



# ACTION PLAN

for the inclusion of  
Biodiversity Conservation  
in Tourism Policies



**ASSOCIATION OF PROTECTED  
AREAS MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS  
(APAMO)**



**CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM  
PARTNERSHIP FUND**

**ACTION PLAN**

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BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION  
IN TOURISM POLICIES**



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Prepared by:

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*The contents, information and ideas expressed in this report are the sole responsibility of the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations and not necessarily reflect the views or position of Counterpart International and Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund.*

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Finally, we would like to thank Counterpart International and CEPF for partnering with Belize in this initiative. We trust that the results will pave the way for increased collaboration.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Protected areas have a long history tied to cultural norms and practices. As far back as two millennia ago, there is evidence of protection of natural resources in India. In Europe nearly a thousand years ago, protected areas were tied to the rich and powerful and declared to reserve hunting grounds. An evolution over time allowed for the inclusion and usage of the community providing for visitation purposes (tourism). Early nineteenth century evidence of declaration of protected areas arose in the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa. In the case of Belize, 36% of the land mass is under some terrestrial protective status, while 13% in the marine zone are under some marine protective declaration.

The theme of the use and enjoyment by the public runs through the early history of protected areas, fostering a bringing together of people as much a part of the concept, as the land and the natural and cultural resources. This would seem to begin to present a justification for the fundamental goal and objectives of this project. To analyze policies geared at the promotion of the use of enjoyment of these resources by the public in a manner that preserves its value and availability for future years. In short then, allowing for the development of tourism in harmony with the protection of natural and cultural resources.

APAMO spearheaded the national evaluation of Tourism Policies in Belize as part of a larger project implemented by Counterpart International and funded by the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund. Recommendations and an action plan were developed to integrate Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development into national tourism policies for Belize. The objective of the project was to complete an analysis of the relevant tourism policy documents achieved via a consultative basis with stakeholders – including protected areas management organization, APAMO officials, and other key national stakeholders. In addition and integrally important is a document as an action plan to aide a process to achieve implementation of recommendations in the area of policy reform for the industry.

Belize's tourism industry saw its roots as a means of economic diversification during a time when the agricultural sector, particularly sugar and bananas were experiencing a down turn. Then like now, the tourism industry was a means to increase foreign exchange, generate new job opportunities and maintain a diversified mix in the economy.

Travel tourism has been accepted as an economic activity that has significant ripple effect with national economies, impacting many sectors with its positive effects evident in employment and contribution to GDP. Equally accepted is that tourism is “a double-edged sword” and much of the international debate has now been concentrated on the need to minimize the actual and potential negative impact that is often associated with its development. The discussion of tourism's impact tends to focus on issues such as overuse of water resources, air pollution, land degradation, waste and litter problems, inadequate sewage treatment, aesthetic pollution, habitat destruction and alteration of ecosystems. Recent debate has now become centered on the opportunities and threats of the industry pose for biodiversity.

### **Process to Assess Belize Tourism Policies for Biodiversity Conservation:**

Primarily, the project was geared at accomplishing an assessment of priority tourism policies for Belize from a view of biodiversity conservation with the development of an action plan to guide the implementation process for making biodiversity conservation reflective in policies and industry planning. For the purpose of the analysis, the following priority policies were identified. These included:

- a) The Blackstone Report of 1998
- b) Cruise Tourism Policy of 2003
- c) Cruise Action Plan of 2008

**1998 Blackstone Tourism Strategy:** The strategy was drafted as a response to a downward turn in tourism. The strategy was derived via a broad consultative process and was meant to guide the targeted development of the industry with due consideration for all its linkages.

**2005 Tourism Policy:** The policy was to serve as an update to the 1998 Strategy post the industry surpassing the earlier projections for overnight tourism and realization of an exponential increase in cruise tourism.

**2003 Cruise Tourism Policy:** The policy was drafted as a response to the exponential growth in this sub-sector and with a hope to guide development with the central goal of averting any negative impact to the image of the tourism product being promoted – one with an eco-ethic consideration.

The weakness of the policies were observed not so much in the essence of the policy as was it apparent in actual implementation and operationalizing the expressed intent. Although not explicitly presented, it can be derived from the examination of the policies that there is some intent to approach tourism planning and management in a collaborative and integrative manner with some consideration for the preservation of the environment and sustainability. The 1998 Blackstone Report was probably the most targeted and focused in citing the need for environmental protection and mitigation of the impacts from the operations within the tourism industry. The Blackstone Strategy as well attempted to detail a manner for operationalizing not only the eco-ethic approach but also the collaborative integrated planning and management seen as crucial for the sustainable development of the industry.

### **Recommendations for Including Biodiversity Conservation in Tourism Policies:**

The recommendations are geared to improve on implementation to meet policy intent and integrate biodiversity conservation into policies. Recommendations included:-

- To build on current policies via a revision in order to result with one policy that explicitly expounds on inter-sectoral planning, decision making and management for the tourism industry.
- To harmonize tourism policies with other relevant sectors and policies, i.e. National Biodiversity Strategy Policy, the National Protected Areas Policy and any policy to address poverty alleviation

- To reinforce the overarching planning and management mechanism for the tourism industry
- To reinforce planning and product development initiatives ensuring broad inclusion and consultation, while remaining responsible in the use and management of natural and cultural resources
- To ensure that tourism planning, management and development strongly consider the importance and health of protected areas as a central component of the product
- To establish certification programs, standards and codes for an industry that responsibly utilizes natural and cultural resources with the final outcome being industry sustainability
- To continue to ensure that the tourism industry is broadly inclusive and respects cultural resources
- To ensure that the stakeholders understand the importance of responsible management and protection of natural and cultural resources as the foundation of industry viability
- To investigate with a view to adopt incentive schemes (financial and otherwise) for the tourism industry to reinforce responsible management and protection of natural and cultural resources

The relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation is symbiotic - one that requires commitment and proactive decision making at all levels of government and from all stakeholders alike.

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## **1.0 Project Background and Description**

APAMO is an association of non-governmental protected areas management organizations that advocates for the sustainability and improved management of Belize's protected areas system. APAMO is currently comprised of 18 founding members and is governed by an Executive Council.

The main objectives of the Association are:

- To provide a forum for increased communication, discussion and networking among its members in an effort to enhance coordination and collaboration
- To create a networked voice for member agencies,
- To represent its member agencies
- To participate proactively in lobbying for action related to protected areas issues
- To continuously build the institutional capacity of the member agencies
- To secure the financial sustainability of the protected areas

Counterpart International is a 42-year old non-profit NGO whose mission is “giving people a voice in their future through smart partnerships, offering options and access to tools for sustained economic, social and environmental development.” Counterpart's primary organizational purpose is to build the capacity of local communities, and the institutions which serve them, to address self-defined needs in sustainable, practical and culturally appropriate ways.

