ENHANCING COLLABORATION FOR CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN BELIZE

by

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A project submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science in Resource Policy and Behavior
or Master of Landscape Architecture
in the School of Natural Resources & Environment
at the University of Michigan

April 2003

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Abstract

Like many places in the world, Belize is exploring ways to balance the sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting objectives of economic development and natural resource conservation. Collaboration among individuals and organizations is increasingly used to resolve natural resource conflicts and to facilitate integrated conservation and development at an ecosystem scale. A team of graduate students from the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan conducted field research in the Toledo District of Belize to develop an understanding of collaborative processes in a Belizean context. The research team interviewed more than 60 individuals involved in conservation and development, including key government ministers and agency personnel, NGO staff, community leaders, and representatives from the private sector. Four case studies were selected and analyzed: the Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect, the Toledo Watershed Association, the Golden Stream Corridor, and the Bladen Management Consortium. The research team disaggregated these case studies to understand the factors that constrain and promote collaboration, and to identify opportunities for building on existing multi-stakeholder conservation and development initiatives in the Toledo District and beyond. Analysis of the case studies revealed that lack of trust among stakeholders, differing visions and strategies, conflict and competition, resource constraints, power and politics, organizational barriers, and community related constraints present challenges to collaboration in the District. Nonetheless, when collaboration does take place it is because of the power of existing relationships, political support, potential for joint gains, shared concerns, and an interest in moving forward. While collaborative resource management poses challenges, it holds promise as an effective means to integrate complex interests and goals into decisions regarding conservation and economic development.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the tremendous support we received from so many people and organizations in Belize. Above all, our sincerest gratitude goes to the people of the Toledo District who courteously welcomed us into their homes and places of work, and who unselfishly shared their extensive knowledge and experiences with us. The people of Indian Creek, Golden Stream, Medina Bank, Santa Cruz, Barranco, Monkey River, and Punta Gorda were especially patient with us, and helped us to grasp the many details that would otherwise have eluded us.

We are grateful to the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE) for providing us the opportunity to develop and implement this Master's Project. We thank our project advisors, Professor Julia Wondolleck and Professor Steven Brechin, for their invaluable support and guidance. Julia and Steve were instrumental in helping us to shape this report into a comprehensible and useful form. Their unwavering commitment to our project and constructive comments propelled us forward during the many trying times we faced over the past 12 months.

Our field research was funded by grants from the Horace H. Rackham's School of Graduate Studies Discretionary Funds, SNRE and the Prentice Fund, the Ecosystem Management Initiative at the University of Michigan, National Audubon Society, and World Wildlife Fund-Central America.

In Belize, Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment John Briceño, Chief Forest Officer Oswaldo Sabido, and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust's Executive Director Valerie Woods supported our project in principle, thereby giving us the credibility we needed. The staff of the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) helped to initially facilitate some important project logistics, including lending us a company vehicle on a few occasions. The BAS library and office facilities were made available to the project team. The staff at the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment, Ya'axche' Conservation Trust, Maya Leaders' Alliance, Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment, Toledo Development Corporation, Fauna & Flora International-Belize, and the Land Information

Center were also extremely helpful and supportive, making important documents and maps available to the team.

We are also appreciative of the support, constructive feedback, and advice we received from our colleagues and fellow students at the University of Michigan.

Throughout our study, we were impressed and encouraged by the growing awareness of the need to develop partnerships and other collaborative arrangements across all stakeholders in the Toledo District and other parts of Belize. This growing awareness shows that people can work together to facilitate more integrated management of natural resources.

The following personal acknowledgements cannot be left unstated:

Gregory Wade De Vries: I express gratitude for my fellow team members. We experienced firsthand the challenges and rewards of collaboration through the evolution of this project.

Margaret Fenimore Haines: I thank my family for their constant enthusiasm and support and for keeping me in their thoughts.

Steven Butler Hufnagel: I thank my wife Liza for her love, support, and humor over three semesters and a summer with too much time away from each other.

Andrew Laird: Thank you, Emma and Giovanni, for letting us stay at your place and providing a great hangout at Earth Runnin's in Punta Gorda.

Kyle Rearick: I thank Kelley, my friend and partner, for her supportive words, critical eye, and caring thoughts throughout this process.

Osmany Salas: I am grateful to the Japan-IDB Scholarship Program for sponsoring my studies. To my wife Lupi, my daughter Ki'ila, and my mom Mirta – I would not have been able to face the many challenges over the past two years if it wasn't for your unflinching love and support.

Ann Arbor, Michigan

April 16, 2003

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Frequently Used Acronyms

AMMA	Ancient Monuments and Antiquities Act
ANDA	Association of National Development Agencies
APAMO	Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations
BACONGO	Belize Alliance of Conservation Non-Governmental Organizations
BAS	Belize Audubon Society
BCER	Boden Creek Ecological Reserve
BCES	Belize Center for Environmental Studies
BFREE	Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education
BGA	Banana Growers Association
BITI	Belize Indigenous Training Institute
BLE	Belize Lodge & Excursions
BNIC	Belize National Indigenous Council
BTB	Belize Tourism Board
BTIA	Belize Tourism Industry Association
CARD	Community-initiated Agriculture and Resource Development
CBO	Community-based organization
CI	Conservation International
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CREP	Caribbean Regional Environmental Program
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Authority
EDF	EcoLogic Development Fund
EEV	EcoLogic Enterprise Ventures
ESTAP	Environmental and Social Technical Assistance Project
FFI	Fauna & Flora International
FON	Friends of Nature
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GOB	Government of Belize
GSC	Golden Stream Corridor
GSCP	Golden Stream Corridor Preserve
IACHR	Inter-American Commission for Human Rights
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Conference
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILRC	Indian Law Resource Center
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IUCN	World Conservation Union
KCB	Kekchi Council of Belize
MBCP	Mesoamerican Biological Corridors Project
MBRS	Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System
MED	Ministry of Economic Development
MLA	Maya Leaders' Alliance
MMAP	Maya Mountains Archaeological Project
MMMAT	Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect

