

THE VOICE OF BELIZE'S PROTECTED AREAS



The official newsletter of the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations

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APAMO strengthens the institutional capacities of community based co-managers for improved protected areas management in Belize

The National Protected Areas System Plan recommends co-management as the appropriate governance mechanism for our protected areas system but also recognizes that along with this the strengthening of co-managers to fully and meaningfully engage in co-management is critical. As such, the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations, APAMO, with the financial support from the Oak Foundation, PACT and GEF, has taken the lead to strengthen the capacities of an initial 7 community based protected areas management organizations. The project entitled "Support for capacity building for improved protected areas management in Belize" is being implemented as an effort to improve protected areas governance. These organizations are: from the Belize River Valley region, the Community Baboon Sanctuary Women's Conservation Group (CBSWCG) which manages the **Community Baboon Wildlife Sanctuary** and the Rancho Dolores Environmental

Development Group (RDEDG) which co-manages the **Spanish Creek Wildlife Sanctuary**; from the marine region, the Friends of Swallow Caye (FOSC) which co-manages the **Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary**, and the Forest and Marine Reserves Association of Caye Caulker (FAMRACC) which co-manages the **Caye Caulker Forest and Marine Reserves**; and from Southern Belize, the Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA) which co-manages the **Billy Barquedier National Park**, the Friends of Mayflower Bucawina (FOMFB) which co-manages the



Caye Caulker groups in training

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Capacity Building for improved Protected Areas Management

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Mayflower Bucawina National Park, and the Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon Conservation Group (FGGLCG) which co-manages the **Gra Gra Lagoon National Park**.

The capacity building initiative is providing training and mentoring to these organizations in 4 key areas identified as priorities by them. These include: **Financial Management, Strategic Planning, Board Development and Project Development**. Equipment such as laptops, projectors and printers as well as internet service have been provided to the organizations to support basic functions in their operational programs and communication needs. Organizations have been trained in basic accounting procedures and in setting up a basic accounting system allowing for greater accountability. They have also been involved in the drafting of a three-year strategic plan for their organizations and a project proposal based on this plan. The board members of each organization have participated in a board governance and functionality training providing them with a greater understanding of their role. The Project is expected to be completed in October 2011.

APAMO Supports and Participates in the Revision of the Belize Fisheries Act

The current Fisheries Act dates back to 1948, with amendments made in 1989. Since then, fisheries management has evolved and incorporated new measures in terms of regulations guided by the precautionary and ecosystem-based management approaches. The current Fisheries Act is clearly outdated and needs to reflect these changes in relation to regulations and enforcement issues and international standards for sustainable fisheries management. In This revision/amendment of the Act provides us with the opportunity to do just that.

APAMO, as a key stakeholder, through its marine protected area management organization members, therefore considers this initiative of the Belize Fisheries Department and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), to revise the national Fisheries Act of Belize as timely and important.

APAMO and its members have been participating in a series of consultations with local fisheries managers and other stakeholders and have

made contributions to the process and on the draft revised Act.

The revision process allows for greater inclusion of all stakeholders in the creation of the Revised Fisheries Act. The Revised Act addresses the creation of new and improved fisheries management approaches. Of key interest for APAMO is the need to address the prosecution of infractions and the creation of stiffer penalties. The current legislation is outdated and fails to address contemporary fisheries management issues which impacts the effectiveness of co-managers.

It is expected that the final draft of the Aquatic Living Resource Bill will be completed by June of this year to be presented to the Cabinet and the House of Representatives.



Belize City consultation held at the CZMAI headquarters

APAMO member – STACA wins 2011 James A. Waight Award

Ms. Hyacinth Ysaguirre, Executive Director of Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA), co-manager of the Billy Barquedier National Park, was the recipient of this year's prestigious James A. Waight Award given by the Belize Audubon Society.

Ms. Ysaguirre, originally from Dangriga Town, has always enjoyed working outdoors. She holds a degree in Applied Animal Science with an emphasis on Dairy Science. At a young age she settled on her farm in Steadfast Village in the Stann Creek Valley. At that time there was no electricity or running water in the Valley, so she travelled to the Billy Barquedier Creek to bathe and wash her clothes. It was during this time that she fell in love with the Billy Barquedier Creek and realized how unique and important this area was.