This initiative, spearheaded by APAMO, is the result of the Belize component of a Counterpart International project. The funding for the project was realized via Critical Ecosystems Protection Fund (CEPF) which supports the promotion of policy reforms related to the most critical issues for conservation where civil society can make a difference. These include agriculture, infrastructure development, forest management and tourism development. It was believed that these four issues together have the strongest influence on biodiversity.

The objective of the project was to have an analysis of the relevant tourism policy documents achieved via a consultative basis with stakeholders – including protected areas management organizations, APAMO officials, and other key national stakeholders. In addition and integrally important was a document as an action plan to move forward in a process to achieve implementation of recommendations in the area of policy reform for the tourism industry.

A major component of the project was a consultative process with a view to analyze the current policies and receiving critical feedback and recommendations from the stakeholders. The Consulting Team worked in close coordination with the project's key participants, the member groups of APAMO, who are protected areas managers that operate sustainable tourism projects or whose facilities currently support the components of Belize's tourism destination. In addition, the project team consulted with other stakeholders across sectors in the area of tourism, conservation and sustainable development.

## **2.0 Recommendations for a Broadly Inclusive Industry**

Natural ecosystems and biological resources provide the very goods and services that underpin the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism can generate employment and income, thus providing a strong incentive for conservation. Sustainable tourism has the potential to reconcile economic and environmental concerns and give practical meaning to sustainable development.

*Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development  
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
2004*

The Convention on Biological Diversity Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development were the result of extensive consultation involving differing parties, organizations, indigenous and local communities. The guidelines were initially presented by a group of experts at a workshop held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in 2001 and were finally adopted at the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of Parties held in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia in February of 2004.

The guidelines were meant to be highly adaptive for the purpose of public sector planning and industry management, private sector industry projects design, planning and management as well as by civil society groups and local communities involved in the tourism industry and biodiversity planning and conservation. Some of the recommendations offered here find its roots in the Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism.

### **2.1 Objectives for an Industry with Biodiversity Conservation as central**

The objectives of the Belize's tourism policy include several points that hold consideration for the importance and the value of biodiversity to the industry. The central objectives and developmental direction suggested by the policies were analyzed from seven key considerations for any policy with a focus on biodiversity conservation.

- Tourism becomes a support tool for biodiversity conservation in the future, ensuring that it's performed under the right conditions.
- Society and the environment are able to absorb the negative impacts originated by tourism practices, benefiting at the same time from the positive impacts in a sustainable way.
- Negative impacts from tourism are minimized in the society and the environment
- Tourism contribution to local economies, conservation of natural and cultural resources, and life quality of both hosts and visitors is maximized.
- Quality of natural resources and the environment is maintained acting as main basis to achieve tourism economic viability.
- There is coordination and cooperation between all entities related to tourism development and biodiversity conservation at the national level.
- Sustainable tourism – low impact becomes one of the main uses on high biodiversity areas with potential for its development.

Although in many instances not explicitly presented, it can be derived from the examination of the policies that there is some intent to approach tourism planning and management in a collaborative and integrative manner with consideration for the preservation of the environment and sustainability. The 1998 Blackstone Report was probably the most targeted and focused in citing the need for environmental protection and mitigation of the impacts from the operations within the tourism industry. The Blackstone Strategy as well attempted to detail a manner for operationalizing not only the eco-ethic approach but also the collaborative integrated planning and management seen as crucial for the sustainable development of the industry.

**Recommendation No. 1:-**

**To build on current policies via a revision to result with ONE policy directive and industry development strategy that guides the sector's growth and explicitly expounds on inter-sectoral planning, decision making and management for the tourism industry.**

**Actions:-**

- ❖ While the policies may attempt a focus at delineating an ethic for the planning and management of tourism, it is recommended that equally as the Blackstone Strategy of 1998, the policy of 2005 is reviewed with a view to include a targeted policy directive on growth of a sustainable industry with environmental protection, management and mitigation of the impacts of the industry at its core.
- ❖ Perhaps a strong complement to the policies would be that implementation strategies for realizing the objectives of the policy become more targeted in structure so as to capitalize on the true benefits possible from the approach idealized in the policy.

The institutional framework and a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of the players in the framework is central to yielding the maximum benefits for an industry desiring to employ an integrated and collaborative planning and management approach; realizing cross-sectoral and broadly distributed benefits while protecting and preserving the very basis of the industry – the natural and cultural resources.

## **2.2 Reinforcing an Institutional Framework that Works**

**Recommendation No. 2:-**

**To reinforce the overarching planning and management mechanism for the tourism industry**

The industry via policy content has made some progress in realizing the institutional framework needed in order to pave the way for progress in the industry. These included:

- Verbalizing an integrated collaborative multi-sectoral planning approach
- Passing legislation for a National Tourism Council – meant to be the driver of the integrated planning approach
- Establishing a Product Development Unit
- Establishing a Tourism Training Unit

The next key step is to reinforce the functionality of the institutional framework.

**Actions:-**

- ❖ **Operationalize a cross sectoral policy making and planning mechanism:** The NTC legislation was passed in 2000 but never really became functional due to a lack of political will. It is recommended that the legislation be reviewed with a view to improve its legal instrument so as to support its operations. ***It is recommended that serious consideration be given to converting the mechanism from a mere council (NTC) to the legal level of an authority.***

**The explicit hope is that an elevation in structure from a Council to an Authority will give the National Tourism planning mechanism more “teeth” to effect change and legally guide the development in the industry.**

- ❖ **Develop Terms of Reference for the coordinating planning mechanism:** A terms of reference would clearly define the role and responsibilities of the mechanism, structure of the partnership with other tourism public sector entities and any other technical working groups/committees formulated to support the functions of the planning body.
- ❖ **Expand Membership of the planning mechanism:** Currently, the NTC legal structure calls for members as follows: the Minister of Tourism as Chairperson, the Chairperson of the BTB; Ministry of Tourism representative; Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, NICH, Director of Tourism; Immigration & Nationality Department, Presidents of key private sector stakeholders (BTIA, BNTOA, Water Taxi Assoc., BTGA, BHA), representative from Belize Audubon Society and Belize Airline Operators Association, representative for the international air carriers in Belize, BCCI, PACT and Ministry of Human Development and the Mayors Association.

**If the NTC is to be revived and serve as an overarching collaborative planning mechanism, it is recommended that the legislation be revised to include membership from the following agencies.**

**The Association for Protected Areas Management Organizations:** While the Belize Audubon Society currently manages several of the government protected areas via co-management agreements, several other protected areas not under this management currently comprise Belize’s tourism product. These include private protected areas, community based reserves and other government owned sites under some sort of co-management arrangement not with the Audubon Society. It is important that an organization that represents some sort of umbrella role and national environmental policy advocacy role be included on an integrated collaborative planning mechanism for an industry that has as its core the natural and cultural resources of the country. APAMO’s eighteen (18) members are responsible for management of twenty five (25) protected areas, representing a majority of the thirty (30) protected areas currently under co-management agreements with the government.

**The Department of Transport:** Transportation is a key component in the industry and establishing standards in the industry that reflects tourism concerns is necessary.

