

THE VOICE OF BELIZE'S PROTECTED AREAS



NEWSLETTER

The official newsletter of the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations

Inside this Issue

APAMO continues to strengthen the capacities of its member organizations

Page 3

APAMO Members—Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon and Friends of Swallow Caye holds their respective General Meetings

Page 4, 5

Highlights of SEA's Summer Camp Program

Page 6

STACA's tribute to Ms Gwen Tulcey

Page 7

Volunteer Opportunity available with Ya'axché Conservation Trust

Page 8

APAMO's First Protected Areas Management Symposium

It is a common perception that conservation management tends to focus only on biodiversity protection without taking into account the needs of the communities which buffer protected areas. However, APAMO recognizes that community involvement is an important component in the effective management of protected areas. This is especially true for buffer communities that are dependent on protected areas and natural resources for a secured livelihood and for their wellbeing. APAMO member organizations work closely with local communities in their management efforts and many times these efforts go by unnoticed by the broader public. Therefore APAMO held its first Protected Areas Management Symposium on September 23, 2011 in Belize City under the theme, *“Communities and Resource Managers: Bridging the Gap –*



Participants listening to the ongoing presentations

Engaging Communities in Integrated Resource Management”

The main goal of the symposium was to assess how the communities, whose livelihoods depend on the sustainability of natural resources, can become better engaged in the management of their natural resources and protected areas. The symposium looked at various research and projects that focus on community involvement in the management of protected areas and natural resources highlighting the successes, challenges, lessons learnt and also providing recommendations.

Presentations were made by several environmental, community-based NGOs as well as other regulating bodies that are involved in the management of Belize's natural resources and protected areas. These included the Belize Audubon Society (BAS), Ya'axché Conservation Trust, Friends of Swallow Caye (FOSC), Southern Environmental Association (SEA), Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE), the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Seleem 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.

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 resource and development plans". Over the past 30 years Ya'axché has studied the land-use change and levels of fragmentation for the MGL. 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 develop-

ing their spatially explicit plans.

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**



Golden Stream which sits in the Maya Golden Landscape



Display of posters, brochures and other awareness material from the different organizations



Ms. Cristina Garcia explaining about SEA's Community Outreach Poster

APAMO: Strengthening the Capacities of its Members

As an Association, 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 so that they are able to improve and effectively manage Belize’s protected areas.

On August 9th, 10th and 11th APAMO, in partnership with the Belize Audubon Society hosted a three day leadership training seminar for 14 of its member organizations in Belize City. Over 50 staff and board members of the APAMO member organizations attended the 3 day seminar which included training in *Effective Communication, Coaching for Improvement and Success, and Conflict Resolution*. This training seminar was part of a larger initiative to strengthen these organizations by building the capacities of their boards and staff.

The board and staff of these conservation NGOs and CBOs interact with a wide range of stakeholders on a day to day basis in the co-management of their respective protected areas. These stakeholders include communities, the resource users, government agencies, donors, and scientists among others. The Effective Communication course was important in providing the participants with key skills to recognize and overcome communication barriers and prepare them for more effective communication with their stakeholders, in order to strengthen key relationships through better communication and cooperation. The Coaching for Improvement course taught participants how to take charge of improving their

performance, altering work habits and developing plans, while the Resolving Conflict 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.

This training seminar was possible with support from The Oak Foundation and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust and was facilitated by Ms. Elizabeth Peppe, the Training Director of the National Audubon Society in the USA.



Ms. Elizabeth Peppe, Training Director, surrounded by 50+ APAMO participants



Working in Groups



Friends of Swallow Caye and Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon celebrate Annual General Meetings

APAMO with the support of the Protected Areas Conservation Trust, the Oak Foundation and the Global Environmental Facility has been implementing a capacity building project over the past year and a half. The capacity building project provided training and mentoring to 7 community based organizations in 4 key areas identified as priorities by them. These include: Financial Management, Organizational Development, Board Development and Project Development. APAMO has been working closely with these 7 member organizations in the 4 areas of focus. One of the results of this project has been the strengthening of the board of directors for these organizations. Two of the organizations with the weakest board of directors, Friends of Swallow Caye and Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon have now filled the positions on their boards and are excited to continue the work of the organizations with greater governance. Both organizations have successfully held their annual general meetings.

Friends of Swallow Caye



Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary
Ranger Station

Friends of Swallow Caye (FOSC), a community based non-profit conservation association established in 1996 to focus on the protection of manatees in the Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary, celebrated its Annual General Meeting on September 4th, 2011. Stakeholders and members of the Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary which included various business representatives, tour guide operators and interested community members gathered at the Caye Caulker Community Center where the organization highlighted its accomplishments over the last year and presented its plans for the next 3 years. The meeting was also held as a tribute to the organization's President and founder Mr. Lionel "Chocolate" Heredia, now 82 years old.