In 1994, Hyacinth along with fellow community members became concerned about their potable water

supply and watershed and came together to establish the NGO known as Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA). STACA's objectives are to conserve its local natural resources, manage and protect the Mullins River Basin Area, and foster the economic development of Steadfast Village through ecologically sound tourism while promoting conservation consciousness.

The Billy Barquedier National Park (BBNP) was legally established in December 2001. This was after 7 years of lobbying for the protection of the Barquedier watershed which provides two communities with potable water. The Barquedier watershed empties into the North Stann Creek and eventually into the sea. The park contains 1500 acres of pristine watershed terrain, and extends from the roadside of BBNP Waterfall over the mountains to the upper Mullins River Basin where it is bordered by the Mullins River.

With Hyacinth at the forefront, STACA has raised enough funds and developed key partnerships to provide the infrastructure needed to take BBNP from a "Paper Park" to Functional Park. One of STACA's many achievements under the leadership of

Hyacinth has been the development of a sedimentation/filtration water system designed and implemented in partnership with the University of Arkansas Engineering class. It provided for the improvement of the potable water supply of two villages as well as Dangriga Town, ensuring water conservation, watershed protection and monitoring.

Hyacinth continuously strives to bring sustainable development to her village and buffer zone communities. Ms. Hyacinth has worked voluntarily and selflessly for STACA for the past 17 years. Despite all the challenges and limitations Hyacinth and STACA are faced with everyday, they continue to work towards the improvement of their community and the BBNP. Hyacinth is also an active member of APAMO and is a member of the current Executive Council. APAMO congratulates Ms. Hyacinth on her achievement! A tribute well deserved!



The waterfall and swimming hole and the Billy Barquedier National Park



Ms. Hyacinth Ysaguirre and James Waight Family Members

APAMO Says NO to Cruise Tourism in Placencia

The proposed cruise tourism for Placencia is neither an environmentally or economically viable strategy for Belize. Our tourism industry continues to be one of the biggest income earners of the country. Over the decades Belize has successfully been recognized as an eco-tourism destination. The second longest barrier reef in the world, the majestic Mayan temples, and the rainforests bursting with biological diversity; all these natural wonders continue to attract visitors to Belize to experience Mother Nature's Best Kept Secret.

Expanding cruise tourism, particularly in the south, can have damaging impacts on the ecosystems and biodiversity of the sensitive areas in that region. A large cruise port will disrupt the migratory patterns of many marine aqua fauna such as the whale sharks which alone generate millions in tourism revenues every year. This area also supports the largest variety of fish spawning aggregations, sea turtles nesting habitats and mangrove islands. The seagrass beds and Placencia lagoon are

ecologically vital to nursery fish populations that support the fishing industry. The impacts of a port can have ecological imbalances to the flow of nutrients, water quality and general stability of this estuary region. The Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System is invaluable to the tourism and fisheries sector. Declared a world heritage site in 1996, it is presently at risk of losing this status due to the current threats it faces. Cruise tourism will only increase the pressures on this system.

Aside from the negative environmental impacts, APAMO does not believe that cruise tourism will benefit the majority of Belizeans in the long term. Studies show that on average cruise passengers spend \$44 for the 1 day they dock in Belize, while the average stay-over visitor spends \$96 per day for an average of 6.8 days, almost 15 times more than what a cruise ship passenger spends in Belize. In terms of employment, studies indicate that cruise tourism contributes to only 1 of every 10 tourism related jobs while stay over tourism contributes to 9 of every 10 jobs.

Due to the great environmental and economic risks associated with cruise tourism, stay-over tourism provides for a more long term sustainability of our natural resources and stability of our economy. Eco-tourism, unlike Cruise tourism, has been proven to be able to co-exist and maintain the integrity of our Protected Areas which in turn supports the very same eco-tourism industry. Replacing ecotourism with mass cruise tourism will further increase the pressure on the country's sensitive areas.

Rather than investing in expanding the cruise sector, Government should invest these funds in building the stay-over tourism sector. APAMO does not support cruise tourism in Placencia and any activity that would compromise our protected areas and the ability of our natural systems to maintain a healthy environment critical to sustaining the population and economy of Belize.