**The Ministry of Works:** The expansion of infrastructure is integral to the development of the industry and harmonizing plans will be a key to success.

**The Ministries of Economic Development & Finance:** If tourism is to be a priority sector it is important that economic development plans and tourism plans be harmonized and that realization of a national budget considers this priority factor.

❖ **Operationalizing an Expanded National Tourism planning mechanism:**

Due to resource shortage – human and financial – an expanded National Tourism planning mechanism can achieve the resource intensive goal of operating an industry via the integrated collaborative approach. The goal of operationalizing an expanded national tourism planning mechanism would be via establishing a mechanism that allows for the availability and consideration of all necessary input and advice.

Perhaps a way to achieve this is via technical working groups/committees each with its operating guidelines. It is recommended that a system of working groups/committees or similarly targeted mechanism be considered as a technical advisory level for the national tourism planning mechanism. The role of these technical groups would be to gather the necessary data, perform the necessary technical analysis providing such to the wider national tourism planning mechanism to allow for planning, decision making and management.

The working groups or similarly target mechanism would allow for the following necessary institutional strengthening and inter-sectoral linkages:-

*a.) Tourism & Natural Resources, the Environment and Cultural Resources* – focused on monitoring, assessment of impact and mitigation. A key role of this initiative would be to conduct and update baseline assessments, monitor and assess impacts of the industry and recommend mitigation activities; develop sector plans (e.g. tourism and archaeology, tourism and protected areas, land use plans, tourism and culture promotion etc.)

*b.) Tourism, Fisheries and Coastal Zone Management* - A key role of this initiative would be to conduct and update baseline assessments, monitor and assess impacts of the industry and recommend mitigation activities; develop sector plans.

*c.) Tourism and Economic and Fiscal Planning* - The planning nationally and sectorally needs harmonization if tourism is to truly be the lynchpin of the national economy and priority sector. Fiscally as well, the country needs to harmonize planning so as to ensure the deployment of resources is broadly beneficial to those sectors and areas that promise maximum yields.

*d.) Tourism and Infrastructure Management* – This technical group would seek to consider tourism needs in relevant planning, while as well harmonizing

countrywide development plans for the improvement of the country's infrastructure network.

*e.) Tourism and Sub-National bodies and Communities* – To become broadly inclusive, sub-national bodies and communities can not only be viewed from an angle of becoming beneficiaries from the spill over of the industry but as well play a key role in planning and decision making, especially as it relates to their respective geographical areas. This working group should include the National Alliance of Village Councils (NAVCO)

The structures are meant to have the critical inclusion of the three broad sectors – public, private and civil society.

- ❖ It is as well recommended that serious consideration be given to whether the Product Development Unit is adequately enshrined within BTB or whether a relocation to the Ministry would be most applicable and allow for better implementation of role (relocation with all necessary resources – human and financial).

It is as well recommended that the Product Development entity develops departments to be specifically responsible for the tourism sub-sectors – one for cruise and one for overnight – allowing for the identification of expertise and accommodation in planning with both respective sectors in mind.

A suggested organogram for the public sector tourism structure includes a product development authority/national tourism authority as a separate body with its own legislations and replacing the Council. This Authority would be alongside BTB and the Border Management agency within an amended organogram.

- ❖ Clearly define the roles, responsibilities, necessary linkages and powers of authority one to another of public sector tourism bodies – BTB, Ministry, PDU and National Tourism planning mechanism (with legislative powers and responsibilities of an Authority).

## **2.3 Planning and Product Development**

### **Recommendation No. 3:-**

**To reinforce planning and product development initiatives ensuring broad inclusion and consultation, while remaining responsible in the use and management of natural and cultural resources**

Achieving an industry with a strong eco-ethic would seem to require focus on the very resources that underpin the industry – natural and cultural – while establishing industry-wide standards and best practices.

### **Actions:-**

- ❖ Strengthen current initiatives of plans to develop a rating system for the hotels, recognizable and compatible with internationally known systems, including management considerations that address environmental issues.

- ❖ Strengthen current initiatives of develop an industry certification program internationally recognized and marketable.
- ❖ Strengthen current initiatives to identify a system that guides industry operations and management with a strong guide for qualification as being eco-friendly. Perhaps this could be tied to some industry incentive.
- ❖ Establish broadly acceptable codes of conduct and standards of operation for different sub-sectors with a view to uphold industry's eco-ethic and consideration for preservation and protection of natural and cultural resources.
- ❖ Establish a system that amplifies current goals of the EIA process by establishing a respective and parallel system to analyze socio-economic impacts of projects and development initiatives.
- ❖ Utilize the EIA process in conjunction with Strategic Environmental Assessments and destination plans, land use plans so as to harmonize and inform project consideration and approval process.
- ❖ Utilize environmental organizations as a technical advisor in the EIA process.
- ❖ Develop Strategic Environmental Assessment for key tourism areas that will form the basis for developing destination plans. Utilize the resources of the Department of Environment and environmental organizations working in these areas to inform, shape and conduct the assessment necessary
- ❖ Develop destination plans for strategic tourism areas in harmony with other sectors, land use plans and Strategic Environmental Assessments
- ❖ Work with the Ministry of Natural Resources to develop any zoning plans, zoning legislation so as to ensure that the zoning plans will work in harmony with land use plans for the surrounding area of the zoned destination.
- ❖ Establish strong baseline data and information on the condition of natural and cultural resources – assessing impact and offering mitigation activities. (Via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives such as the University of Belize, the Healthy Reefs for Healthy People Initiative, Wildlife Conservation Society, the Belize Audubon Society, the Coastal Zone Management Institute and Authority, the Fisheries Department, the Forest Department, Environmental NGOs etc).
- ❖ Reinforce the continued gathering and updating of above data and utilize in industry planning, decision making and management, via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives.
- ❖ Establish countrywide acceptable limits of change for protected sites that form part of the tourism product – not meant to be immobile but allow for adjustment based on real situation, (via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives.

- ❖ Critical for the usefulness of this and the above two stated recommendations is a clearly established frequency for continued updating of the data and revamping of industry plans and decisions based on the data.
- ❖ Establish a financing structure along with the relevant public sector bodies for budgeting of resources to conduct the necessary periodic assessment and monitoring activities, including allocations for any mitigation actions.

## 2.4 Protected Areas in Tourism

### **Recommendation No. 4:-**

**To ensure that tourism planning, management and development strongly considers the importance and health of protected areas as a central component of the product**

Belize has earned an international name for its protection of natural resources. Several of our sites are internationally recognized either as World Heritage Sites or RAMSAR Sites. It is this strong eco-friendly base that underpins the very development of the tourism industry and earned the country popularity among those visitors seeking such an eco-responsible product.

To ensure that the country maintains its reputation and allows for the resources-based tourism industry product to maintain economic viability, these protected areas are critical.