MMMC	Maya Mountain Marine Corridor
MNRECI	Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, Commerce and Industry
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine protected area
NGC	National Garifuna Council
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPSA	National Parks System Act
OAS	Organization of American States
PA	Protected area
PACT	Protected Areas Conservation Trust
PCNP	Payne's Creek National Park
PFB	Programme for Belize
PHMR	Port Honduras Marine Reserve
PHWA	Port Honduras Watershed Association
PUP	Peoples' United Party
REAs	Rapid Ecological Assessments
RDP	Regional Development Plan
SAGE	Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment
SATIIM	Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management
SCMR	Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve
SCP	Site Conservation Plan
SIT	School for International Training
SPEAR	Society for the Promotion of Education and Research
SRDC	Southern Region Development Corporation
STNP	Sarstoon-Temash National Park
SWA	Sibun Watershed Association
TAA	Toledo Alcaldes Association
TASTE	Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment
TDC	Toledo Development Corporation
TIDE	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment
TMCC	Toledo Maya Cultural Council
TMWC	Toledo Maya Women's Council
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TRIGOH	Tri-national Alliance for the Gulf of Honduras
TWA	Toledo Watershed Association
UDP	United Democratic Party
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
YCT	Ya'axche' Conservation Trust

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

Belize is a developing country possessing a rich tapestry of natural and cultural resources. Like many nations around the globe it confronts significant dilemmas posed at the interface of development and conservation. Local, national and international non-governmental organizations actively pursue conservation objectives through the modification of land use, land purchases, and the creation of public and private reserves. Meanwhile, deficits in financial and human resources force the Government of Belize to experiment with innovative partnerships with individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Under these arrangements, various co-management arrangements introduce different levels of management attention to otherwise neglected yet legally declared protected lands. At the same time, indigenous communities struggle to maintain and promote their traditional livelihoods and practices. While protecting their livelihoods and cultural resources, local people vigorously pursue title to their use of the areas in which they dwell. Land use decisions also involve private interests in sectors such as, tourism, timber, mineral extraction, agriculture, fishing, and shrimp farming. These industries contribute significantly to the economy of Belize. All groups contribute to the complexity of the social landscape in Belize and create challenges for a reconciliation of ecological sustainability and human development.

The challenge in Belize, as elsewhere throughout the world, is finding ways to balance the sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting objectives of diverse social processes and ecological systems. The outcomes of this balancing act are expressed in the day-to-day actions of individuals and the evolving contexts in which they make decisions. The struggles and accomplishments of many individuals and organizations in Belize provide tremendous insights into the answer to the question of how to balance environmental and social goals.

In the past, protected area decision-making in Belize has tended to take a top-down approach that does not incorporate the interests and needs of a diverse array of stakeholders[1] (PFB 1996). Furthermore, the absence of a national management authority or national policy for Belize's protected areas system results in the lack of effective and cohesive management plans. Even where management plans do exist, interaction among the organizations charged with implementing the plans is characterized by inadequate information sharing, communication, collective problem solving, and decision-making. This situation fragments and isolates mutual conservation concerns and initiatives. Given limited financial and human resources for protected area management and enforcement, meaningful public involvement and multi-stakeholder collaboration may be essential for successful implementation of policy and plans both at a macro and micro level. A substantial body of literature suggests that increasing collaboration among agencies and involvement of community members and additional constituents in protected area planning results in improved on-the-ground management (Childers 1994; Derman 1995; Gibson and Marks 1995; Pinkerton 1989; McNeely and Pitt 1985; Western et al. 1994; White et al. 1994). Collaboration for natural resource management indicates diverse arrangements in which multiple stakeholders voluntarily pool resources, information, and responsibility for collectively achieving shared goals (Gray 1989; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). Additionally, collaboration can facilitate landscape-scale strategies rather than approaches that prioritize individual species regardless of their communities and larger-scale ecosystem processes that occur across institutional and political boundaries (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000).

The current lack of mutual understanding and agreement on protected area goals, the paucity of information exchange, and the significant overlap in responsibilities strains limited human and financial resources available for protected areas management in Belize. The success of a national protected area system – including its relationship to coexisting human populations and the resulting conservation of species and habitat – stands or falls on the adaptive management of the sites of which the protected area system is comprised. While the dangers of over-centralized management regimes are well known (Orlove 2002; Peluso 1992; Scott 1998; Wilshusen et al. 2002), a growing body of evidence substantiates that successful conservation management can be best enacted if the relevant stakeholders coordinate their

efforts as part of a collaborative arrangement (Dukes and Firehock 2001; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000).

Research Questions and Approach

This project seeks to identify constraints, facilitating factors, and opportunities to increase interaction among policymakers, resource-dependent communities, conservation groups, developers, and other stakeholders in protected area management in Belize. It is the researchers' assumption that conservation is integral to human development. As such, conservation initiatives must address the cultural, social, economic, organizational, political, and ecological context in which these initiatives occur without exacerbating inequalities among the various actors. Failing to accommodate such issues will result in the eventual degradation of both natural ecosystems and corresponding environments in which people live (Wilshusen et al. 2002).

Six graduate students of the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment focused their research in a distinctive area of Belize – the Toledo District – in an effort to identify key considerations for the possibility of developing collaborative arrangements within a multi-ecosystem and culturally diverse context. The Toledo District in Southern Belize, comprised of multiple watersheds draining into the Gulf of Honduras, contains a broad array of habitats and ecosystems unique to Central America. Long-term conservation of these areas requires cooperation among communities, organizations, and agencies that interact with local resources. By posing questions formed through initial research with stakeholders and constituencies in Toledo, the project aims to yield insights for improving multi-stakeholder collaboration applicable for resource management throughout the Toledo District and locations with similar situations.

This study examined several examples of multi-stakeholder efforts to manage natural resources in the Toledo District. The project team conducted an intensive analysis of conservation and development initiatives in the District. To highlight the issues involved in collaborative efforts in the study area, this report focuses on four case studies. These case studies were analyzed to answer the following general questions:

- What issues are involved at the conservation/development interface in Belize?
- What challenges are confronted in addressing these issues?
- What ways do different groups approach these issues?
- What barriers impinge on effective collaboration?
- What factors facilitate aspects of collaboration when it has occurred?
- What lessons from these experiences can be gleaned about future opportunities for improved collaboration and how they might be harnessed?

The four case studies were selected both for their visibility and because they provide invaluable insight on constraints, opportunities, and lessons that might apply to future collaborative efforts in the Toledo District. As a whole, the cases present a wealth of experience and insights about the potential for and challenges to collaboration from some of the most outstanding examples of collaborative initiatives in Southern Belize. They encompass a range of geographical and temporal scales. More importantly, they provide examples of the range of types of collaboration in the area: from the interchange of communication among a few stakeholders to the full sharing of responsibility and authority among many actors. Aspects from the lessons learned from each case study can be applied to the whole of Southern Belize and beyond.