APAMO MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT



Southern Environmental Association hosts first Lionfish Tournament and Cook-off



The Southern Environmental Association (SEA) in collaboration with the Placencia Tour Guide Association (PTGA) held their first ever lionfish tournament and cook-off competition in Placencia Village on March 5th, 2011. The now overwhelming population of the invasive lionfish species swimming and spawning in our Belizean waters sparked the idea to host such a competition. The theme of the tournament was entitled **“Save Our Reef by catching and eating a lionfish today.”** The overall objective of the event was to initialize an awareness campaign on the threat of the lionfish in Belizean waters and at the same time to educate the public on how to properly clean and cook lionfish.

The tournament commenced at 6:30 Saturday morning where five tour operators headed to Laughing Bird Caye National Park and Glad-den Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve to start their fishing. The tour operators who competed in

the tournament were Splash Dive Shop, Paradise Resort, Roberts’ Grove, Seahorse Dive Shop, and Arlin Muschamp.



Lionfish being caught

After a long day of catching lionfish the participants took their catches to Placencia to determine prizes. The first prize for the most lionfish caught went to **Seahorse Dive Shop** with a total number of **133** lionfish. Second prize for the heaviest lionfish went to **Paradise Resort** with **23.5 ounces**. Third prize for the biggest lionfish caught went to **Seahorse Dive Shop** with a size of **39 cm**; and the fourth prize went to **Paradise Resort** for the smallest lionfish caught with a size of **8 cm**. The winners received various gift certificates as well as cash prizes.

After the tournament winners were announced, the cook-off competition began. Three chefs, Adrian Vernon, Henry Anderson and Paradise Resort, entered the competition. Henry Anderson won for the tastiest meal for his grilled lionfish. Paradise Resort won the prize for the best meal presentation for his sauté fish with honey and ginger, and Adrian Vernon won for best local dish with his parmesan fish.

ECOMAR was present at the tournament handing out information and demonstrating how to clean the lionfish as part of a lion fish campaign to help eradicate the specie.

The Southern Environmental Association congratulates all winners and thanks the public for their continuous support and generosity in donating prizes. SEA also thanks the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) for their guidance and for assisting in obtaining some of the prizes.

APAMO MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

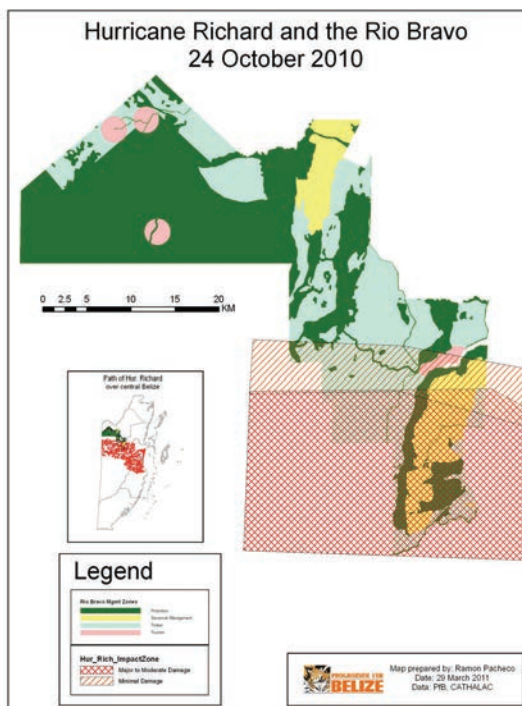
Hurricane Richard Damages the Forest of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area



On Sunday, October 24, 2010, Hurricane Richard, a Category 1 hurricane with winds of 90 miles/hour, passed through central Belize including the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area (Rio Bravo) causing significant damage to the forest structure. While the swath of the hurricane covered the entire Rio Bravo, only the southeastern part experienced category 1 hurricane strength winds.

Programme for Belize subsequently conducted an aerial survey and two terrestrial surveys immediately after the hurricane. The preliminary results showed significant damage to the forest south of the Hillbank Field Station. Of interest is that only the broad-leaf forest was damaged as compared to the pine trees in the savanna where only a few trees were seen on the ground.

Further analysis using GIS software indicated that the impacted zone was approximately 18,724 hectares (ha) or 18.05% of the entire Rio Bravo. Of the area impacted, 4,160 ha falls within the Protection Zone, 6,066 ha falls within the Savannah Management Zone, and 8,497 ha falls within the Sustainable Timber Management Zone. No significant damage was observed in the Savannah Management Zone.