Ms. Maria Vega, project manager of FOSC presented on the different aspects and functions of Friends of Swallow Caye. The presentations included details on FOSC's outreach activities, research initiatives, and financial report. FOSC's Strategic Plan for 2011-2014, was also presented highlighting that this particular plan is one of the products of the Capacity Building Project implemented by APAMO, of which FOSC has participated in for the past year. Guest speaker, Ms. Ralna Lamb, Project Officer of APAMO, gave a presentation on the history and the value of APAMO as an umbrella organization of protected areas managers. Elections were held for new members of the FOSC board. The FOSC board now has a new Secretary/Scientist, Ms. Nicole Auil, to complement the current Board members Mr. Lionel Heredia,

Attendees of FOSC's Annual General Meeting



President; Mr. Albert Pacheco, Vice President; Mrs. Annie Seashore Heredia, Treasurer; Mr. Marcial Alamina III, Director; and Mr. Cassian Aguet, Director. Friends of Swallow Caye had a successful annual general meeting and gives many thanks to all its members, partners, donors and friends for their continued support and participation over the past years.

Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon Conservation Group

Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon Conservation Group (FGGLCG) established in 1994, with the goal of protecting the Gra-Gra lagoon area for future citizens of Dangriga and Belize, celebrated its Annual General Meeting on August 6th at the Alejo Beni Park, Dangriga Town in an effort to revitalize the organization and secure a new Board poised to effectively co-manage the national park. FGGLCG’s 2011-2012 Strategic Action Plan and the newly elected Board were presented. Newly elected were: Mr. Sylvin Gomez as President, Mr. Harry Arzu as Vice President, Ms. Patricia Castillo as Treasurer, Ms. Marlet Castillo as Secretary,

Mr. Henry Lopez Sr. as Director of Education, Ms. Velda Lewis as Trustee I and Mr. Brenton Gongora as Trustee II.

Key note speaker, Mrs. Yvette Alonzo Mejia, the Executive Director of the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO), highlighted the need for FGGL to become better organized in order to enable greater effective management of the Gra Gra Lagoon National Park. Mrs. Yvette Mejia also reaffirmed APAMO’s commitment in supporting its member organization in this endeavour.

After elections, the newly elected Board, FGGL members and representatives from APAMO staff went on a tour of the Gra Gra Lagoon National Park in order for them to become acquainted with the area. The day proved successful and it is envisioned that with a new Board committed to furthering the mission and vision of FGGLCG, the organization will become poised to protect and sustainably utilize its local natural resources for the present and future generations. FGGL also wishes to thank all its members, partners, donors and friends for their continued support.



Friends of Gra Ga Lagoon newly elected Board members

Back row L-R: Brenton Gongora, Velda Lewis and Sylvin Gomez. Front row L-R: Henry Lopez Sr., Patricia Castillo, Marlet Castillo and Harry Arzu. Also shown is Mr. Julian Lewis, FGGL’s Project Manager.



Mrs. Yvette Alonzo Mejia, APAMO’s Executive Director, addressing those in attendance



APAMO representatives enjoying a tour of Gra Gra Lagoon National Park



Students learn about mangroves and lagoon systems through SEA's Summer Camp Program



With 26% of our national territory under protection (36% terrestrial and 13% marine) Belize has some of the world's most rich and diverse wildlife. Our rainforest and reef are the ultimate open classroom and natural living laboratory for students. It is no wonder that many of the conservation NGOs in Belize hold annual summer camps geared at providing the young people of Belize an opportunity to learn about ecosystems management, biodiversity conservation and conservation issues as well as to experience first-hand our protected areas with the hope of fostering an appreciation for these.

One such organization, the Southern Environmental Association, kicked off this year's Summer Camp under the theme: ***Education and Climate Change – Widening the scope through the eyes of our youths and coastal communities.*** The four day summer camp started on July 13th and was met with much anticipation as students from Monkey River Village and Seine Bight village travelled to Independence and Placencia respectively. These students learned and shared on topics such as Coral Reefs, Mangroves, Sea

Turtles and the Manatee. The program was both hands on and interactive with a segment of question and answer held at the end of each presentation which in turn allowed students to win prizes of school supplies.

One of the most exciting components of the summer camp was the trip taken to Placencia to learn about the Placencia Lagoon. The students learned about different types of mangroves and their purposes, the manatee which need the sea grass and lagoon to survive, and the many developmental changes that have occurred over the years, most of which are detrimental to the ecosystem such as dredging and removing mangroves. Students then travelled from Sittee River to Hopkins Village where they learned about the Hopkins Lagoon and its history which took them back to the year 1941. Surprisingly enough, the participants from Hopkins were strangers to the Hopkins Lagoon as many have never had the opportunity to learn about the lagoon ecosystem used by their ancestors.

The Southern Environmental Association met its goal and object-



Above and Below: Students keenly listening to the different presentations



Students on a tour of the Placencia Lagoon



Participants proudly displaying their prizes

Continued on Page 8...