The first case study focuses on the evolution of a "Ridges to Reef" concept – the Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect (MMMAT) – into a multi-watershed conservation strategy. This story explains how the MMMAT represents an effort to confront the challenges posed by national development projects in Southern Belize. It also describes the involvement of the MMMAT's main proponent – the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) – with two protected areas within the area. Through this description, the case analyzes the potential of the MMMAT concept to serve as a forum for promoting multi-stakeholder discussions and coordination in light of the events that have taken place over the past decade.

The second case describes the continued development of a collaborative initiative – the Toledo Watershed Association (TWA) – which was born out of the MMMAT concept. This story highlights the tendency among organizations to work with other organizations like themselves rather than across sectoral boundaries and reveals the potential shortcomings of such an approach. The TWA story also highlights the desire among NGOs to define and defend organizational turf. Organizations in Toledo exhibit reluctance to share information, ideas, and especially credit for projects given the funding that reputation draws. Finally, the story demonstrates the power of models of success to motivate attempts at collaboration.

The third case study of the Golden Stream Corridor describes a smaller-scale collaborative initiative at the single-watershed scale. The case study focuses on how several organizations are attempting to coordinate conservation activities within a stretch of contiguous habitat between the Maya Mountains and Port Honduras in an effort to secure the area from development threats and fragmentation. An analysis of the interactions among diverse land managers, organizations and other stakeholders along Golden Stream is helpful for understanding the challenges to collaborative management in the Toledo District where similar dynamics play out on a larger scale.

Finally, the fourth case describes the evolution of the Bladen Management Consortium. As a case study in collaboration, it highlights the many difficulties associated with initiating and sustaining a multi-stakeholder management body, particularly with regard to the challenges of funding, staffing, representation, and legitimacy. It also illustrates how a few committed individuals can drive a collaborative process forward despite such challenges. Understanding the difficulties and successes that Consortium members have encountered provides insights for incipient watershed management efforts beyond a single watershed scale.

These four stories vividly capture recognition of the need among diverse groups to work together if common and complementary natural resource management objectives are to be realized in combination with the threats and opportunities of development. They also highlight the foundation and tremendous potential for enhanced collaboration in Belize. Importantly, the stories illustrate the reality that collaboration, even under the best of circumstances, is not easy. They reveal that collaboration, as demonstrated by the words and

actions of those involved, makes sense but nonetheless poses challenges that need to be recognized and overcome for progress to be made.

Methodology

This report is primarily based on the qualitative analysis of field data gathered in the southernmost district of Belize. The project emerged from interaction of team members with Belizean NGOs and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, Government of Belize. Originally planned as part of a holistic study for the development of an "Integrated National Protected Areas Policy," the project team recognized the significance of collaborative initiatives in southern Belize and sought to analyze them. In order to discuss the initial concept and to learn the perspective of relevant stakeholders, two team members conducted preliminary research in Belize in February 2002. Reaction to the project concept during this visit was very positive. All the representatives of the visited groups expressed interest in improving communication and coordination for building more effective collaborative management strategies for protected areas. The Ministry of Natural Resources and various NGOs confirmed the importance of the research by offering varying degrees of logistical support. Consequently, the project team prepared a detailed work plan based on the observations made during the preliminary visit.

The six project team members gathered the bulk of field data in Belize during June and July of 2002. Additional field data was gathered in February and March 2003. Conducting interviews and residing in the Toledo District allowed the team to explore local issues in-depth, respond to emergent questions, verify data validity, and build better relationships. The research team based itself out of the town of Punta Gorda for convenient access to numerous research participants. In addition, many excursions were made throughout the country to cross-check information and to conduct interviews with people where they work and live. These trips proved critical for learning firsthand from resource-dependent communities as well as from bureaucrats in Belmopan and Belize City. The approach also facilitated the refinement of site-specific insights that directly relate to various people and places studied by the team.

Research involved extensive interaction with community members and representatives of organizations and agencies (see Appendix I). Key interviewees were determined by their relation to particular conservation and development projects and by their association with involved organizations and agencies. In addition to unobtrusive observation, the team employed methods of direct observation and semi-structured and guided interviewing (Bernard 1995). The team conducted over 70 interviews with representatives of government agencies, non-governmental and indigenous organizations, community-based organizations, local communities, and tourism and agricultural sectors. Dr. Julia Wondolleck and Dr. Steven Brechin, the team's faculty advisors, reviewed the interview questions and research strategy prior to commencement of fieldwork. Participants were asked for permission to electronically record the discussions (using an MD-recorder) in an effort to accurately document their knowledge and experiences in the region. When it was not feasible to record electronically, at least two team members took notes. The interview recordings and notes were transcribed for later reference. These interviews provided the most important data source for this project. They captured the perspectives of the participants themselves, allowing the team to better understand the social, cultural, and ecological landscapes of the Toledo District.

The team also relied on primary and secondary-source documents gathered in Belize and the United States. Pertinent documents in Belize were compiled and reviewed by the project team, including content analysis of protected area management plans and critical reviews of government policy documents. These documents were obtained from the resource centers of relevant governmental agencies and NGOs in Belize. In particular, the libraries of the Belize Audubon Society, the University of Michigan, the University of Florida, and the Indian Law Resource Center provided important information for this project.

As a result of researching the potential for collaboration and identifying constraints, opportunities, interests, resources, connections, and networks, the project team hopes to encourage a process that creates an open forum for discussion. This dialogue will increase as participants are brought together, exchange information, learn from each other, and share their interests, priorities, and objectives. It is imperative that the process continue beyond the life of this research project. This dynamic outcome is the most critical measure of project success.

Report Structure

The remainder of this report is divided into eight chapters. Chapter Two provides background information on Belize's geography, cultural setting, political system, and economic setting. It further describes Belize's ecological characteristics, and provides information on the national protected areas legal framework, as well as conservation initiatives and organizations involved in these initiatives. The chapter also sets the stage for the rest of the report by highlighting issues pertaining to economic development, social concerns, and environmental processes in the Toledo District.

Chapter Three provides a detailed analysis of the issues framing land tenure and resource management in Toledo. By addressing the convoluted interests and competing territorial claims of the Toledo Maya and the Government of Belize (GOB), the chapter discusses the potential for a resolution of the long-standing land tenure dispute and the implications for land and resource management in the district. The chapter then presents the case of the Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) as an example of a fledgling effort to achieve comprehensive indigenous management of a protected area, and the challenges and opportunities that may arise. The chapter ends by discussing the importance of SATIIM as an initiative to organize multi-stakeholder support for its efforts at Sarstoon-Temash National Park.