### **Actions:-**

- ❖ Harmonize tourism policies with those of National Biodiversity Strategy and National Protected Areas Systems Plan and Policy
- ❖ Ensure tourism policies reflect those agreements and obligations required of government and included in international agreements and conventions ratified by Belize.
- ❖ Work with PACT to ensure that resources earned via the tourism industry are re-invested for the continued benefit of biodiversity conservation and reinforcement of the viability of the tourism product in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner. This is to be done not by PACT but by grant funding to organizations already conducting these activities.

PACT funds should continue to be invested primarily for aiding monitoring programs, impact assessment initiatives and mitigation efforts. As well important is for the continued establishment of eco-friendly infrastructure within sites that will support the site relevant tourism activities.

*Some stakeholders recommended that serious consideration be given to reverse the central government agreement to award 33% of the contribution from PACT to the Belize City Council received via the cruise tourism head tax.*

- ❖ Reclassify tourism activities within protected areas so as to be site specific considering the biodiversity and sensitivity of the eco-system.
- ❖ Establish tourism zones with particular focus on activities sensitive to particulars of respective sites.
- ❖ Strongly encourage and support site managers to establish codes of ethics and codes of conduct for tourists, guides, operators, the general public within these sites and all users of the protected sites
- ❖ Utilize the National Tourism planning mechanism structure and relevant technical working group to offer advice to the National Protected Areas Commission (NPAC) on any new site designations or de-reservations. According to the National Protected Areas Policy and Plan, the National Protected Areas Commission is to be chiefly responsible for providing recommendations on site designation and de-reservation, however the policy accepts that consultation and coordination is important.
- ❖ Strengthen current plans to develop cruise tourism specific sites with capacity limits, codes of conducts and ethics. Eliminate cruise tourism visitation from sites declared particularly sensitive and valuable to biodiversity conservation.
- ❖ Incorporate international biodiversity treaties and agreements into tourism planning and management.
- ❖ Strengthen current plans to establish and incorporate the National Protected Areas Policy System and a National Protected Areas Council and establish strong coordination with tourism planning.
- ❖ Review the EIA Regulation with a particular focus on requirements for energy management and conservation, water usage, waste management (sewage systems) and solid waste, perhaps even for the inclusion of recycling initiatives.
- ❖ Support Government initiatives and processes to realize the Solid Waste Management Program for the Western Corridor
- ❖ Ensure that Government realizes a national solid waste management plan for the entire country utilizing the above program for establishing acceptable solid waste management systems in areas not included in this program, especially in high tourism areas such as Hopkins, Placencia, Toledo and the Northern Corridor of the country.
- ❖ Utilize the revenues from the Environmental Tax to fund a national solid waste management program. This is in keeping with the Environmental Tax legislation.
- ❖ Exempt bio-friendly products from the Environmental Tax. Reduce import duties on bio-friendly products.

## 2.5 Certification

### **Recommendation No. 5:-**

**To establish certification programs, standards and codes for an industry that responsibly utilizes natural and cultural resources with the final outcome of industry sustainability**

Belize has for years marketed itself as an eco-friendly destination, but stopped short of establishing a certification program with acceptability among biodiversity conservation and industry stakeholders and is internationally recognized. Several studies on the sector have made reference and suggestion towards this end. Additionally these same studies of the sector have advised on establishing acceptable export ready standards and service quality among operators in the different sub-sectors.

In relation to establishing standards and best practices in the industry, Programme for Belize (an APAMO member) in a project in conjunction with Rainforest Alliance had developed an applicable best practice program for tourism with due consideration for environmental management and biodiversity conservation. That program now currently forms as the foundation and basis for the promotion of best practices in the industry via the Belize Hotel Association, with endorsement from Belize Tourism Board.

### **Actions:**

- ❖ Strengthen current initiatives to adopt best practices for the tourism industry ensuring its local applicability and applicability for all sub-sectors of the industry.
- ❖ Strengthen current plans to develop a rating system for the hotels, recognizable and compatible with internationally known systems with focus on management regime that respects natural and cultural resources.
- ❖ Recommend duty exemption and/or lower customs duties on environmentally friendly technologies, encouraging investors to utilize such in their operations – solar panels, 4-stroke engines, hybrid vehicles etc.
- ❖ Eliminate Environmental Tax from the importation of environmentally friendly products and technologies.
- ❖ Strengthen current initiatives to develop an industry certification program that is internationally recognized, is marketable and yields real benefits to participants.
- ❖ Strengthen current initiatives to identify a system that shapes industry operations and management with a strong guide for qualification of being eco-friendly.

This could be tied to some industry incentive. These can include programs geared towards being energy conscious, prudent water usage, using product sensitive to natural resources protection, grounds management and preservation of surrounding ecosystems and resources etc.

## 2.6 Community Involvement

### **Recommendation No. 6:-**

**To continue to ensure that the tourism industry is broadly inclusive and respect cultural resources**

Community based tourism is cited in the policies as an area of increasing popularity and growth on the international scene. The policies as well encourage continued development of community based tourism initiatives as an effective means of improving quality of life and the quality of the tourism experience for visitors.

Community based tourism can as well effectively serve the purpose of biodiversity conservation, protecting the very base of Belize's tourism industry and working effectively towards economic viability.

### **Actions:-**

- ❖ Harmonize tourism policy and planning with poverty alleviation strategies and plans.
- ❖ Ensure that tourism policies, plans and operations are respectful of people's cultures and cultural assets
- ❖ Utilize the central coordinating and planning mechanism to receive the input of local communities and sub-national bodies (municipalities) in the planning for tourism.
- ❖ Empower sub-national bodies and local communities to contribute effectively to the industry decision making process via the central coordinating and planning mechanism.
- ❖ Investigate and adopt ways to directly channel training and resources to local communities so as to increasingly become beneficiaries and decision makers for a broadly inclusive tourism industry and biodiversity conservation promoters.

## 2.7 Education, training and public awareness

### **Recommendation No. 7:-**

**To ensure that the stakeholders understand the importance of the responsible management and protection of natural and cultural resources as the foundation of industry viability**

Since the 1998 Strategy recommended strong public awareness to curb the attitudes demonstrated towards tourism, Belize has effectively implemented several campaigns. Among these were the "Service not Servitude campaign", the "have you hugged a tourist today campaign" and "Tourism is for all of us be a part of it campaign – to name a few.

Cited in the 100 Day Outlook is a campaign entitled "I AM BELIZE". The campaign is rightly captioned and can be used to capture the different faces of the Belize tourism

industry – from cultural, to tourism sites, to biodiversity flora and fauna, tourism activities and many other aspects of what makes Belize a unique travel and tourism product.

**Actions:**

- ❖ Utilize PACT grant funding to APAMO and other environmental organizations as strong proponents for conservation public awareness programs and training. It is recommended that the science to action approach be supported for its utility and ability to convince and mobilize.

This is not meant to have PACT function as the environmental educator but for the organization to utilize its grant funds to support the initiatives of environmental organizations in the area.