The 8,497 ha affected in the Sustainable Timber Management Zone represents 22.4% of the total area dedicated to sustainable timber harvesting. Of this, 1,362 ha have been harvested in previous



Aerial View of Forest with Extreme Damage

years leaving an area of 7,135 ha that should be considered for timber salvaging.

To get an estimate of the volume of salvageable timber, PFB collected sample plot data and used previous logging volumes to get a volume estimate. It was estimated that 36,389 trees with a potential volume of 8.9 million board feet (bf) of timber is either laying on the ground or standing with severe damage to the crown. Research suggests that if PFB is to salvage this huge volume of timber, it must be done in less than three years due to decay that will occur eventually. Of course this massive task will require a significant injection of capital if it is to be done.

This event has affected the overall potential of PFB's Sustainable Forest Management Program by reducing the annual cutting area. Additionally, the affected area is part of the Rio Bravo Carbon Sequestration Project, where the carbon pools have definitely shifted. However, whether the total volume of carbon sequestered so far has changed still needs to be investigated.

Environmental concerns include the threat of wild fires, infestation by insect pests and the future composition of the forest. The area will need constant monitoring and, where necessary, silvicultural interventions.

APAMO MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT



SATIIM Says “NO Drilling in the Sarstoon Temash National Park, Protected Areas or Offshore”

Oil concessions have been granted over the entire territory of Belize without any discrimination of highly sensitive areas such as offshore and protected areas. The Sarstoon Temash National Park faces threats along with other vulnerable protected areas throughout Belize that have been given out through oil concessions and production sharing agreements. Such development concessions demonstrate a complete disregard for the National Park Systems Act, which “provides for the preservation and protection of highly important natural and cultural features and for the regulation of the scientific, educational and recreational use of the same” and not for exploitation for private gain by national and multi-national corporations.

Allowing oil development to occur within such a sensitive area will further pave the way for damaging impacts to the environment, and the potential of oil spill in the Sarstoon Temash National Park would have devastating consequences. Not only will there be ecological impacts but also the economic and socio-cultural impacts along with the infringement of human rights. It is important that the Belizean society, especially those to be most affected, have a voice in the national consensus on oil development, especially in protected areas and offshore. The people must be aware, informed and

organized in order to make conscious educated decisions.

Due to the Government’s position to completely disregard the protection of our natural heritage, the rule of law and the rights of Belizean citizens by making decisions which will negatively impact the life and future of this country, SATIIM in partnership with APAMO, the Coalition to Save our Natural Heritage and Oceana hosted a two day oil summit on the 8th and 9th of March 2011. The objectives of the summit were: to increase awareness and stimulate discussion and activism among civil society and within indigenous people regarding the threats posed by oil development; and to build a coalition of local and national civil society actors to influence government officials to reevaluate their stance on oil development within fragile ecosystems, including offshore and in protected areas, while promoting policies that entail sustainable development, respect for human rights and environmental conservation.



Guest Speakers at the Oil Summit

Representatives from all buffer communities of the National Park participated at the summit and several guest speakers with specialized knowledge regarding the legal, environmental, social, human rights, and economic aspects of oil development were invited to participate along with many civil society organizations from around the country.

As a result, on March 9th SATIIM released their position statement regarding oil development in sensitive areas of Belize. SATIIM’s position is “**No drilling in the Sarstoon Temash National Park, Protected Areas or Offshore**”. SATIIM’s position is based on the following 4 principles: Respect for Rule of Law, Observance of Human Rights, Protection of our Environment and Guarantee to Economic Equality. SATIIM is calling upon the people of Belize to save the Sarstoon Temash National Park from oil development, to respect the human rights of its surrounding communities and to seek sustainable energy development opportunities. SATIIM is calling on the Belizean people to stand up and share their voices in the decision making process regarding the issue of “to drill or not to drill in Protected Areas in Belize” and the protection of Belize’s true wealth; its cultural diversity and natural heritage.

