*

The overarching goal of the symposium was to assess how communities, whose livelihoods depend on the sustainability of natural resources, can become better engaged in the management of these resources through people-centred management approaches. People play an integral role in creating changes in their environment, and their participation in generating decisions concerning the governing of their natural resources is essential. The inclusion and integration of communities in the management of natural resources is vital in order to ensure that environmental planning and management processes are effective.

This symposium highlighted recent and current scientific research and projects conducted in Belize by organizations such as: Southern Environmental Association (SEA), Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE), Peninsula Citizens for Sustainable Development (PCSD), Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI), Ya'axché Conservation Trust, Belize Audubon Society (BAS), Friends of Swallow Caye (FOSC) among others.

Mr. Saleem Chan, TIDE Marine Manager, presented on an initiative being implemented in

partnership with the Fisheries Department and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF).

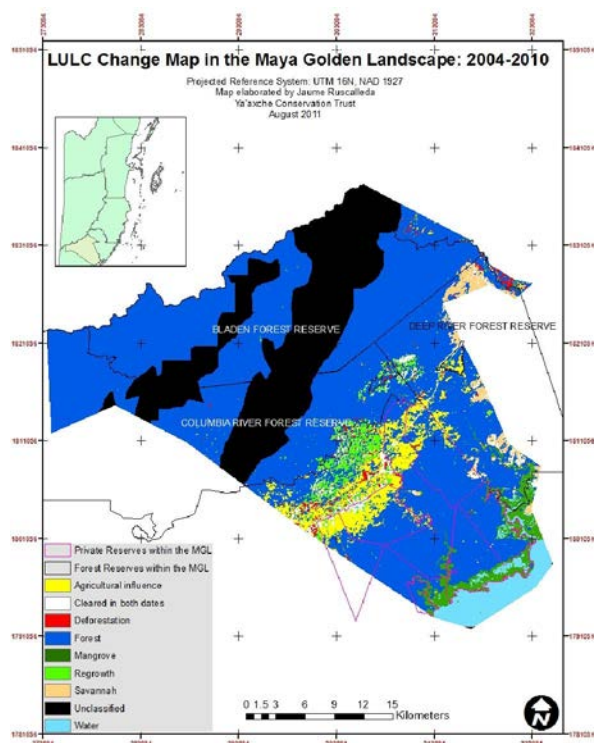
The project which seeks to implement "Managed Access" in Belize, he explained, is a licensing system to allow traditional fishermen access to fish within the general use zone of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve, one of two pilot sites for this project. The project will also establish a monitoring system to gather scientific, economic and social data to inform decision making by fishermen and managers. TIDE is working close with its buffer communities and fishers in the design and implementation of this initiative that is expected to end the destructive race to fish, provide fishermen an incentive to allow fish to reach reproductive maturity, develop a fair, transparent, collaborative and participatory fisheries management process, and establish community based, management fisheries committees to guide this initiative.



Representatives from TIDE, the Fisheries Department, and EDF and meeting with a managed access fisher while hand line fishing in the PHMR.

On the terrestrial environment Maarten Hofman, Research Officer/Terrestrial Ecologist at Ya'axché Conservation Trust, presented an interesting research on "Land-use change and fragmentation in the Maya Golden Landscape (MGL): the need for spatially explicit community

He explained that Ya'axché has studied the land-use change and levels of fragmentation for the MGL over the past 30 years. His [presentation highlighted that although the deforestation rate at the MGL scale was low due to the high acreage of protected areas, it was considerably higher on the community lands. Increased deforestation within these areas as well as along the Southern highway will have damaging impacts on the ecosystems and moreover on the communities dependent on environmental services. Mr. Hofman explained that community resource and development plans are important tools to help communities and natural resource managers face the challenge of finding an acceptable balance between development and conservation. Ya'axché is currently preparing some of its buffer communities to assist them with developing their spatially explicit plans.



The map shows Land Use/Land Cover changes for the Maya Golden Landscape-primarily the effect of 3 main phenomena: deforestation (red), recovery from hurricane Iris in 2001 (light green), and the expansion of a secondary forest (yellow).

The symposium also included a poster display segment where participants could learn in more detail about the various research projects presented.

APAMO's first symposium was well attended with over 50 representatives from both governmental and non-governmental management agencies and other interested individuals. APAMO plans for this to be an annual event. **For more information or to view the other presentations log on to [www.apamo.net](http://www.apamo.net)**



Ms. Cristina Garcia presenting SEA's Community Outreach Poster



Participants listening to presentations



## 2.3 Training and mentoring of APAMO CBO members

In 2011 APAMO continued to implement the project *“Support for capacity building for improved protected areas management in Belize”*, a capacity building project to enhance the management and operational effectiveness of seven Community Based Organizations (CBOs) co-managing protected areas in Belize. The aim was to provide CBO Board members with the necessary tools for increased and improved accountability, management of their protected areas, project management, delivery and report on programs and services to improve protected areas management.

In an institutional assessment conducted by APAMO in 2010, these organizations prioritized 4 areas which they considered they needed to strengthen: *board development, project development, organizational development, and financial management*. They also recognized that capacity building interventions as “stand alone” actions without the complete package of personnel and equipment / communication and follow up, have not proven to be sufficiently effective in the past. Consequently, the capacity building aspect of the project included both training workshops on concepts and practical applications with existing data and information, as well as coaching of staff and board members through regular visits to each of the seven organizations. The project also provided part-time support personnel using consultants and the required tools/equipment to ensure that the training can be incorporated into the daily operations of the CBOs.

As a result, over 40 staff and Board members of seven CBOs participated in the “hands-on” trainings and were guided in developing a 3 year strategic plan for their organization, annual operational plans and budgets, a project proposal, and a simple financial system to record financial information. As a result the CBOs have a higher capacity for managing their finances and for providing timely

resource and development plans”.

reports to donors. Board members have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are able to provide better direction and oversight to their organizations. In addition to the training and mentoring in the various governance and financial management skills, the CBOs also received much needed equipment to be able to effectively function which included: internet modems, laptop computers, projectors, screens, and paper and ink. These activities were possible with the support from the Oak Foundation, PACT and GEF SGP.

Even though the project ended in December of 2011, APAMO continues to provide technical support to the CBOs.