- ❖ Review the *primary education* curriculum with a view to introduce conservation and environmental management in the science curriculum for students.
- ❖ Foster awareness initiatives that seek to educate at the highest level of public sector of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation
- ❖ Foster awareness initiatives that seek to educate all levels of the NTC planning mechanism to the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation.
- ❖ Foster awareness initiatives among the general public and especially within communities that are tourism stakeholders of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation.
- ❖ Foster awareness initiatives among private sector as a whole and those engaged as tourism stakeholders of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation.
- ❖ Foster awareness initiatives among civil society and environmental organizations of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity and tourism as an economic activity that can generate financial support for biodiversity conservation.
- ❖ Review current formal education training programs for natural resources management and tourism to ensure that aspects of both disciplines are included in the respective programs.
- ❖ Foster general awareness initiatives for the tourists and Belizean public of the importance of biodiversity conservation and its natural foundation for a key economic earner – tourism.
- ❖ Review training programs promoted by the BTB and other tourism stakeholders to ensure an inclusion of biodiversity awareness and importance of conservation.

## 2.8 Marketing

### **Recommendation No. 8:-**

**To ensure that the stakeholders understand the importance of the responsible management and protection of natural and cultural resources as the foundation of industry viability**

With the institutionalization of above listed recommendations and actions, Belize can truly continue to promote itself as an eco-friendly destination, whose tourism development is responsible and considers biodiversity conservation and protection of natural resources.

### **Actions:-**

- ❖ By all means, we must continue to promote Belize as an eco-friendly, responsible tourism destination.
- ❖ Promote the realization of any certification and best practice management programs geared at natural resources protection and sustainable management
- ❖ Promote the realization of incentive programs for investors to operate sustainably, eco-friendly and with consideration for natural resource protection

## 2.9 Monitoring & Evaluation

### **Recommendation No. 9:-**

**To establish acceptable monitoring and evaluation programs complete with the identification of those responsible for data collection, analysis, collection schedules and indicators with a view to incorporate into planning, decision-making and management**

For Belize to maintain economic viability in the tourism industry, it is important that the very basis of the industry is protected, monitored, evaluated and mitigation measures included in planning and operations.

*Quite a few of the recommended actions are reiterated for emphasis and applicability (cross cutting nature) to several areas in the Recommendations.*

### **Actions:-**

- ❖ Harmonize activities in this regard with the entities responsible in public sector and civil society for natural resource management and with activities identified in National Biodiversity Strategy Policy and National Protected Areas Systems Plan and Policy
- ❖ Establish broadly acceptable codes of conduct and standards of operation for different sub-sectors with a view to uphold industry's eco-ethic and consideration for preservation and protection of natural and cultural resources.

- ❖ Establish a system that amplifies current goals of the EIA process by allowing for a respective system to analyze socio-economic impacts of projects and development initiatives.
- ❖ Establish strong baseline data and information on the condition of natural and cultural resources – assessing impact and offering mitigation activities via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives such as the University of Belize, the Healthy Reefs for Healthy People Initiative, Wildlife Conservation Society, the Belize Audubon Society, the Coastal Zone Management Institute and Authority, the Fisheries Department, the Forest Department, Environmental NGOs etc.
- ❖ Reinforce the continued gathering and updating of above data and utilize in industry planning, decision making and management, via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives.
- ❖ Establish countrywide acceptable limits of change for protected sites that form part of the tourism product – not meant to be immobile but allow for adjustment based on real situation, via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives.

Critical for the usefulness of this and the above two statement recommendations is a clearly established period for continued updating of the data and revamping of industry plans and decisions based on the data.

- ❖ Establish a financing structure along with the relevant public sector agencies for budgeting of resources to conduct the necessary periodic assessment and monitoring activities, including allocations for any mitigation actions.
- ❖ Review the EIA Regulation with a focus on requirements for energy management and conservation, water usage, waste management (sewage systems).

## 2.10 Incentives for Tourism

### **Recommendation No. 10:**

**To investigate with a view to adopt incentive schemes (financial and otherwise) for the tourism industry reinforce responsible management and protection of natural and cultural resources**

Currently, there exist no financial incentive programs unique to the tourism industry. The industry stakeholders and investors apply for approval to general across the board incentive programs that include the fiscal incentive programs, export processing zones and commercial free zone programs. It is important that like countries in the Caribbean that employ programs specific to the tourism industry that Belize considers likewise.

### **Actions:-**

- ❖ Institute a financial incentive program tied to a certification program for medium to large scale tourism investments.

- ❖ Institute financial incentives for those operators – small, medium and large – who desire to establish management programs which at its heart considers conservation – biodiversity and resources management regimes.
- ❖ Promote these financial incentive programs to new and existing investors.
- ❖ Monitor financial incentive programs for effectiveness and individual investments for satisfying stated goals and objectives.
- ❖ Peg incentive programs to destination and development plans as well as Strategic Environmental Assessments for key destinations and areas.
- ❖ Consider tax breaks (Environmental Tax) and duty reduction and/or elimination for environmentally friendly products and technology.
- ❖ Allow for tax rebates for those enterprises that implement environmentally friendly products and technology in management and operations

### **3.0 Conclusion**

The relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation is a symbiotic one that requires commitment and proactive decision making at all levels of government and from all stakeholders alike.

It is broadly accepted that tourism can yield positive benefits across sectors and as such make a contribution to sustainable development. Tourism is dynamic and its future projected growth offers promise of increased economic benefits for countries and communities.

Achieving sustainability is the responsibility of all players in the industry, with government taking on a principal role as policy maker, enabler and enforcer. While most of the impacts of tourism are felt at the private sector level via enterprise activities, government can take the leading role. Individual investments would find it difficult to yield results and positive impact, but governments can achieve results via its regulatory framework, offering economic incentives and utilizing the resources of its institutions and agencies to promote the enabling environment and disseminating good practices.

Strong policy making at the level of governments is the avenue to which the development can be positively challenged. Achieving sustainability in tourism is a process.

## RESOURCES CONSULTED

*A Tourism Strategy Plan for Belize*, Blackstone Corporation, June 1998

*Tourism Sector Diagnostic 1998- 2004*, Launchpad Consulting, January 2004

*Cruise Tourism Policy*, Belize Tourism Board, 2004

*White Paper – Considerations for Updating the National Tourism Strategy for Belize*, Project Supported by CPEC, June 2005

*Tourism Policy for Belize*, Launchpad Consulting, 2005

*100 Day Outlook*, Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation, May 2008

*National Biodiversity Policy*, Vincent Gillett, George Myvett & Allan Herrera, May 2006

*National Environmental Policy & Strategy*, Department Solutions Limited, 2006

*National Protected Areas Systems Plan, Belize’s Policy on Protected Areas*, Eugenia Wo Ching, Feb 2005

*The Belize National Protected Areas System Plan*, November 2005

*The Policy Making Process in Belize: Issues and Challenges for the New Millennium*, Katalyst Institute for Public Policy & Research May 2008e

*Protecting Belize’s Natural Heritage: An Action Plan for Shared Stewardship of a Cruise Destination*, Conservation International, 2008