Chapter Four sets out the theoretical framework used to analyze the four case studies and to arrive at insights and conclusions. Forces that facilitate and constrain collaboration are discussed. The introduction to case studies consists of: 1) TIDE and the Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect, 2) the Toledo Watershed Association and the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment, 3) the Golden Stream Corridor, and 4) the Bladen Management Consortium.

Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight comprise the stories themselves. Each chapter includes a detailed, analytical discussion of the challenges to successful collaboration, and factors that may facilitate or expand collaboration for the respective case.

Finally, Chapter Nine draws on the lessons learned from each case study. This chapter analyzes the constraints and challenges to greater collaboration in Toledo and discusses these issues along political, socio-cultural, organizational, and economic contexts. Challenges include lack of enabling legislation, lack of implementation of policy and legislation, political will, divestment of protected area management responsibility, land tenure disputes, mistrust, cultural diversity, representation and participation issues, lack of ownership of plans, organizational norms and culture, capacity, inadequate communication and information sharing, and resource limitations. The chapter also presents a discussion of particular forces that facilitate collaboration in Toledo. These forces include a shared sense of place, common perception of threats, perceived need to act collectively, tight social and professional networks, specific shared interests, committed individuals, and governmental support. Drawing on lessons learned but also looking beyond the case studies, the chapter concludes with a discussion of future opportunities for improving collaboration at the interface of conservation and development. These opportunities include emerging support for eco-regional management efforts, designation of biological corridors, financing mechanisms, tourism and social entrepreneurship, existing governmental and quasi-governmental initiatives, increasing national and international recognition of the Toledo region, trans-boundary opportunities, partnership agreements, emerging educational opportunities, integrated conservation and development opportunities, and existing relationships.

Chapter Two: Background

Belize – National Context

Geography

Belize is located at the northernmost point and on the Caribbean coast of the Central American isthmus. Known as British Honduras until 1973, Belize is bounded to the north and part of the west by Quintana Roo, Mexico, to the south and the remainder of the west by Guatemala, and to the east by the Caribbean Sea (Map 1). Its inner Caribbean coastal waters are shallow and are sheltered by a line of coral reefs, dotted with islets called "cayes", extending almost the entire length of the country (GOB 2003a). Belize is the least densely populated country in the Central American isthmus and in the entire American mainland, with a population of approximately 257,000 (CSO 2001). It is also the second smallest country in the region. The area of the mainland and cayes is 8,867 square miles. The country's greatest length from north to south is 280 kilometers and its greatest width is 109 kilometers. It has approximately 18,000 square miles of territorial sea (Belize Explorer 2002).

Map 1: Belize – Regional Location

Map 2: Administrative Districts of Belize

The country is divided into six administrative districts: Corozal District and Orange Walk District to the north, Cayo District in the west, Belize District in the center, and Stann Creek District and Toledo District in the south (see Map 2, p.12). The only two inland districts are Cayo and Orange Walk, while the other four districts are located along the Caribbean coast. The climate is subtropical, tempered by trade winds. Temperatures in coastal districts range from about 10°C (50°F) to about 35.6°C (96°F); inland the range is greater. Rainfall varies from an average of 1,295 millimeters in the north to 4,445 millimeters in the extreme south. The dry season usually extends from February to May and there is sometimes a dry spell in August (GOB 2003a).

Cultural setting

Belize is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country, predominated by Mestizos (people of Spanish and Maya descent) and Creoles (people of European and African descent). The Mestizos make up about 49 percent and the Creoles about 25 percent of the population. The other two major population groups are the Maya and the Garifuna, which comprise eleven percent and six percent of the population respectively. There are three Maya ethnic groups in Belize: the Yucatec, the Kekchi, and the Mopan. The Yucatec live mostly in the northern and western areas of Belize. Most of the Mopans and the Kekchis are concentrated in Belize's southernmost region, the Toledo District, where they comprise about 60 percent of the population (or about 15,000 people). The remainder of the population is comprised of East Indians (people of Indian and African descent), Mennonites, Chinese, and a spate of North American and British expatriates. The official language of the country is English, although Spanish and Creole (a local dialect derived from the English language) are also widely spoken. To a lesser extent (in terms of population size of the respective ethnic group), Garifuna, Maya Mopan, Maya Kekchi, Maya Yucatec, German/Deutsch, Indian and Chinese are also spoken. For the majority of the population in the Toledo and Stann Creek Districts of Southern Belize, the primary language is either Garifuna, Mopan Maya, or Kekchi Maya.

Political system

Formerly a British colony, Belize gained its political independence from Great Britain on September 21, 1981. Its political system is based on the principles of parliamentary democracy based on the Westminster System. The Queen of England is the constitutional Head of State, represented by a Belizean Governor General, whom she appoints. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the political party that commands the majority of seats in the House of Representatives. Members of the Executive Branch of Government, selected from among the National Assembly, are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The bicameral National Assembly consists of the Senate (twelve members appointed by the governor general – six on the advice of the prime minister, three on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and one each on the advice of the Belize Council of Churches and Evangelical Association of Churches, the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Belize Better Business Bureau, and the National Trade Union Congress and the Civil Society Steering Committee), whose members are appointed for five-year terms, and the House of Representatives, which comprises 29 seats. Members of the House of Representatives are elected by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms. The Honorable Said W. Musa was re-appointed as Prime Minister by the Governor General for another five-year term after leading the People's United Party (PUP) to re-election on March 4, 2003. The PUP controls 22 seats in the House of Representatives, while the opposition United Democratic Party, headed by the Honorable Dean O. Barrow, controls seven seats. The Honorable John Briceño was re-appointed as Deputy Prime Minister and holds the ministerial portfolios of Natural Resources, the Environment, Commerce and Industry.

The administration of the six districts is jointly run by a number of Government functionaries, namely the District Accountant, the Officer Commanding the District Police, and the Heads of various Government departments based in the districts. Each district town has a locally elected Town Council of seven members. Belize City is administered by a nine-member City Council, and the capital, Belmopan City, is administered by a seven-member City Council. Local Government in the villages is carried out with the help of locally elected

village councils of seven members (GOB 2002). Maya villages in the two southern districts, Toledo and Stann Creek, are jointly governed by village councils and *alcalde* councils.[2]

Economic setting

Belize's current economic base dates back to the mid-20th century when there was a shift from the production of forestry products such as logwood, mahogany and *chicle*[3] towards large-scale plantation-type agriculture with citrus and banana cultivation in the south of the country and sugarcane in northern Belize (GOB 2003c).