STACA Board member participating in strategic planning session



FAMRACC staff and Board members receiving practical training in financial management and reporting

Many of the CBOs are also using the various products developed under the project such as their annual work plans and annual budgets. Two of the organizations have been successful in submitting components for their project proposals and secured grant funding.

It is important to note that this project alone will not solve all the capacity needs of the organizations to become truly effective protected area managers, much more still needs to be done.

Nevertheless, this capacity building project has certainly given them information and tools they did not have before. They are able to understand the importance of having and following established processes. This project is a good example of how committed co-financing and people's participation can help address the needs of multiple stakeholders to ensure the viability and good stewardship of some of Belize's protected areas.

APAMO will endeavor to seek further funding to continue supporting member organizations in improving their governance and financial capacities

so that they are better able to meet their responsibilities as co-managers, as well as other capacity strengthening needs and to maintain its systematic program of monitoring and mentoring member CBOs so as to continue to promote a high level of organizational governance, empowerment and visibility. By enhancing the management effectiveness of the protected areas this will contribute to securing the foundation for biodiversity conservation. The 7 CBOs that benefited from this project included Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA), Friends of Mayflower Bocawina National Park (FOMBNP), Forest and Marine Reserve Association of Caye Caulker (FAMRACC), Friends of Swallow Caye Ltd. (FOSC), Community Baboon Sanctuary Women's Conservation Group (CBSWCG), Rancho Dolores Environment and Development Company Ltd (RDEDC), and Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon Company Ltd (FGGLC). These organizations showed strong commitment throughout the project despite the fact that their staff and board members operate on a volunteer basis. The trainings were all very interactive and fully participatory.



RDEDC and CBSWCG staff and board members in Board Development training.

## 2.4 Commemorating 4 years

On May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 APAMO celebrated its 4th Annual General Meeting under the theme *"Securing protected Areas Integrity and people's Livelihoods"*. Key note speakers were Dr. Vincent Palacio, Dean of Faculty of Management Tourism and Social Sciences, University of Belize and Dr. Jaime Gonzalez Cano a representative of the National Commission for Protected Areas of Mexico. Dr. Palacio recognized and commended the co-managers for their unwavering commitment, dedication, passion and hard work in the management of our protected areas. Dr. Gonzalez Cano gave an overview of interesting and innovative projects being implemented in three protected areas in Quintana Roo, Mexico geared at reducing the threats to coral reefs in these areas.

The AGM highlighted the 2010 achievements of APAMO which included Institutional Growth and Strengthening, and the relocation of its office; Membership Development, the implementation of Capacity Building program "Support for capacity building for improved protected areas management in Belize." Advocacy and Policy remains at the top APAMO agenda. APAMO will continue to lobby for endorsement of a National Co-management Framework, and to remove our Barrier Reef from the list of world Heritage Sites in Danger. We also lobbied against initiatives that pose a threat to protected areas such as proposed Cruise Tourism in Placencia. APAMO publicly expressed its disagreement with this and ensure that it participated in all the consultations held country wide on the issue. In addition APAMO met with the Chief Executive Officer from the Ministry of Tourism and the Director of Tourism to discuss its concerns with the proposed cruise tourism in Placencia as this could negatively affect integrity of the protected areas in that region such as Laughing Bird Caye National

Park, Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve, Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary and others.

APAMO also actively supported one of its community based organization members in publicly advocating against the passing of a logging road through the Billy Barquedier National Park which resulted in cease and desist order through mass efforts. However our effort to halt oil exploration inside protected areas is inconclusive at this time. The AGM also features some of the initiatives for 2011 including continuing to develop partnerships with other organizations.

A newly elected Executive Council was presented. Four members of the Executive Council were elected with two being re-elected and two newly elected. Re-elected were Mr. Edilberto Romero as Chairman and Ms. Hyacinth Ysaguirre as a council member; and newly elected were Mr. Gregory Ch'oc as Treasurer and Mr. Raymond Reneau as Council member. These four join Mrs. Amanda Acosta, Vice Chair, Mrs. Celia Mahung, Secretary, and Ms. Nellie Catzim, Council Member to form the APAMO Executive Council for 2011-2012.

One year later we are happy to report that the government proposal for cruise tourism to Placencia has been halted.





## 2.5 Creating Awareness

APAMO supported four of its members both financially and technically in celebrating Earth Day 2011. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, APAMO staff and The Community Baboon Sanctuary Women's Conservation Group held their Earth Day clean-up with the participation of the local kindergarteners. Belize Audubon Society representatives wooed and amazed the children with interactive games highlighting the importance of protecting and conserving our natural resources and the need to keep our environment clean.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association held its 2011 Earth Day/Easter Clean-up. Approximately 70 children from Valley Community, Alta Vista and Steadfast Village participated in STACA's Earth day activities. After an introduction by Ms. Hyacinth Ysaguirre, Executive Director of STACA, the children proceeded to clean their community by picking up garbage in the area. The children were rewarded by an Easter Egg Hunt and distribution of prizes.

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, the Belize Audubon Society, the largest and oldest conservation NGO in the country, conducted its 3<sup>rd</sup> "Walk for a Green Belize", a successful clean-up campaign that keeps growing every year. Over six hundred volunteers from different embassies, companies, organizations, and schools and environmental clubs joined the event. APAMO participated in this clean-up campaign to spread environmental consciousness to the nation for a more sustainable and 'greener' Belizean environment. Over 2,000 ten gallon bags were filled and picked up along the Western Highway on this day.

Lastly, Friends of Swallow Caye (FOSC), based in Caye Caulker hosted a Sand Sculpture Competition for the students of the Caye Caulker RC Primary School. FOSC is a community based organization which co-manages the Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary for the protection of the endangered Antillean Manatee.

The purpose of the Earth Day Events were to increase awareness of protected areas and Belize's natural resources such as watershed among the youth, to inspire youth and community leaders to volunteer and try to improve their communities, and to bring an increase sense of community awareness and promote pride in one's community. This was all achieved while having a great time.



Children busy making a sand sculpture of a Manatee as part of a sculpture contest spearheaded by Friends of Swallow Caye Ltd.