*Breaking Barriers – Managing Growth - The Global Travel & Tourism Summit Highlights*, World Travel & Tourism Council, Lisbon, May 2007

*Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers*, United Nations Environment Program and World Tourism Organization, 2005

*Guidelines for Biodiversity & Tourism Development*, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2004

*Blueprint for New Tourism*, World Travel & Tourism, 2003

*Corporate Social Leadership in Travel & Tourism*, World Travel & Tourism, 2002

*Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas – Guidelines for Planning & Management*, Cardiff University, United Nations Environment Program, World Tourism Organization, IUCN – World Conservation Union, 2002

## ANNEX I: MATRIX FOR RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION PLAN

### RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION MATRIX TO INTEGRATE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION INTO TOURISM POLICIES

No.	Standard Requirements	Tourism Policy in Protected Areas
<b>POLICY FOR TOURISM</b>		
1	To build on current policies via a revision to result with <b>ONE</b> policy directive and industry development strategy that guides the sector's growth and explicitly expounds on inter-sectoral planning, decision making and management for the tourism industry.	<p><b>Actions:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ While the policies may attempt a focus at delineating an ethic for the planning and management of tourism, it is recommended that equally as the Blackstone Strategy of 1998, the policy of 2005 is reviewed with a view to include a targeted policy directive on growth of a sustainable industry with environmental protection, management and mitigation of the impacts of the industry at its core.</li> <li>❖ Perhaps a strong complement to the policies would be that implementation strategies for realizing the objectives of the policy become more targeted in structure so as to capitalize on the true benefits possible from the approach idealized in the policy.</li> </ul> <p>The institutional framework and a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of the players in the framework is central to yielding the maximum benefits for an industry desiring to employ an integrated and collaborative planning and management approach; realizing cross-sectoral and broadly distributed benefits while protecting and preserving the very basis of the industry – the natural and cultural resources.</p>
<b>INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK</b>		
2	To reinforce the overarching planning and management mechanism for the tourism industry	<p><b>Actions:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Operationalize a cross sectoral policy making and planning mechanism:</b> The NTC legislation was passed in 2000 but never really became functional due to a lack of political will. It is recommended that the legislation be reviewed with a view to improve its legal instrument so as to support its operations. <b><i>It is recommended that serious consideration be given to converting the mechanism from a mere council (NTC) to the legal level of an Authority.</i></b></li> </ul> <p>The explicit hope is that an elevation in structure from a Council to an Authority will give the National Tourism planning mechanism more “teeth” to effect change and legally guide the development in the industry.</p>

❖ **Develop Terms of Reference for the coordinating planning mechanism:** A terms of reference would clearly define the role and responsibilities of the mechanism, structure of the partnership with other tourism public sector entities and any other technical working groups/committees formulated to support the functions of the planning body.

❖ **Expand Membership of the planning mechanism:** Currently, the NTC legal structure calls for members as follows: the Minister of Tourism as Chairperson, the Chairperson of the BTB; Ministry of Tourism representative; Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, NICH, Director of Tourism; Immigration & Nationality Department, Presidents of key private sector stakeholders (BTIA, BNTOA, Water Taxi Assoc., BTGA, BHA), representative from Belize Audubon Society and Belize Airline Operators Association, representative for the international air carriers in Belize, BCCI, PACT and Ministry of Human Development and the Mayors Association.

**If the NTC is to be revived and serve as an overarching collaborative planning mechanism, it is recommended that the legislation be revised to include membership from the following agencies.**

**The Association for Protected Areas Management Organizations:** While the Belize Audubon Society currently manages several of the government protected areas via co-management agreements, several other protected areas not under this management currently comprise Belize's tourism product. These include private protected areas, community based reserves and other government owned sites under some sort of co-management arrangement not with the Audubon Society. It is important that an organization that represents some sort of umbrella role and national environmental policy advocacy role be included on an integrated collaborative planning mechanism for an industry that has as its core the natural and cultural resources of the country. APAMO's eighteen (18) members are responsible for management of twenty five protected areas, representing a majority of the thirty protected areas currently under co-management agreements with the government.

**The Department of Transport:** Transportation is a key component in the industry and establishing standards in the industry that reflects tourism concerns is necessary.

**The Ministry of Works:** The expansion of infrastructure is integral to the development of the industry and harmonizing plans will be a key to success.

		<p><b>The Ministries of Economic Development &amp; Finance:</b> If tourism is to be a priority sector it is important that economic development plans and tourism plans be harmonized and that realization of a national budget considers this priority factor.</p> <p>❖ <b>Operationalizing an Expanded National Tourism planning mechanism:</b>          Due to resource shortage – human and financial – an expanded National Tourism planning mechanism can achieve the resource intensive goal of operating an industry via the integrated collaborative approach. The goal of operationalizing an expanded national tourism planning mechanism would be via establishing a mechanism that allows for the availability and consideration of all necessary input and advice.</p> <p>Perhaps a way to achieve this is via technical working groups/committees each with its operating guidelines. It is recommended that a system of working groups/committees or similarly targeted mechanism be considered as a technical advisory level for the national tourism planning mechanism. The role of these technical groups would be to gather the necessary data, perform the necessary technical analysis providing such to the wider national tourism planning mechanism to allow for planning, decision making and management.</p> <p>The working groups or similarly target mechanism would allow for the following necessary institutional strengthening and inter-sectoral linkages:-</p> <p><i>a.) Tourism &amp; Natural Resources, the Environment and Cultural Resources</i> – focused on monitoring, assessment of impact and mitigation. A key role of this initiative would be to conduct and update baseline assessments, monitor and assess impacts of the industry and recommend mitigation activities; develop sector plans (e.g. tourism and archaeology, tourism and protected areas, land use plans, tourism and culture promotion etc.)</p> <p><i>b.) Tourism, Fisheries and Coastal Zone Management</i> - A key role of this initiative would be to conduct and update baseline assessments, monitor and assess impacts of the industry and recommend mitigation activities; develop sector plans.</p> <p><i>c.) Tourism and Economic and Fiscal Planning</i> - The planning nationally and sectorally needs harmonization if tourism is to truly be the lynchpin of the national economy and priority sector. Fiscally as well, the country needs to harmonize planning so as to ensure the deployment of resources is broadly beneficial to those sectors and areas that promise maximum yields.</p> <p><i>d.) Tourism and Infrastructure Management</i> – This technical group would seek to consider</p>
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		<p>tourism needs in the relevant planning, while as well harmonizing countrywide development plans for the improvement of the country's infrastructure network.</p> <p><i>e.) Tourism and Sub-National bodies and Communities</i> – To become broadly inclusive, sub-national bodies and communities can not only be viewed from an angle of becoming beneficiaries from the spill over of the industry but as well play a key role in planning and decision making, especially as it relates to their respective geographical areas. This working group should include the National Alliance of Village Councils (NAVCO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ It is as well recommended that serious consideration be given to whether the Product Development Unit is adequately enshrined within BTB or whether a relocation to the Ministry would be most applicable and allow for better implementation of role (relocation with all necessary resources – human and financial).</li> </ul> <p>It is as well recommended that the Product Development entity develops departments to be specifically responsible for the tourism sub-sectors – one for cruise and one for overnight – allowing for the identification of expertise and accommodation in planning with both respective sectors in mind.</p> <p>A suggested organogram for the public sector tourism structure includes a product development authority/national tourism authority as a separate body with its own legislations and replacing the NTC. This Authority would be alongside BTB and the Border Management agency within an amended the organogram.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Clearly define the roles, responsibilities, necessary linkages and powers of authority one to another of public sector tourism bodies – BTB, Ministry, PDU and National Tourism planning mechanism (with legislative powers and responsibilities of an Authority).</li> </ul>
<b>PLANNING &amp; PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT</b>		
3	<p><b>Recommendations:-</b>  <b>To reinforce planning and product development initiatives ensuring broad inclusion and consultation, while remaining responsible in the use and management of natural and cultural resources</b></p>	<p><b>Actions:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Strengthen current initiatives of plans to develop a rating system for the hotels, recognizable and compatible with internationally known systems, including management considerations that address environmental issues.</li> <li>❖ Strengthen current initiatives of develop an industry certification program internationally</li> </ul>