A new shift is currently taking place. The Government of Belize's Medium Term Economic Strategy 2003-2005 states that: "The economy of Belize is gradually undergoing transformation from one that is primarily agricultural to one that is more service-oriented; the service sector contributed 59.5 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2001 whilst the primary sector contributed just 16.8 percent. Belize has a farming population of about 16,979 operating on a total land area of 265,000 acres, of which 146,000 are for crops and 119,000 acres for pastures. During 2001 the contribution of agriculture to GDP amounted to 11.3 percent, and 88.9 percent of total export earnings. The principal source of income is sugar, bananas, and citrus fruit production. In 2001, citrus exports replaced sugarcane as the largest contributor to foreign exchange earnings followed by sugarcane in second place and bananas in third place. Citrus, sugar, and banana export revenues in 2001 amounted to $95.1M (includes fresh fruits and by-products), $59.4M and $42.8M, respectively, totaling $197.3 M for these three traditional commodities.[4] Belize is also experiencing increased levels of expansion and development of new export commodities such as papayas, habanero peppers and aquaculture" (GOB 2002). Marine products (including farmed shrimp) and small manufacturing also make notable contributions to exports.

Although Belize's economic base has shifted to agriculture, the textile industry and the wood industry also serve as important sources of income. However, the industries that have seen the most rapid development over the past five years (1998-2003) have been the tourism and financial services (GOB 2003b). Tourism, in particular, has experienced a phenomenal increase. According to the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), 2002 saw the highest number of overnight visitors (arriving by land and air) in Belize's history.

Cruise passenger arrivals experienced an increase of over 500 percent compared to arrivals the previous year (BTB 2003a). Additionally, according to the BTB, the figure for total overnight arrivals in 1998 was 176,054; four years later, after three major hurricanes, and an overall decline in international travel after 9/11, Belize's tourism arrivals grew by 13.3 percent. There was also a 4.5 percent growth in the number of hotels in 2002 (BTB 2003a).

The Belizean economy's relative strength in a large part is due to an abundance of land, forest, and water resources, Belize's proximity to the U.S. market, and the country's historically close ties to the United Kingdom. Belize's environmental resources also create substantial opportunities in the nature-based tourism market. Although historically Belize has not been significantly impacted by hurricanes, during 2000 and 2001 two substantial hurricanes and one tropical storm did adversely affect the Belizean economy, illustrating the vulnerability of Belize to natural disasters. The declining preferred market access, available to certain export products such as bananas and sugar under various international arrangements, is another challenge for Belize (GOB 2003b).

Conservation in Belize

Ecological characteristics

The natural vegetation of Belize consists of a mosaic of major formations, according to underlying geology, terrain, soil type, wetness, salinity, altitude and rainfall pattern (PFB 1996). The Central American Ecosystems Mapping Project[5] identified a total of 85 terrestrial ecosystems for Belize, as well as two marine ecosystems (sea grass beds and coral reefs). Based on data obtained from 1996 and 1998 satellite imagery, it was calculated that approximately 15,867 square kilometers, or 69.1 percent of Belize, was under some form of forest (including shrublands) cover; 804 square kilometers of this figure was Pine Forest (five percent of total forest cover) (Meerman & Sabido 2001). The terrestrial ecosystems are grouped into nine major ecosystem classes and two broad land uses. The nine major broad ecosystem classes are water, wetland, coastal savanna (marine salt marsh), mangrove and littoral forest, lowland savanna, lowland pine forest, submontane pine forest, lowland

broadleaf forest and shrublands, and submontane broadleaf forest. The two broad land use types are agricultural uses (which include aquaculture and forest plantations) and urban areas. Table 1 lists the broad ecosystems classes and land uses by cover. All of these major ecosystem classes occur in Southern Belize, where this Master's Project was based.

The most characteristic feature of Belize is the presence of extensive areas of natural habitat and relatively low but growing levels of human disturbance. As a result, the country continues to harbor viable populations of a range of species of conservation concern that are under pressure throughout the rest of their Central American range. Belize is also within a local center of endemicity and lies on migration routes for both Nearctic and Neotropical bird species (PFB 1996). Over 540 bird species have been recorded in Belize, of which over 80 are of special conservation concern. Over 150 mammal species have been recorded in Belize. Of these, forty-three are considered endangered, threatened, rare and/or hunted throughout their ranges, with thirteen officially designated as being of international concern and listed in the CITES appendices, IUCN Red Data Books or under the US Endangered Species Act (PFB 1996). Amongst the less charismatic wildlife species, 111 species of reptile fauna have been recorded, and 40 amphibian species have also been recorded to date, although this figure remains tentative. There is very limited information available on freshwater fish and invertebrates (PFB 1996).

Suitable wildlife habitat is in serious decline throughout the Central American region. With large blocks of contiguous habitat still in existence, Belize plays an important role for survival of nearctic and neotropical migrants, and threatened mammalian populations. Protected areas in Belize cover adequate areas of critical habitat. These protected areas are necessary to maintain viable populations and are used as the principal tool for conservation of these species (PFB 1996). Additionally, Belize's protected areas form a crucial part of the Maya Forest Region and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, connecting the remaining forests in Peten, Guatemala, to the forests of Calakmul, Chiapas (Mexico).

Table 1: Broad Ecosystem Classes and Land Uses by Cover

Cover	% ±	km² ±
Lowland broadleaf forest and shrubland	51.4%	11,803
Agriculture, all subclasses	16.7%	3,835
Submontane and montane broadleaf forest	10.0%	2,296
Lowland savanna including pine savanna	8.8%	2,021
Mangrove and littoral forest	4.2%	964
Submontane pine forest (dense)	2.1%	482
Water	2.1%	482
Wetland	1.9%	436
Lowland pine forest (dense)	1.4%	321
Coastal savanna (marine salt marsh)	1.1%	253
Urban	0.5%	115

Source: Central American Ecosystems Map – Belize (Meerman & Sabido, 2001)

Protected areas establishment and legal framework

Belize is blessed with an abundance of natural and cultural resources located in both marine and terrestrial settings, and the recognition of their importance has been manifested to a large extent by the declaration of 71 protected areas across the country (see Appendix II).