APAMO staff, Evita Quiroz and Vanessa Grajalez, participates in the Belize Audubon Society Green Walk cleaning the Western Highway

## 2.6 APAMO partners with Belize Olympics Association

In May 2011, APAMO partnered with the Belize Olympics Association to increase awareness on the role and importance of protected areas through an environmental essay and presentation competition. As a pilot project this competition was geared towards 2<sup>nd</sup> form high school students of Belize City.

The theme for this competition was *“From the Ridge to the Reef”*. Seven schools participated in the competition with three students per school. They were taken to two protected areas that showcase a terrestrial and a marine setting to gather information to generate an essay and presentation. APAMO facilitated field trips to Billy Barquedier National Park in Steadfast Village co-managed by Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA), to learn more about watershed ecology and how the marine environment might be impacted from what happens by the processes that occur upstream

and to Caye Caulker Forest and Marine Reserves, co-managed by Forest and Marine Reserve Association of Caye Caulker (FAMRACC) to learn about marine ecology and again about the natural connection it has to the ridge and how what happens up in the ridge may impact marine life.

James A. Waight awardee and Executive Director of STACA, Ms. Hyacinth Ysaguirre together with Mr. Kimo Jolly, a marine and watershed educator of the Cayo District gave presentations on BBNP and watersheds and Ms. Ellen McRae, biologist and Executive Director of FAMRACC presented on the marine and forest reserves of Caye Caulker.

With the knowledge gained from both sites, the students prepared a report on the importance of both inland and marine protected areas and their connectivity, their relationship to one another, some effects of one on the other, possible solutions to the problems each face, and the importance of conserving our natural resources. The top 3 groups were invited to make a presentation and display.



Students snorkeling at Caye Caulker Marine reserve



Edward P. York High School won 1<sup>st</sup> place, St. Catherine's Academy won 2<sup>nd</sup> place and Excelsior High School came in 3<sup>rd</sup>. They each received an academic endowment prize of \$1,000, \$750 and \$500 per student and a trophy respectively. These were provided by the Belize Olympics Association.

Judging the essays and presentations were representatives from the Belize Audubon Society Ms. Palacio, APAMO Ms. Lamb, and Programme for Belize Mr. Pacheco.

APAMO hopes to continue fostering similar partnerships to effectively spread environmental awareness and to bring forth other such projects.



Students at Billy Barquedier National Park receiving lecture on forest ecology and watersheds as well as a tour of the park



Students examining a crab and learning the importance of biodiversity of the Caye Caulker Forest and Marine Reserve



Students taking a tour of the Caye Caulker Forest Reserve and learning about the functions and importance of mangroves



### 3. Advocacy and Policy

**APAMO's core business** is to advocate for the integrity and proper management of Belize's protected areas. APAMO's Advocacy and Policy program focuses on issues that directly or indirectly affect protected areas at the unit and system-level. One of the major problems is a lack of long-term planning, which leads to unregulated development and project-driven management, and the consequent pressures to Belize's natural resource base. Oil exploration in protected areas has become one of the biggest threats to our protected areas. Lack of financial support from the government to cover at least core operation costs of co-managers is also one of the main limitations for effective protected areas management.

The APAMO Members meet regularly, through general membership meetings as well as at the Annual General Assembly. The Executive Council meets at least 6 times a year or more if necessary. These meetings center around a fully-packed agendas where members discuss and agree on actions to be taken regarding the different issues to be addressed.

Several membership meetings were held throughout the year revolving around the issues of oil exploration in protected areas and offshore, co-management agreement, and entrance fees. These meetings were to agree on a collective voice on the opinions of the membership on the current issues.

We work hard to better position ourselves so that we can advocate to ensure that the integrity of our protected areas is not compromised due to unsustainable development. It is our belief that without its protected areas Belize would be significantly poorer, as these protected areas

have become major contributors to the national economy. This includes economic benefits through tourism, fisheries and for enhancing overall quality of life.

It is in pursuit of these benefits and the work of our members who are on the ground that drives APAMO forward and encourages us all to stand up for what we believe in. We are working to resolve some tough issues such as oil exploration in our protected areas, and finding solutions that benefit, nature and our society. Oil exploration is currently occurring at both Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area and The Sarstoon Temash National Park.

APAMO has also been very busy ensuring that its collective voice is heard regarding the various recommendations and products coming out of the National project: Strengthening National Capacities geared at implementing the priority recommendations of the NPASP. APAMO has been contributing to the legislation, fee consultancy and the rationalization process.



APAMO members meeting to discuss and agree on position on oil development and protected areas

## 3.1 Contributing to the Establishing Belize's Protected Areas System

In 2011 APAMO continued to play an active role in the implementation of the NPAPSP which aims at converting Belize's fractured network of protected areas into a cohesive national protected areas system, with the appropriate legal, administrative, and institutional restructuring that would allow Belize to have an ecologically representative and connected network of protected areas, subject to efficient and effective management arrangements and adequately financed through multiple sources and realize its strong commitment to biodiversity conservation.

Mr. Edilberto Romero, APAMO's Chairman, represented APAMO and actively participated in the **National Protected Areas Technical Committee**, whose primary function is to advise the responsible Ministers on issues related to the implementation of the System Plan. Ms. Nellie Catzim, APAMO's Council member represented and also actively participated in the **project executing group (PEG)** of the GEF funded project entitled "Strengthening National Capacities for the Operationalization, Consolidation, and Sustainability of Belize's Protected Areas System" (SNC) which expects to establish an enabling environment through legal, institutional, and operational reforms supporting PA management effectiveness and financial sustainability by 2013. Much of the project baselines for this project were contributed through APAMO previous efforts.

APAMO also made significant progress in negotiating with government a more standard and improved co-management agreement.

We are closer to getting this approved by government and expect that these will be signed between government and the co-managers in 2012.



APAMO Chairman, Mr. Edilberto Romero, making an intervention at one of the SNC consultations

APAMO also participated in the Steering Committee of the Environmental Research Institute (ERI-SC) of the University of Belize that provides guidance and oversight to ERI. In addition APAMO contributed to the National land Use Policy.

APAMO intends to continue investing significant effort in reviewing and ensuring that the results under the SNC project provide the framework or an enabling administrative structure for policy implementation, the creation of a system that is functional, the rationalization of the system allowing for comprehensive cover, and financial sustainability of the system.