		<p>recognized and marketable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Strengthen current initiatives to identify a system that guides industry operations and management with a strong guide for qualification as being eco-friendly. Perhaps this could be tied to some industry incentive.</li> <li>❖ Establish broadly acceptable codes of conduct and standards of operation for different sub-sectors with a view to uphold industry's eco-ethic and consideration for preservation and protection of natural and cultural resources.</li> <li>❖ Establish a system that amplifies current goals of the EIA process by establishing a respective and parallel system to analyze socio-economic impacts of projects and development initiatives.</li> <li>❖ Utilize the EIA process in conjunction with Strategic Environmental Assessments and destination plans, land use plans so as to harmonize and inform project consideration and approval process.</li> <li>❖ Utilize environmental organizations as a technical advisor in the EIA process.</li> <li>❖ Develop Strategic Environmental Assessment for key tourism areas that will form the basis for developing destination plans. Utilize the resources of the Department of Environment and environmental organizations working in these areas to inform, shape and conduct the assessment necessary</li> <li>❖ Develop destination plans for strategic tourism areas in harmony with other sectors, land use plans and Strategic Environmental Assessments</li> <li>❖ Work with the Ministry of Natural Resources to develop any zoning plans, zoning legislation so as to ensure that the zoning plans will work in harmony with land use plans for the surrounding area of the zoned destination.</li> <li>❖ Establish strong baseline data and information on the condition of natural and cultural resources – assessing impact and offering mitigation activities. (Via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives – UB, Healthy Reefs, WCS, BAS, CZM and Fisheries Department, Forestry, Environmental NGOs etc).</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Reinforce the continued gathering and updating of above data and utilize in industry planning, decision making and management. (Via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives – UB, Healthy Reefs, CZM and Fisheries Department, Forestry, Environmental NGOs etc).</li> <li>❖ Establish countrywide acceptable limits of change for protected sites that form part of the tourism product – not meant to be immobile but allow for adjustment based on real situation. (Via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives – UB, Healthy Reefs, CZM and Fisheries Department, Forestry, Environmental NGOs etc).</li> </ul> <p>Critical for the usefulness of this and the above two stated recommendations is a clearly established frequency for continued updating of the data and revamping of industry plans and decisions based on the data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Establish a financing structure along with the relevant public sector bodies for budgeting of resources to conduct the necessary periodic assessment and monitoring activities, including allocations for any mitigation actions.</li> </ul>
<b>PROTECTED AREAS</b>		
4	<p><b>To ensure that tourism planning, management and development strongly considers the importance and health of protected areas as a central component of the product</b></p>	<p><b>Actions:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Harmonize tourism policies with those of National Biodiversity Strategy and National Protected Areas Systems Plan and Policy</li> <li>❖ Ensure tourism policies reflect those agreements and obligations required of government and included in international agreements and conventions ratified by Belize.</li> <li>❖ Work with PACT to ensure that resources earned via the tourism industry are re-invested for the continued benefit of biodiversity conservation and reinforcement of the viability of the tourism product. This is to be done not by PACT but by grant funding to organizations already conducting these activities.</li> </ul> <p>Funds should continue to be invested primarily for aiding monitoring programs, impact assessment initiatives and mitigation efforts. As well important is for the continued establishment of eco-friendly infrastructure within sites that will support the site relevant tourism activities.</p>

		<p><i>Some stakeholders recommended that serious consideration be given to reverse the central government agreement to award 33% of the contribution from PACT to the Belize City Council received via the cruise tourism head tax.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Reclassify tourism activities within protected areas so as to be site specific considering the biodiversity and sensitivity of the eco-system.</li> <li>❖ Establish tourism zones with focus on activities sensitive to particulars of respective sites.</li> <li>❖ Strongly encourage and support site managers to establish codes of ethics and codes of conduct for tourists, guides, operators, the general public within these sites and all users of the protected sites</li> <li>❖ Utilize the National Tourism planning mechanism structure and relevant technical working group to offer advice to the NPAC on any new site designations or de-reservations. According to the National Protected Areas Policy and Plan, the National Protected Areas Commission is to be chiefly responsible for site designation and de-reservation, however the policy accepts that consultation and coordination is important.</li> <li>❖ Strengthen current plans to develop cruise tourism specific sites complete with capacity limits, codes of conducts and codes of ethics. Eliminate cruise tourism visitation from sites declared particularly sensitive and valuable to biodiversity conservation.</li> <li>❖ Incorporate international biodiversity treaties and agreements into tourism planning and management.</li> <li>❖ Strengthen current plans to establish and incorporate the National Protected Areas Policy System and a National Protected Areas Council and establish strong coordination with tourism planning.</li> <li>❖ Review the EIA Regulation with a particular focus on requirements for energy management and conservation, water usage, waste management (sewage systems) and solid waste, perhaps even for the inclusion of recycling initiatives.</li> <li>❖ Support Government initiatives and processes to realize the Solid Waste Management Program for the Western Corridor</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ensure that Government realizes a national solid waste management plan for the entire country utilizing the above program for establishing acceptable solid waste management systems in areas not included in this program, especially in high tourism areas such as Hopkins, Placencia, Toledo and the Northern Corridor of the country.</li> <li>❖ Utilize the revenues garnered via the Environmental Tax to fund a national solid waste management program. This is in keeping with the Environmental Tax legislation.</li> <li>❖ Exempt bio-friendly products from the Environmental Tax. Reduce import duties on bio-friendly products.</li> </ul>
<b>CERTIFICATION</b>		
5	<p><b>To establish certification programs, standards and codes for an industry that responsibly utilizes natural and cultural resources with the final outcome of industry sustainability</b></p>	<p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Strengthen current initiatives to adopt best practices for the tourism industry ensuring its local applicability and applicability for all sub-sectors of the industry.</li> <li>❖ Strengthen current plans to develop a rating system for the hotels, recognizable and compatible with internationally known systems with focus on management regime that respects natural and cultural resources.</li> <li>❖ Recommend duty exemption and/or lower customs duties on environmentally friendly technologies, encouraging investors to utilize such in their operations – solar panels, 4-stroke engines, hybrid vehicles etc.</li> <li>❖ Eliminate Environmental Tax from the importation of environmentally friendly products and technologies.</li> <li>❖ Strengthen current initiatives to develop an industry certification program that is internationally recognized, is marketable and yields real benefits to participants.</li> <li>❖ Strengthen current initiatives to identify a system that shapes industry operations and management with a strong guide for qualification of being eco-friendly.</li> </ul> <p>This could be tied to industry incentive which can include programs geared towards being energy conscious, prudent water usage, using products sensitive to natural resources protection, grounds management, preservation of surrounding ecosystems and resources etc.</p>