STACA loses Dedicated and Committed Member



NGOs co-manage over 70% of protected areas under the National Parks System Act. While all these NGOs work closely with communities that buffer the respective protected areas under their management, some are community based organizations established and run by community members operating at the rural/village level. Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association, STACA, is one such organization that was formed by concerned villagers of Steadfast that came together to form the Board of Directors for the NGO and in 1994 lobbied to have the Billy Barquedier water catchments area recognized as an important potable water resource for the Valley and to have the area declared a protected area.

So when such an organization loses one of its most dedicated and committed member it touches everyone. The following is a tribute to Ms. Gwen Tulcey Jackson from Ms. Hyacinth Ysaguirre.

“On August 3rd, 2011, STACA, lost one of her most loyal members, Ms. Gwen Tulcey Jackson. Ms. Gwen was the ticket booth operator at the Billy Barquedier National Park, a job she had performed on a voluntary basis for over 3 years. This year was the first year that Ms. Gwen was receiving a “real” salary for her work, her compensation in the past ranging from our gratitude to \$25.00 per day on a good day. Despite this, she kept the booth open as much as weather permitted, was friendly and helpful to guests, and was loyal to STACA’s goals.



Billy Barquedier National Park co-managed by STACA

Her late common-law husband was Maurice Stanley, one of the founding members of the association, and she was the mother of Kenrick Stanley, Administrative Assistant at STACA.

Two nights after her passing I dreamed she was young and beautiful, as she always was, walking hand in hand with Maurice, or “Rio” on the beach in Dangriga in front of the Rio Mar Hotel. The moon was huge and “Red Sails in the Sunset” was playing, and then I woke up crying, but in my heart I was content as I *know* they are together.

I miss you my friend, until that day when we will be together again...”



Pictured here with the grand children of Ms. Hyacinth, Ms. Gwen is smiling as always

Ms. Gwen Tulcey and her family have been dedicated and committed to the environment and to STACA’s conservation efforts since its establishment. We encourage others to follow such a commendable example that Ms. Gwen offered. On behalf of all members, APAMO expresses its sincerest condolences to the STACA family on the passing of such a dedicated and giving person.

SEA's Summer Camp Program 2011



...Continued from Page 6

tives for this year's summer camp. SEA ensured that at least twenty five (25) children of each of its stakeholder communities benefited by participating, and with climate change on the horizon the camp focused on the consequences that would occur if we do not do our part to prevent some of the detrimental changes to our environment.

This summer camp was a great success. SEA thanks its staff that supported the program, the parents who encouraged their children to be a part of the summer camp, the cooks who prepared snacks and lunch, Turtle Inn Resort, Splash Dive Shop, Clement Martinez and Hubert Miranda who provided their boats for the tour of the Placencia and Hopkins lagoons, and Mr. Adrian Vernon and Mr. Rudolph Coleman who assisted with presentations on mangroves and the manatee and who shared their knowledge of the respective lagoon systems. SEA also collaborated with the Punta Gorda Town Council on a one day summer camp in Punta Gorda

For more information on SEA and their programs visit www.seabelize.org



Laughing Bird Caye National Park—Co-managed by SEA

Do you have Horticulture expertise and are looking for a volunteer opportunity?

The Ya'axché Conservation Trust, a community oriented conservation and development NGO, in southern Belize is offering such an opportunity at its organic greenhouse and tree nursery, which produce seeds and saplings for distribution to local farmers and for revenue to support their philanthropic activities.

Duties will include

1. Daily care of crops and developing and implementing planting schedules
2. Forging connections with local markets and organizing distribution
3. Testing innovative farming methods (i.e. new crops, varieties and techniques)



Requirements include

- minimum 1 year experience in horticulture, preferably organic and in a tropical climate
- Willingness to live and work under basic rural conditions in beautiful rainforest location
- Pro-active (will be the driving force behind the success of the greenhouse)
- Willingness/ability to commit to a minimum of **six months**

To apply, send C.V. and a cover letter to james.lord@yaaxche.org by **1st November 2011.**

For more information on Ya'axché Conservation Trust and for more detailed information on the available position, log on to www.yaaxche.org or www.apamo.net Or contact YCT at info@yaaxche.org; telephone no: 722-0108.



Our Mission!

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

Our Vision!

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

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

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

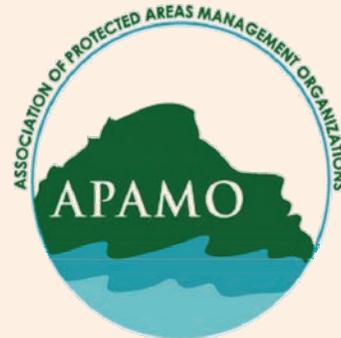
APAMO

#1154 SUNRISE AVENUE
APT. 101 SUNRISE BUILDING,
Belize City,

Belize, Central America

(501) 223-7266

Email: info@apamo.net



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON
APAMO PLEASE VISIT OUR
WEBSITE AT

www.apamo.net

Find and “Like” us on
Facebook at facebook.com/apamo.belize