APAMO will continue to address the challenges affecting protected areas management as well as capitalizing on the opportunities for protected areas. Our work is crucial as we recognize that failure to effectively manage our protected areas will continue to make the conservation of Belize's protected areas even more challenging, and will place us at even greater risk of losing important conservation gains.

## 3.2 No Oil Exploration Offshore and in protected areas



Laughing Bird Caye National Park, Co-managed by SEA and one of 7 protected areas that make up the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System World Heritage Site

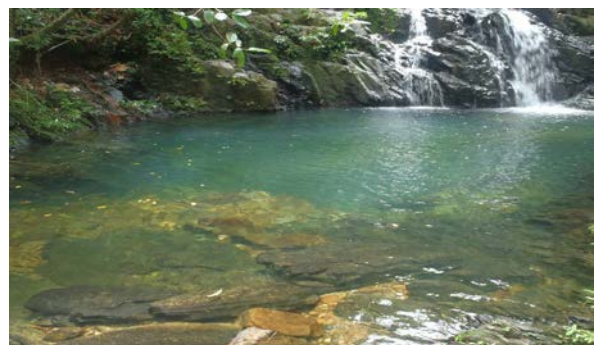
The Government of Belize is interested in accelerating oil exploration and production in the national lands and waters in order to pay its burdensome foreign debt. It has therefore divided the entire terrestrial and marine territory into oil exploration blocks without due consideration of the protected areas and environmentally sensitive areas of Belize.

APAMO has been actively advocating for the protected areas of Belize to be excluded from oil exploration and production. As the leading network association of protected areas management organization, APAMO was invited by Prime Minister of Belize to discuss the issue of oil exploration and production in protected areas. Particularly recommendations were made for protected areas that should be completely off-limit to oil exploration and production and guidelines and conditions were also recommended for oil exploration and production in areas where exploration activities could potentially be allowed. APAMO developed a position paper and made key recommendations which were discussed with the Ministry's technical personnel.

Considering the impacts that oil exploration and production can have on the ecology, biodiversity, and integrity of the natural features, the environment and protected areas, APAMO's position and recommendation is that ***the entire marine area should be off-limits to oil exploration and production.*** APAMO is of the position that Belize's Barrier Reef, a recognized World Heritage Site and globally renowned natural treasure, should not be placed at risk from oil exploration and production. Therefore, APAMO official position is: **NO oil exploration and drilling offshore.**

Also, considering the purpose, importance and ecological sensitivity, APAMO's position and recommendation is that ***all the protected areas under the National Park System Act (national parks, natural monuments, nature reserves and wildlife sanctuaries) should be off-limits to oil exploration and production as well as private protected areas such as the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area, that are of national and regional importance, should be off-limits to oil exploration and production.***

Of the 36% of Belize's land area under some form of protection. Only 13% are protected areas governed under the National Parks System Act, created for conservation purpose. 17% is comprised of forest reserve, created for the management of extractive resources. The remaining 6% consists of private protected areas and archaeological sites.



Pristine Pool and waterfall at Mayflower Bocawina National Park



Also considering that oil exploration and production can have significant impacts on underground water quality and watersheds, APAMO also recommended that *the forest reserves that are essential for maintaining the integrity of important watersheds should be off-limits to oil exploration and production.*

APAMO recommended that the Government of Belize conduct a study of the forest reserves to determine the ones that are essential for the protection of watersheds that should be off-limits to oil exploration and production. Furthermore, APAMO recommended that the Government of Belize and the Ministry of Natural Resources develop and adopt appropriate guidelines and measures for oil exploration in the areas that can allow oil exploration in order to protect the ecological integrity and the environmental services of the forest.

In summary at the membership meeting held on March 29, 2011, after analyzing the threats from oil exploration and production, APAMO adopted the following position:

1. **NO to oil exploration and drilling offshore; and**
2. **NO to oil exploration and drilling within the protected areas under the National Parks Systems Act and in key private protected areas and watershed areas.**



White tailed deer at the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area.

### 3.3 APAMO speaks out on the 9<sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill

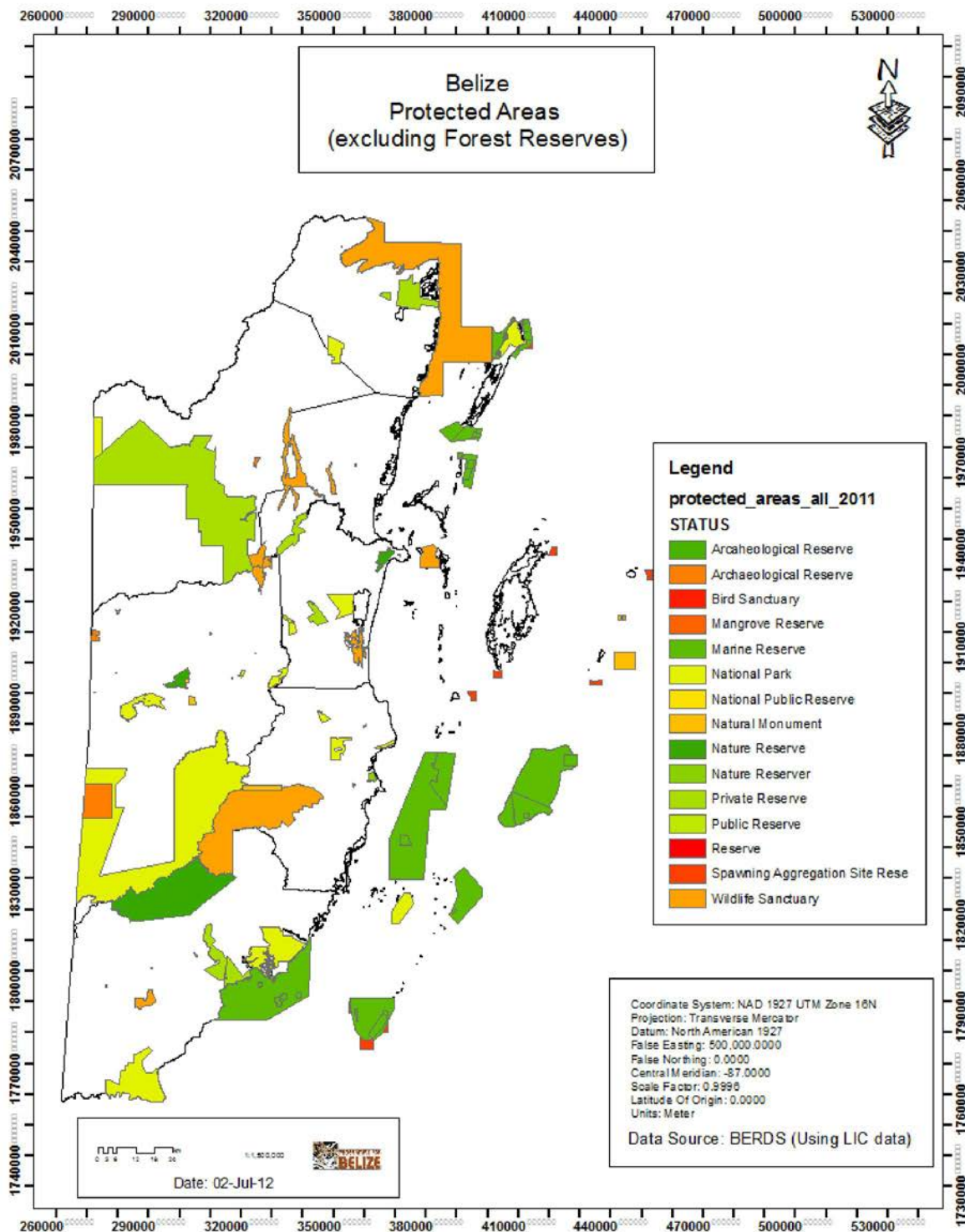
After reviewing several legal opinions on the matter of the 9<sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill, APAMO considered that there were sections in the proposed amendment that were not good for the country and the people of Belize, specifically as it relates to Section 2 and Subsection 9 which would allow the government or the National Assembly to change the constitution at any time.