These protected areas have been declared under a number of different legal instruments. These include the National Parks System Act, the Forest Act, the Fisheries Act, and the Ancient Monuments and Antiquities Act. As a result, various governmental agencies have jurisdiction over the protected areas and the present institutional framework is diffuse (see Figure 1, p.19). The Forest Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, Commerce and Industry (MNRECI) has statutory responsibility for the protected areas established under the National Parks System Act and the Forest Act. These include the following categories of aquatic and terrestrial protected areas: national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, natural monuments, nature reserves, and forest reserves. Under the Fisheries Act, the Fisheries Department (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives) is legally responsible for most of the marine reserves. The Department of Archaeology (Ministry of Tourism) has jurisdiction over the archaeological reserves.

In response to their human and financial limitations and constraints, some of these agencies have delegated management of several protected areas to third parties, particularly, non-governmental (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), via the signing of co-management agreements. Additionally, there are a few private reserves that are officially recognized by the Government of Belize although no legal instrument exists to fully incorporate them within the national protected areas system.

Figure 1: Government Agencies with Legal Jurisdiction over Protected Areas

Given that there are at least five different management entities that have responsibility for management of these areas, there are significant overlaps in responsibilities, particularly between the Forest and Archaeology Departments in areas with high concentrations of cultural and natural resources. Overlaps also occur between the Fisheries and Forest Departments in the coastal zone and intertidal wetlands and waterbodies (PFB 1996). The need for cross-sectoral coordination has already been recognized for the coastal zone, leading to the creation of the interdepartmental Coastal Zone Management Authority.[6] However, this only addresses the coastal/marine component of the protected area system.

Most of the protected areas – 47 national parks and reserves – have been declared under the National Parks System Act (NPSA) of 1981 and the Forest Act: eighteen Forest Reserves, sixteen National Parks, seven Wildlife Sanctuaries, three Natural Monuments, and three Nature Reserves. Two natural monuments – Half Moon Caye and Blue Hole on Lighthouse

Reef Atoll – have been designated as World Heritage Sites and thus have international recognition. The Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary is Belize's only Ramsar Site having been designated under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat.

There are thirteen marine protected areas (MPAs) in Belize. The first MPA – Half Moon Caye – was designated in 1982. Eight of the MPAs were declared under the Fisheries Act, and the others under the NPSA. The eight marine reserves established under the Fisheries Act are: Hol Chan (1987), Glovers Reef (1993), Bacalar Chico (1996), South Water Caye (1996), Sapodilla Cayes (1996), Caye Caulker (1998), Port Honduras (2000), and Gladden Spit (2000). The other areas were declared under the NPSA but are technically MPAs as well because they protect marine environments: these are Half Moon Caye Natural Monument (1982), Laughing Bird Cay National Park (1991), Bacalar Chico National Park (1996), Corozal Bay (Manatee) Wildlife Sanctuary (1998), Blue Hole Natural Monument (1998), and Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary (2002). It is interesting to note that Bacalar Chico was designated under both the National Parks System and Fisheries Acts, and Caye Caulker under both the NPSA and the Forest Act.

Despite their legal designation under the current legal framework, long-term security for protected areas does not exist. Protected areas and Forest Reserves or sections within them can be de-reserved (that is, removed from protected status) by Ministerial fiat. Forest Reserves have been especially subject to official and unofficial de-reservation. Sections of Swasey-Bladen Forest Reserve, Columbia River Forest Reserve, and Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve have been de-reserved for banana cultivation, small-scale agriculture, and sugarcane plantations, respectively (GOB 2000c). Furthermore, as noted in a UNDP/GEF project report:

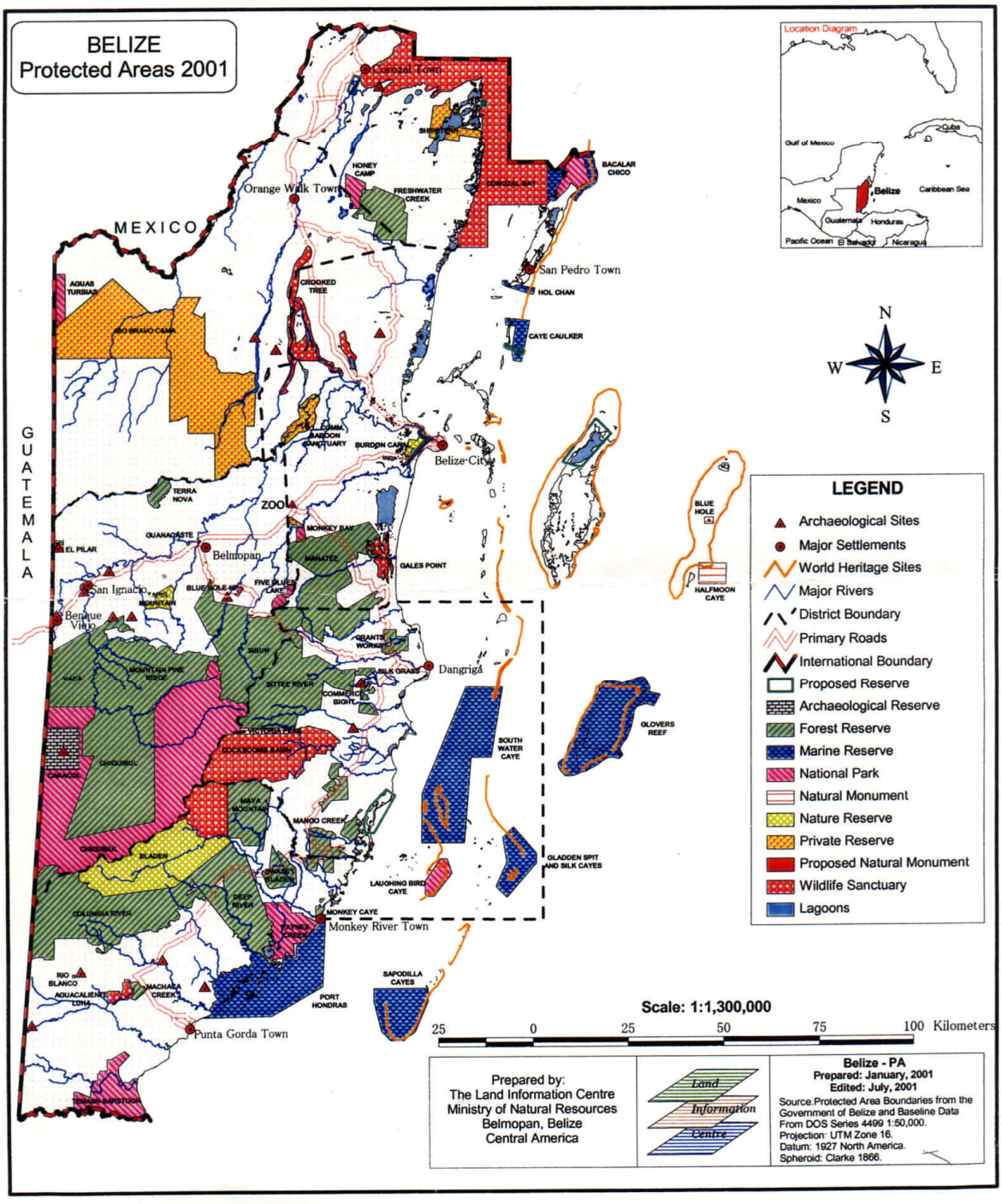
> The National Parks System Act gives the Minister great discretionary powers to deviate from the Act, and as such provides little guarantee for long-term conservation of biodiversity in [protected areas (PAs)]. Numerous licenses to extract resources in PAs (where this is not normally allowed) or to cultivate crops inside PAs have been granted by applying such discretionary powers. In at least one of the PAs included in the project, a human settlement, including sugarcane fields, exists within the PA, allowed by a former Minister, and large tracts of what was previously part of the PA have been 'de-reserved'. (Ravndal 2002:11)