APAMO MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

Greater Governance of the Stann Creek District Watersheds

The Billy Barquidier National Park (BBNP), co-managed by Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA), was legally established in 2001. As part of the development of the management plan for the park, STACA has been leading the consultation process to develop a zoning plan for the park. The zoning plan proposes to divide the park into 7 zones, with zone 7 designated as the proposed “Buffer Zone” of the park. This zone includes the potable water supplies of the Upper Valley (Valley Community and Middlesex); and the entire Mullins River Basin. This was based on suggestions made by its stakeholders. Stakeholders from the Hummingbird Community to Dangriga Town, Mullins River, CPBL, Gra-Gra Lagoon and others participated in the consultation process. A major recommendation from this consultation has been to establish a watershed advisory council for the two major watersheds: the North Stann Creek and Mullins River area, both of which are included in the BBNP. The goal of the Council is to secure the protection and conservation of these two major watersheds and potable water supplies (water security) for the communities. The objectives are to protect and conserve the water resource and the biodiversity in the area. The Council is comprised of representatives from Middlesex, Steadfast, STACA, Alta Vista, Pomona, CPBL, Hope Creek, Mullins River, and Mayflower Bacowina communities. Other communities and stakeholders were invited to join the Council.

With STACA leading this initiative, a manage-

ment committee has been established to spearhead the work of the Council. The committee members include Dwight Montero, CPBL; Hyacinth Ysaguirre, STACA; Jesse Pandey, STACA, and Elcidia Awe, Alta Vista Water Board.

The Council has already partnered with the University Of Belize, specifically Dr. Ed Boles and his watershed ecology class who will assist in conducting a Rapid Environmental Assessment of the water catchments of BBNP, and the North Stann Creek River. Watershed mapping will be conducted and produced along with an atlas of the watershed. The first field trip by Dr. Boles and his class was carried out on the 26th and 27th of February. The students enjoyed their stay in the park and had a wonderful time meeting the residents of Steadfast Village. Another field trip is scheduled for mid March. STACA is grateful to the University of Belize, APAMO, and CPBL, and all the participating communities for supporting this initiative.



UB's Dr. Ed Boles and his Watershed Ecology Class

How Oil Development Can Impact Our Environment

The Government of Belize has received heavy criticism for granting concession blocks for oil exploration within Belize's offshore and terrestrial protected areas – and rightly so. Our Barrier Reef and terrestrial protected areas play an important role in sustaining livelihoods, contributing to the national economy and development of the country and ensuring a decent quality of life for all Belizeans. It is important for all Belizeans to become knowledgeable of this issue of national importance. Most people remain unaware of the process of oil development and the potential impacts it can have on our health and environment. Some people are blinded by the perceived wealth they consider oil can bring to Belize and fail to see the negative ripple effects that may occur. Experiences of oil development around the world demonstrates the potential negative impacts which could happen in Belize if oil exploration and drilling were conducted in the offshore and terrestrial protected areas. The following are some ways in which oil development can have negative impacts on our environment which in turn can affect all of us.

Oil development can result in water contamination, which can have severe impacts on the quality of life for communities. Protected areas protect



watersheds for irrigation and drinking purposes. Direct drilling potentially threatens these important resources. A common drilling procedure, called hydraulic fracturing can pollute surface and ground water. A single fracturing procedure can involve the injection of a ton of sand mixed with considerable amounts of hazardous and toxic materials. These materials can pollute underground aquifers, contaminate sources of drinking water and pollute waterways important to communities and aquatic wildlife.



Production emissions from drilling and extraction include nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, and other hazardous substances such as benzene. Heavy metals and other toxic substances may get released into the air.

Oil fields block natural migration patterns and encroach on wildlife habitat. Oil drilling requires extensive infrastructure, including roads, plane-landing strips and pipelines which results in forest fragmentation and subsequent disruption of wildlife. Also, oil is a very poisonous substance; one drop of crude oil can kill the unborn bird inside its egg, or poison adult birds and other animals that drink contaminated water.

The potential impacts of offshore drilling include the disorientation of marine life from seismic waves. Also, the noise from seismic surveys can damage or kill fish eggs and larvae and impair the hearing and health of fish, making them susceptible to predators and making it very difficult for them to locate prey or mates. These disturbances can disrupt important

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How Oil Development Can Impact Our Environment ... *Continued*

migratory patterns, driving marine life away from habitats meant for foraging or mating. Another potential impact is that of spill risk into the sea. Once oil is spilled, it is very difficult to clean up. It spreads quickly on water, and this is very fatal to birds, marine life and other wildlife. Plants and animals, including reefs, have died when coming in contact with oil. A recent example being the spill in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010. Cleanup can sometimes take decades with very little recovery. Also, byproducts of oil drilling contains polycyclic hydrocarbons, which in high concentrations are lethal to marine life, and also thousands of gallons of polluted water known as “drilling muds” is released into the ocean, that contain technologically enhanced naturally occurring radioactive material.