APAMO considered this to be very risky because it meant that at any time the constitution could be changed in a way that could affect the rights of the people of Belize, the rights of organizations, the rights of individuals and for that reason APAMO was not in support of the bill. On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011 APAMO sent a press release expressing its concerns with section 2 and subsection 9 of Section 69 which we considered, if enacted, leaves vulnerable our constitutional democracy and which risks taking our country down a slippery road.

Our concerns with the two sections were as follows:

- (1) Any amendment to section 2 of the Constitution potentially dilutes the supremacy of our written constitution, which sets out how we are to be governed and which safeguards our fundamental rights and which our citizenry has accepted as the bedrock of our democracy.

While the government claimed that the proposed alteration to section 2 is simply seeking to clarify and preserve the integrity of the legislative process.



Map showing protected areas (excluding forest reserves) with those governed under the under the National Park System Act (national parks, natural monuments, nature reserves and wildlife sanctuaries), and private protected areas of national and regional importance created for conservation purpose which APAMO continues to advocate should be off-limits to oil exploration and production including the entire offshore area.

Upon our read of it, however, and buttressed by the legal opinions we have reviewed, the proposed amendment seeks to vest supremacy in the National Assembly so as to enable that body to pass future constitutional amendments. Once the requisite manner and form provisions of section 69 are complied with, the citizenry will be unable to challenge its legality, even if the future amendment infringes the vested fundamental rights that we presently enjoy;

(2) The amendments to section 69 takes away the court's ability to hear anything but procedural challenges to a proposed constitutional amendment and allows for parliamentary supremacy.

APAMO joined several other organizations including the Bar Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the National Teachers' Union, the Citizens Organized for Liberty and Action, Belizeans for Justice, in publicly objecting to the government's proposal for changes to these sections of the constitution and urged the government to refrain from amending the section 2 and section 69 as being proposed in the 9<sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill.



Golden Stream which sits in the Maya Golden Landscape

### 3.4 APAMO calls for a Moratorium on Rosewood Exploitation In Toledo

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011, APAMO issued the press release on rosewood exploitation in the Toledo District expressing our deep concerned with the unsustainable extraction of rosewood occurring there. As a non-governmental umbrella organization of conservation NGOs and CBOs working to conserve our natural resources for the long-term wellbeing of local communities and the country of Belize, we believe that the extraction of any natural resources should be carried out in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Although the rosewood logging was occurring outside of protected areas, APAMO noted that once the stocks of rosewood were depleted in community and private lands, the protected areas would then be targeted. It was not long before some SATIIM reported cases of illegal harvesting of rosewood from within the Sarstoon Temash National Park.

APAMO pointed out that Belize has undertaken significant and exemplary efforts to stop environmental degradation, effectively manage its natural resources, protect its unique biodiversity and promote environmentally sustainable development. Beyond their inherent value, these natural treasures - which are a source of national pride - also guarantee benefits and services that are essential to the daily lives of the rural majority of the population, providing them with water, food and shelter. The protection and preservation of natural resources will help to guarantee the long-term sustainable development of the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors upon which Belize is grounded in.



Based on a preliminary assessment conducted by Ya'axche, the rosewood in Belize, also known as Honduran rosewood, is locally and internationally well-known for its beautiful and versatile wood. It has traditionally been used by the indigenous people of the Toledo district for fence and house posts, musical instruments, furniture, cabinet making and a small amount is utilized by local craftsmen for carvings. Raw rosewood lumber commands a high price on international markets making it highly vulnerable to over-exploitation. The Belize Forest Department has indicated that demand from Asia is largely responsible for the recent spike in exports of raw lumber.

Logs are cut into flitches (a single, de-barked, squared log). This process results in a certain amount of wastage (approximately 1" of rosewood for every foot that is cut), leaving only the heartwood. Amounts paid to loggers vary considerably (the Forest Department has indicated that loggers get paid between BZ\$3-\$5 per board foot). The Government of Belize receives BZ\$60 per ton in royalties for rosewood. One board foot of Honduran rosewood can sell for a minimum of BZ\$33 in the USA. A rosewood chair can cost as much as BZ\$900 in the USA or Europe. This gives a clear indication of how much value could be added if the timber was processed in Belize. Investing in value-added products would provide jobs and income for local people.