Long-term conservation planning and donor investment in protected areas necessitates stricter legal security.

The *de facto* management of most protected areas is based on principles and practices specified in the *National Protected Areas Systems Plan for Belize* (PFB 1996). While this 1996 document was never signed into law, it guides on-the-ground management practices and national-level policy making for a number of protected area management agencies. Furthermore, according to a recent World Bank/WCS survey of the Belizean protected area (PA) legal framework, there is no mention of "public participation, collaboration, or the creation and function of any type of advisory committees for protected areas" (Barborak et. al. 2002:7).[7] As shown in Figure 1, management is further complicated by the fact that protected areas management roles and responsibilities fall under the umbrella of three government departments – the Forest Department, Fisheries Department and the Department of Archeology – each located within a separate Ministry. Ministerial portfolios expand and contract in response to current affairs and political affiliation; this means that funding, staff, projects, and goals are also in flux. Changes in portfolios have the potential to create conflicts of interest; for example, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment includes the portfolios of Commerce and Industry.

Although more than 40 percent of Belize has been designated as protected area, there is very little management on-the-ground due to limited financial support, human resources, and technical expertise. Of the 71 national parks and protected areas, less than 25 percent have management plans and personnel (Pinelo 2000). Many parks are considered "paper parks" in reference to the lack of on-the-ground management. Despite their legal designation, it is

recognized that activities such as *milpa* farming or shifting cultivation, looting of archeological sites and hunting and fishing continue to some extent within protected area borders. Management consists of a diffuse assortment of public agencies, NGOs, and community organizations that rarely coordinate efforts or openly share information and resources. Additionally the complex social and political environment of protected areas is characterized by diverse and competing interests including industry and mining bodies, indigenous groups, refugee communities, and other public and private stakeholders whose perspectives and resources are not often represented in protected areas management. Greater integration of interests, needs, and concerns of various actors is essential to the long-term viability of Belize's natural resources and protected areas.



Map 3: Belize Protected Areas

Regional, national, and international conservation initiatives

Demonstrating a commitment to conservation, Belize is a signatory to various regional and international environmental treaties such as the *Central American Convention on Biological Diversity Protection*, and the protection of *Priority Protected Areas of Central America* and the *Alliance for Sustainable Development*. Belize is also a signatory to various international environmental treaties regarding: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Waste, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, and Wetlands (CIA 2002).

Preservation of biological diversity is the focus of several regional, national and international initiatives. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) promote the protection and conservation of a million-acre land management unit known as the Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect (MMMAT) as part of their "ridges to reefs" conservation approach (TNC 2003b) The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC) and the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System (MBRS) are both long-term multifaceted projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a multi-lateral funding mechanism geared toward environmental programs and projects in the developing world. The MBC is a regional initiative (including seven Central American countries and southern Mexico) that seeks to: 1) protect key biodiversity sites; 2) connect these sites with corridors managed in such a way as to enable the movement and dispersal of animals and plants; and 3) promote socially equitable and culturally sensitive development that conserves biodiversity (Miller et al. 2001).

The MBRS project is a fifteen-year plan, which aims to protect the vulnerable and unique barrier reef system that stretches along the coast from Mexico to Honduras. The Belize Barrier Reef was declared a World Heritage Site in 1996 yet damaging fishing practices, agricultural and industrial runoff and episodic coral bleaching present a challenge to preserving the extensive reef systems. Objectives of this project include: 1) Development of integrated management plans for the sustainable use of coastal and marine ecosystems and the diverse resources, goods and services they provide; 2) strengthening local and national capacity for environmental management through education, information sharing and training;

3) standardization of ecosystem monitoring and facilitation of its execution and dissemination of results throughout the region; 4) strengthening of institutions and programs for maintenance of water quality and prevention of contamination, particularly in trans-boundary situations; and 5) establishment of transnational coordination and cooperation mechanisms for harmonization of policies (including laws, standards, regulations and enforcement mechanisms) related to the conservation and sustainable use of the MBRS (GEF 2001).

The Tri-national Alliance for the Gulf of Honduras (TRIGOH) is a tri-national network – consisting of conservation organizations from Belize, Guatemala and Honduras – of coastal and marine protected areas which seeks to coordinate conservation initiatives and overcome conflict in the biologically rich Gulf of Honduras. This regional alliance was founded in 1996.

Relevant organizations and agencies

With a rapidly expanding trade deficit and reduced post-hurricane growth rate, the Government has focused on decentralization and privatization of public activities as a means to overcome budgetary constraints. Various resource management-related development and conservation activities have been delegated to quasi-governmental enterprises such as the Toledo Development Corporation (TDC) and the Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA), as well as to various NGOs.

In the realm of biodiversity and natural resource management, the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) acts as the primary in-country funding agency for protected areas management. The Trust is intricately linked to the overall management and development of protected areas in Belize. PACT aims to provide a "sustainable means of funding for activities to help conserve the natural and cultural treasure of Belize" through exit fees levied on foreign visitors and protected areas entrance fees (PACT 2001). While the Fund does provide much needed revenue for resource-starved Government and non-governmental agencies it is not sufficient to manage and maintain Belize's extensive protected areas system.