<b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>		
6	<b>To continue to ensure that the tourism industry is broadly inclusive and respect cultural resources</b>	<p><b>Actions:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Harmonize tourism policy and planning with poverty alleviation strategies and plans.</li> <li>❖ Ensure that tourism policies, plans and operations are respectful of people’s cultures and cultural assets</li> <li>❖ Utilize the central coordinating and planning mechanism to receive the input of local communities and sub-national bodies (municipalities) in the planning for tourism.</li> <li>❖ Empower sub-national bodies and local communities to contribute effectively to the industry decision making process via the central coordinating and planning mechanism.</li> <li>❖ Investigate and adopt ways to directly channel training and resources to local communities so as to increasingly become beneficiaries and decision makers for a broadly inclusive tourism industry and biodiversity conservation promoters.</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATION, TRAINING &amp; PUBLIC AWARENESS</b>		
7	<b>To ensure that the stakeholders understand the importance of the responsible management and protection of natural and cultural resources as the foundation of industry viability</b>	<p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Utilize PACT grant funding to APAMO and other environmental organizations as strong proponents for conservation public awareness programs and training. It is recommended that the science to action approach be supported for its utility and ability to convince and mobilize.</li> </ul> <p>This is not meant to have PACT function as the environmental educator but for the organization to utilize its grant funds to support the initiatives of environmental organizations in the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Review the <i>primary education</i> curriculum with a view to introduce conservation and environmental management in the science curriculum for students.</li> <li>❖ Foster awareness initiatives that seek to educate at the highest level of public sector of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation</li> <li>❖ Foster awareness initiatives that seek to educate all levels of the NTC planning mechanism to the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Foster awareness initiatives among the general public and especially within communities that are tourism stakeholders of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation.</li> <li>❖ Foster awareness initiatives among private sector as a whole and those engaged as tourism stakeholders of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity conservation.</li> <li>❖ Foster awareness initiatives among civil society and environmental organizations of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and biodiversity and tourism as an economic activity that can generate financial support for biodiversity conservation.</li> <li>❖ Review current formal education training programs for natural resources management and tourism to ensure that aspects of both disciplines are included in the respective programs.</li> <li>❖ Foster general awareness initiatives for the tourists and Belizean public of the importance of biodiversity conservation and its natural foundation for a key economic earner – tourism.</li> <li>❖ Review training programs promoted by the BTB and other tourism stakeholders to ensure an inclusion of biodiversity awareness and importance of conservation.</li> </ul>
<b>MARKETING</b>		
8	<b>To ensure that the stakeholders understand the importance of the responsible management and protection of natural and cultural resources as the foundation of industry viability</b>	<b>Actions:-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ By all means, we must continue to promote Belize as an eco-friendly, responsible tourism destination.</li> <li>❖ Promote the realization of any certification and best practice management programs geared at natural resources protection and sustainable management</li> <li>❖ Promote the realization of incentive programs for investors to operate sustainably, eco-friendly and with consideration for natural resource protection</li> </ul>
<b>MONITORING &amp; EVALUATION</b>		
9	<b>Establish acceptable monitoring and evaluation programs with the identification of those responsible for data collection, analysis and indicators to incorporate into planning, decision-making and management</b>	<b>Actions:-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Harmonize activities in this regard with the entities responsible in public sector and civil society for natural resource management and with activities identified in National Biodiversity Strategy Policy and National Protected Areas Systems Plan and Policy</li> <li>❖ Establish broadly acceptable codes of conduct and standards of operation for different sub-</li> </ul>

		<p>sectors with a view to uphold industry's eco-ethic and consideration for preservation and protection of natural and cultural resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Establish a system that amplifies current goals of the EIA process by allowing for a respective system to analyze socio-economic impacts of projects and development initiatives.</li> <li>❖ Establish strong baseline data and information on the condition of natural and cultural resources – assessing impact and offering mitigation activities. (Via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives such as the University of Belize, the Healthy Reefs for Healthy People Initiative, Wildlife Conservation Society, the Belize Audubon Society, the Coastal Zone Management Institute and Authority, the Fisheries Department, the Forest Department, Environmental NGOs etc).</li> <li>❖ Reinforce the continued gathering and updating of above data and utilize in industry planning, decision making and management via collaboration with agencies conducting such initiatives.</li> <li>❖ Establish countrywide acceptable limits of change for protected sites that form part of the tourism product – not meant to be immobile but allow for adjustment based on real situation, via collaboration with agencies already conducting such initiatives.</li> <li>❖ Critical for the usefulness of this and the above two statement recommendations is a clearly established period for continued updating of the data and revamping of industry plans and decisions based on the data.</li> <li>❖ Establish a financing structure along with the relevant public sector agencies for budgeting of resources to conduct the necessary periodic assessment and monitoring activities, including allocations for any mitigation actions.</li> <li>❖ Review the EIA Regulation with a particular focus on requirements for energy management and conservation, water usage, waste management (sewage systems).</li> </ul>
<b>INCENTIVES</b>		
10	<p><b>To investigate with a view to adopt incentive schemes (financial and otherwise) for the tourism industry reinforce responsible management and protection of natural and cultural resources</b></p>	<p><b>Actions:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Institute a financial incentive program tied to a certification program for medium to large scale tourism investments.</li> <li>❖ Institute financial incentives for those operators – small, medium and large – who desire to</li> </ul>

		<p>establish management programs which at its heart considers conservation – biodiversity and resources management regimes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Promote these financial incentive programs to new and existing investors.</li><li>❖ Monitor financial incentive programs for effectiveness and individual investments for satisfying stated goals and objectives.</li><li>❖ Peg incentive programs to destination and development plans as well as Strategic Environmental Assessments for key destinations and areas.</li><li>❖ Consider tax breaks (Environmental Tax) and duty reduction and/or elimination for environmentally friendly products and technology.</li><li>❖ Allow for tax rebates for those enterprises that implement environmentally friendly products and technology in management and operations</li></ul>
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