APAMO recommended that an urgent re-assessment of rosewood stocks on community lands be carried out, and a sustainable management plan for the future use of this precious resource be developed.

APAMO called on immediate action in order ensure the long-term availability of rosewood, and to protect the forests of Toledo from further degradation.

APAMO urged the government to put a stop to the open and organized plundering of this valuable timber species. Specifically APAMO joined Ya'axche Conservation Trust, an APAMO member in Toledo, to place a moratorium on all harvesting of rosewood until the re-assessment of stocks is complete.

Through this appeal, APAMO confirmed its commitment to work for the biodiversity of Belize and for the well-being of the local communities, who are the stewards of this natural heritage. APAMO also invited each citizen to recognize that the sustainability of the development of the country depends upon its natural resources and calls on every individual to take responsibility.



*Illegally harvested rosewood from the Sarstoon Temash National Park in Belize. Photo by: Anisario Cal.*



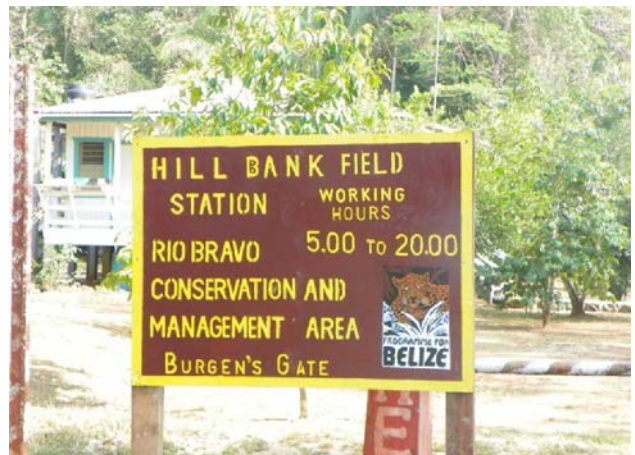
Rosewood logs ready to be transported to shipping ports for export. Approximately 3 large trucks per week leaves Toledo filled with rosewood purchased from middlemen. Photo courtesy Wil Maheia

## 4.0 Strategic Data and Information

Accurate data is very valuable particularly in arriving at credible and rigorous policy positions, for proper organizational management and for identifying funding priorities to effectively manage protected areas and addressing the increasing challenges that affect these areas.

APAMO continues to collect, store and secure data about its various members so that it could provide strategic support to their institutional strengthening and programmatic needs. While APAMO is not expected to engage in site specific research, APAMO will facilitate the efforts of its members to create and maintain a central database of scientific information that will be easily accessible to members and other stakeholders. APAMO's role is to seek ways to promote the work of its member agencies as well as to facilitate data to policymakers, the media, protected area managers, and the general public, in the most useful language and formats and at the most opportune times.

APAMO disseminates information among its member agencies, partners, donors and the wider public and creates awareness about APAMO's work via its quarterly newsletters, ECHO, augmented by its website [www.apamo.net](http://www.apamo.net) also geared at sharing information about APAMO's work as well as to promote the work of APAMO's member agencies.





## Donors and Partners

The Executive Council, Staff and Members of APAMO express our sincere gratitude to the donors, friends and partners for the generous contribution in 2011. Once again, APAMO's accomplishments would not have been possible without your kind and generous support.

APAMO is also grateful to all NGOs, both local and international, businesses and government organizations and individuals who supported the work of APAMO through the years.

### Hats off to our major donors:

- The Oak Foundation
- Protected Areas Conservation Trust
- Global Environmental Facility

Without you our work would not have been possible.

Grant funds help to sustain APAMO and enables us to perform essential program expansions, organizational improvements, and fulfill its mission. Your support, in any form, will help us continue advocating for and contributing to the proper management of our protected areas, ensuring the integrity of these is maintained, and support for institution of policy. It Will allow us to continue to be the Voice of Belize's Protected Areas.

*If you are interested in making a financial contribution to support the work of APAMO please contact us at any of the following:*

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1154 Sunrise Avenue, Belize City, Belize

**Email:** [info@apamo.net](mailto:info@apamo.net),  
[executivedirector@apamo.net](mailto:executivedirector@apamo.net)

**Website:** [www.apamo.net](http://www.apamo.net)

**Phone:** 501-223-7266

Online donations can also be made through our website.



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### Council Member:

Raymond Reneau  
Chairman  
Rancho Dolores  
Environmental and  
Development Group  
Rancho Dolores  
Burrell Boom, Belize  
District, Belize

### Council Member:

Hyacinth Ysaguirre  
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# APAMO Members 2011

APAMO is comprised of thirteen member organizations which manage eighteen terrestrial protected areas, of which three are privately owned, and eight marine protected areas. This represents an area of approximately 860,000 acres or 50% of the total area under protection (excluding forest reserves).

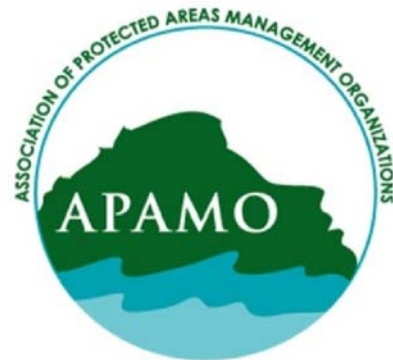
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3.	Selwin Gomez Harry Arzu	Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon Company Ltd. <a href="mailto:gglagoon@hotmail.com">gglagoon@hotmail.com</a> , <a href="mailto:harzu@cheerful.com">harzu@cheerful.com</a>	
4.	Terrence Salam	Friends of Mayflower Bocawina National Park Company <a href="mailto:terence_salam2@yahoo.com">terence_salam2@yahoo.com</a>	523-7223 663-4868
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11.	Anthony Menzies	Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association <a href="mailto:menziesanthony@yahoo.com">menziesanthony@yahoo.com</a>	
12.	Celia Mahung	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment <a href="mailto:cmahung@tidebelize.org">cmahung@tidebelize.org</a>	722-2274
13.	Lisel Alamilla	Ya'axche Conservation Trust <a href="mailto:executivedirector.yct@gmail.com">executivedirector.yct@gmail.com</a>	722-0108

# APAMO Guiding Principles

**APAMO members have agreed to subscribe to the following values in carrying out the mission of the association.**

- An integrated membership centred and driven approach (strength in unity);
- An unflinching belief in the continuous existence of naturally-functioning ecosystems;
- A belief that the abuse of power is unacceptable;
- Member agencies operate within a spirit of collaboration;
- Respect of differences of ideas and opinions among members;
- The practice of collective decision-making;
- Transparency and accountability in decision-making processes;
- Members' ownership of decision-making processes and decisions;
- Empowering member agencies;
- A belief that behavioral and attitudinal change are essential for the good of natural resources and people; and

APAMO will abide by a code of conduct based on its values.