Because offshore oil production requires massive infrastructure on land, local communities can experience onshore environmental problems. Infrastructure can severely damage beaches, wetlands, and coastal habitats, which directly impact local communities that rely on

tourism and recreation. Our protected areas are placed under conservation due to their ecological, social, cultural, historical and scenic importance. The extractive use of these areas deserve careful consideration. They should be protected for our sake and for the sake of future generations since they provide important services such as clean water, clean air, food, and medicine as well as recreational opportunities. Oil development has the potential to remove these services and opportunities and result in significant, long-term destruction. These reduced qualities then affect the nearby communities whose livelihoods are dependent on the natural environment.

While it is understandable that some drilling is going to occur on public lands, Belizeans must insist that drilling should not be extended to Belize’s unique, scenic landscapes and highly sensitive areas such as our protected areas. A balance must exist between the protection of our natural protected areas and oil development.



April 22nd is Earth Day! This year, Earth Day's theme is “A Billion Acts of Green”: our people-powered campaign to generate a billion acts of environmental service and advocacy before Rio +20. For over 40 years, Earth Day has inspired and mobilized individuals and organizations worldwide to demonstrate their commitment to environmental protection and sustainability. APAMO encourages you to do your part today!

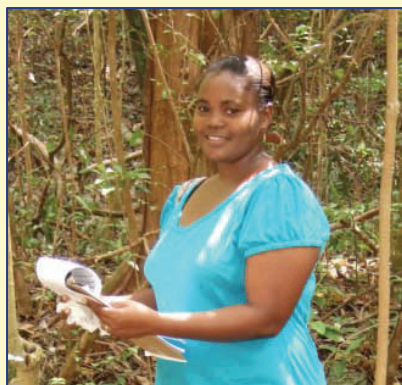
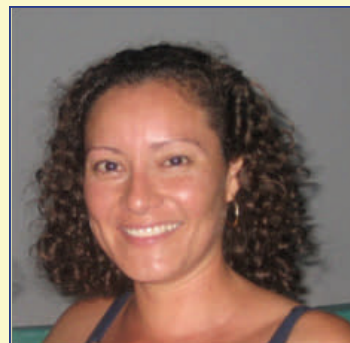
Comings and Goings of the APAMO Team



On February 9th, 2011 Ms. Evita Quiroz joined the APAMO staff as the Development Officer. Among her many interests include sustainable development and natural resource management. She has obtained a Bachelors Degree in Environmental Science from Galen University, class of 2009, and is looking to pursue a post-graduate degree sometime in the near future.

Her core responsibilities at APAMO include assisting the Executive Director in developing project proposals and identifying other sources of funding for APAMO in an effort to ensure that APAMO can continue providing support to its members and, furthermore, allowing APAMO to move forward.

Ms. Gianna Gómez's last day with APAMO as Project Officer was on Friday March 18th, 2011. Her dedication and service to APAMO is greatly appreciated. As she returns to the United States we wish her nothing but the very best in any and all of her future endeavors. Many have expressed how much they enjoyed working with Gianna. She will be missed.



On March 22nd, 2011, APAMO welcomed Ms. Ralna Lamb to the APAMO Team. She is taking over the responsibilities of Gianna Gomez, our last project officer, in managing the PACT and GEF capacity building project. She holds a MSc. in Natural Resources and Environmental Management with a specialization in Coastal and Marine Management from the University of the West Indies. Originally from Maskall Village but now a resident of Belmopan, Ms. Lamb has, prior to joining the APAMO team, taught chemistry and biology at both secondary and tertiary level institutions. Welcome to the team!



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 leading network of protected areas management organizations, envisions a healthy, productive and vibrant environment in which protected areas maintain their ecological integrity in perpetuity, play an integral role in national development, and contribute directly to the well being of communities and the nation of Belize.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

You can help by getting involved or sending donations to the address below.

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