The Voice of Belize's Protected Areas

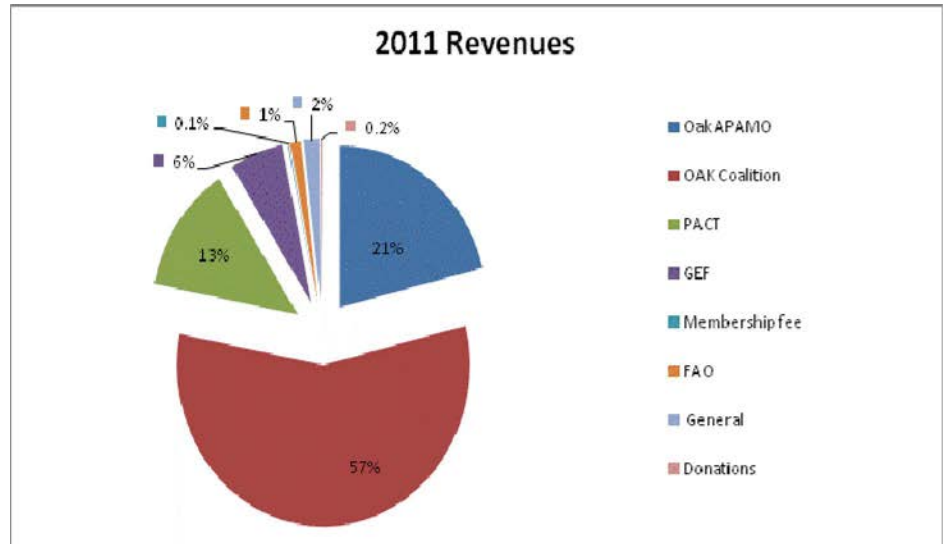


# Protected Areas Co-managed by APAMO Member Agencies

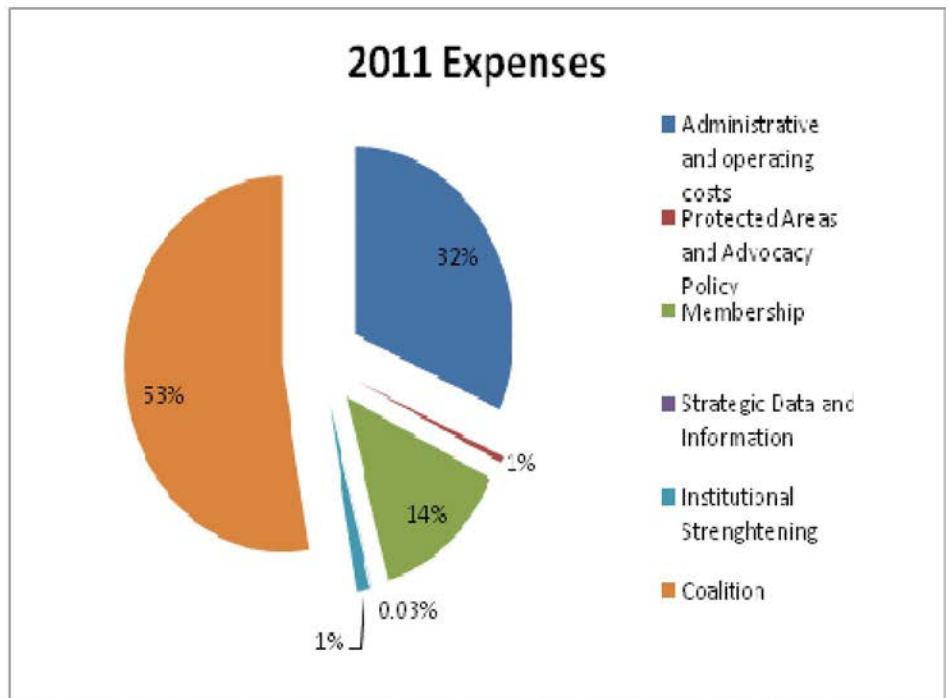
No	Organization	Acronym	Protected Areas Co-managed	Acres	Hectares
1	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	Guanacaste National Park	57.6	23.3
	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park	664.5	268.9
	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	Actun Tunichil Muknal Natural Monument	457.3	185.1
	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	Blue Hole Natural Monument	1,023.1	414
	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	Half Moon Caye Natural Monument	9,770.9	3,954.2
	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	Victoria Peak Natural Monument	4,840.6	1,958.9
	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve	6,299.6	2,549.4
	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary	122,260.1	49,477.1
	Belize Audubon Society	BAS	Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary	36,479.3	14,762.7
2	Community Baboon Sanctuary Women's Conservation Group	CBSWCG	Community Baboon Wildlife Sanctuary Private Reserve	12,980	5,252.9
3	Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon Company Ltd.	FGGLCG	Gra Gra Lagoon National Park	1,319.7	534.1
4	Friends of Mayflower Bocawina National Park Company	FMBNP	Mayflower Bocawina National Park	7,854	3,178.4
5	Friends of Swallow Caye Ltd.	FOSC	Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary	8,972.1	3,630.9
6	Forest and Marine Reserve Association of Caye Caulker	FAMRACC	Caye Caulker Marine Reserve	9,670.2	3,913.4
	Forest and Marine Reserve Association of Caye Caulker	FAMRACC	Caye Caulker Forest Reserve	93.7	37.9
7	Programme for Belize	PfB	Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area	259,205.7	104,897.2
8	Rancho Dolores Environmental and Development Company Ltd.	RDEDG	Spanish Creek Wildlife Sanctuary	6,001.3	2,428.7
9	Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management	SATIIM	Sarstoon Temash National Park	41,854.7	16,938.1
10	Southern Environmental Association	SEA	Laughing Bird Caye National Park	10,119.6	4,095.3
	Southern Environmental Association	SEA	Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve	26,356.6	10,513.1
	Southern Environmental Association	SEA	Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve	38,594.0	15,618.5
11	Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association	STACA	Billy Barquedeer National Park	1,639.1	663.3
12	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment	TIDE	Paynes Creek National Park	36,420.5	14,738.9
	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment	TIDE	Port Honduras Marine Reserve	100,001.1	40,469.2
13	Ya'axche Conservation Trust	YCT	Golden Stream Corridor Preserve	15,038.1	6,085.7
	Ya'axche Conservation Trust	YCT	Bladen Nature Reserve	99,673.8	40,336.7
	<b>Total area</b>			<b>857,647.2</b>	<b>346,925.9</b>
	<b>Total area of Belize's Protected Areas</b>			2,642,153.3	1,069,246.0
	<b>Total area of Belize's forest reserves</b>			939,809.0	380,328.0
	<b>Total area under protection excluding the forest reserves</b>			1,702,344.3	688,918.0
	<b>Total area under co-management</b>			1,329,475.2	538,031.2
	<b>% of protected areas managed by APAMO members excluding the forest reserve</b>			<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>
	<b>% of co-managed protected areas managed by APAMO members</b>			<b>64.5%</b>	<b>64.5%</b>

# Financial Summary

During January to December 2011, APAMO directly managed a total of BZ \$851,149.81. This includes funds brought forward from 2010 and funds received in 2011. In 2011 APAMO continued to serve as the fiduciary managers for the Oak- Coalition Project funded in last quarter of 2010.



The largest expenditure in 2011 was related to the Coalition project that focused on education and awareness and advocacy geared towards obtaining a ban on oil exploration and production in our entire offshore area and within our protected areas representing 53%. The other major expense was administrative and operating costs representing 32%. This included 4 staff members who provide the necessary services to APAMO's 4 program areas. APAMO also focused significant efforts on strengthening seven of its smaller members, representing 14% of total expenses for 2011.

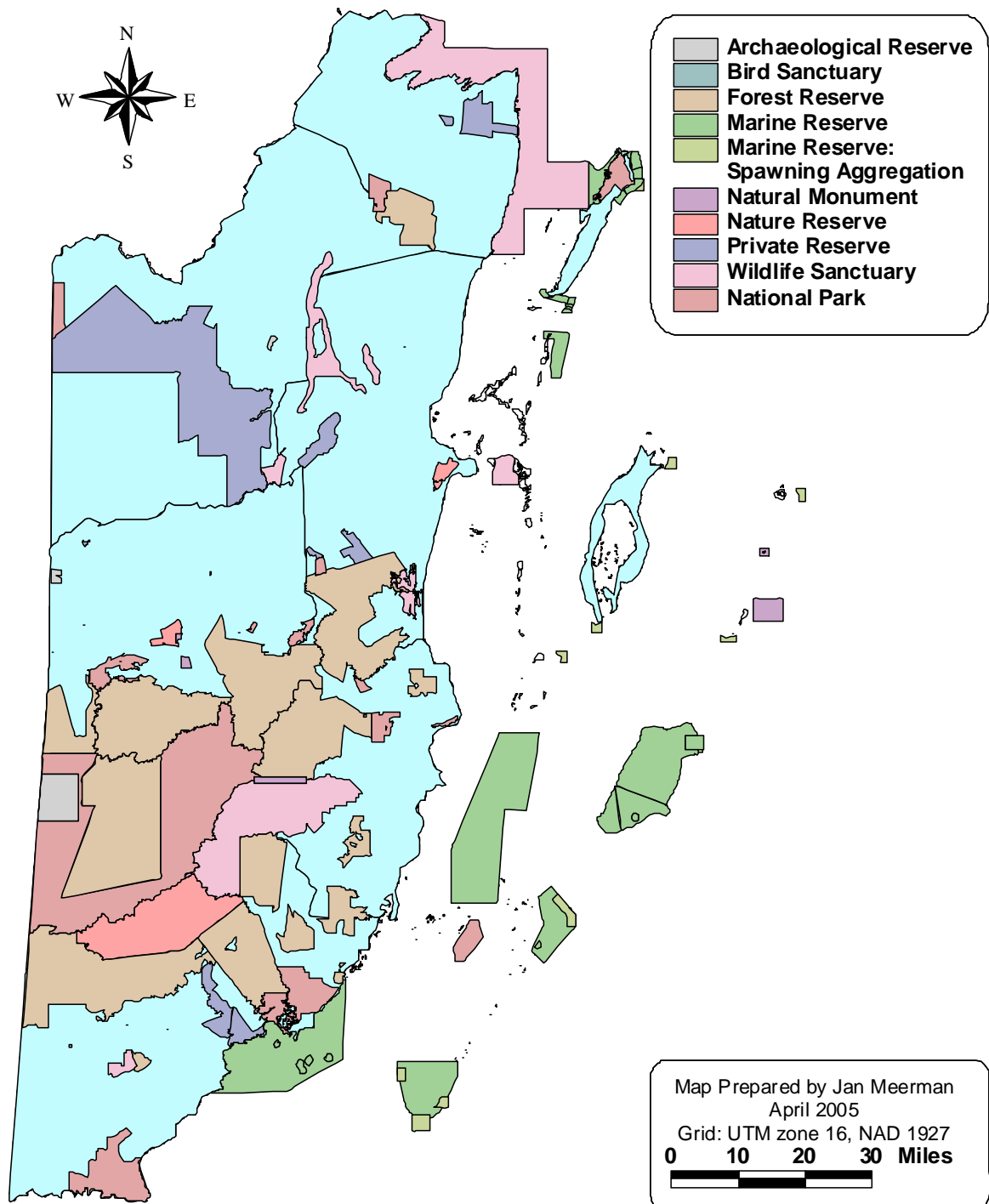


# Map of Protected Areas Managed by APAMO Member Agencies





# Map of Belize's Protected Areas



Source: The Belize National Protected Areas System Plan, 2005



The Voice of Belize's Protected Areas



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