Management of protected areas has also been entrusted to private organizations such as the Belize Audubon Society (BAS), TIDE, and the Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment (TASTE) through various co-management agreements. In a *de jure* sense these legally binding agreements between a Government agency (Fisheries Department or Forest Department) and NGOs or community-based organizations (CBOs) theoretically allow for protected area management responsibilities to be jointly shared by the parties to the agreement. Fourteen protected areas are being administered by NGOs and CBOs under co-management arrangements with the Forest Department. These include the eight protected areas managed by the BAS – Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, Victoria Peak Natural Monument, Blue Hole National Park, Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve, Guanacaste National Park, Blue Hole Natural Monument, Half Moon Caye Natural Monument, and the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Six other sites are managed by CBOs under co-management arrangements with the Forest Department: these include Caye Caulker Forest Reserve, Five Blues Lake National Park, Laughing Bird Caye National Park, Mayflower Bocawina National Park, Noj Kaax Meen Eligio Panti National Park, and Rio Blanco National Park. The Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) has recently embarked on a World Bank-funded project to institute a co-management system for the Sarstoon-Temash National Park, the southernmost of all the Belizean protected areas.

TIDE has signed a co-management agreement with the Fisheries Department for Port Honduras Marine Reserve, and is a member of the committee that has been charged by the Forest Department with overseeing the management of Payne's Creek National Park. TASTE is presently negotiating a co-management agreement for the management of the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve. Ya'axche' Conservation Trust (YCT) manages its own property, known as Golden Stream Corridor Preserve. TIDE also owns and manages private property.

Devolution of management responsibility, however, is not accompanied by necessary financial resources. Where communities have sought to establish co-management agreements with Government agencies, the lack of human and financial capacity remains a substantial barrier to carrying out management responsibilities. While decentralization of protected area management grants freedom for innovation and a level of on-the-ground management

unlikely under GOB control, means are lacking to ensure that managing organizations are held accountable to GOB, local populations, and other stakeholders.

Toledo District: Context and Issues

The Toledo District lies at a crossroads. Accelerated development of the area looms in the future as the Southern Highway nears completion and the road to Guatemala is planned. This road would traverse areas of traditional Maya occupancy, an area referred to as the "Maya heartland" or the "Maya Homeland." Different people have different visions for the future of Southern Belize.[8] Some envision increased economic development through industrial agriculture, shrimp farms and large-scale infrastructure projects. Others envision an eco-regional conservation scheme to protect one of the last remaining wilderness areas that runs unbroken from the Upland forests of the Maya Mountains to the coast. Many people are trying to maintain their traditional livelihoods in areas that others have demarcated as distinct political units, logging concessions, and "protected" zones. Concentrated biodiversity coupled with a complex organizational landscape translates into high visibility for the locale. Issues that affect resource management unfold at various scales and within overlapping realms of activity. Some take place at international, national, regional, or local levels while others transect any number of levels. Many issues are chronic concerns or rapidly emerging situations. They can be generally categorized as issues pertaining to economic development, society and culture, and environment.

Economic development issues

Poverty and economic development

The bulk of Belize's protected areas and reserves are located in Southern Belize, a part of the country that had for many years been referred to as "the forgotten district" in terms of economic development. Poverty and illiteracy rates are highest in the Toledo District – the most economically disadvantaged district in the country. 1993 and 1996 poverty assessments established that Toledo is the most indigent district in Belize (GOB 2000c).

Characterized by a largely rural agrarian population, many of Toledo's diverse ethnic groups maintain their cultural traditions as small scale agriculturalists that depend on their natural environment for medicinal herbs, food, timber, and construction materials.

Over the past five years, Southern Belize, especially the Toledo District, has received focused attention from the Government of Belize (GOB). In an effort to reduce and eliminate poverty, the Government has instituted "new and special approaches and measures... to assist the south in catching up," including measures that give special benefits to the Toledo District (GOB 1998:1). The GOB, however, also stresses the relationship between environment and development:

> Land use planning, environmental management and protection are cross cutting issues which are important in the context of poverty alleviation, health sector development, tourism [particularity eco-tourism and community based tourism], industrial and agricultural development, and disaster mitigation and management. (GOB 1998:14)

Perhaps the most significant intervention has been the improvement of the Southern Highway, which traverses the entire southern region of Belize. Under the *Southern Highway Rehabilitation Project*, some 104 miles of the existing Southern Highway – which connects Southern Belize to the more industrialized and populated northern districts – are being rehabilitated, upgraded and paved from Stann Creek Valley road to Punta Gorda the capital of the Toledo District. Similar to other large road projects in previously isolated areas (Moran 1979), the highway serves as a catalyst for rapid social and environmental change (Cook 1991). In Toledo, plans to upgrade the road prompted the emergence of various public, non-profit and private organizations to address potential social and ecological impacts of the highway many of which are becoming a reality. The highway has already severed previously intact ecological corridors between the upland forests and the coastal plains. Highway improvement will likely augment tourism, agricultural exportation, and timber and mineral extraction by increasing transportation efficiency. There may be a motion for further de-reservation of national forest lands to augment transportation and commerce. Highway development will also increase land speculation and the spontaneous emergence of roadside villages, further destabilizing indigenous villages located near the highway.

Plans are also underway to forge a major transportation route between Southern Belize and Guatemala. The new highway project forms part of the much contested Plan Puebla de Panama funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (Hayden 2003). By linking the Southern Highway to the Pan American Highway across the border, this project is intended to foster Central American market integration. Similar to the Southern Highway, this route will open previously isolated areas to settlement and development. A major overland route to Guatemala has the potential to exacerbate existing tensions between Spanish-speaking Central American immigrants, Mayas, and other Belizeans.

Timber extraction is also an important element in recent development initiatives for Southern Belize. In the mid-1990s, the Government of Belize granted at least seventeen concessions for logging on lands totaling 480,000 acres in the Toledo District. In 1997, the Government granted a permit to a foreign oil and gas exploration company to explore for oil reserves on almost 750,000 acres of land in the Toledo District (ILRC 1998). Hurricane Iris devastated much of the Toledo forests in 2001, in effect destroying the timber industry in Southern Belize. However, in March 2002, the Government approved a two-year permit to a US-based timber company to harvest hurricane-damaged trees of commercial value (with extensions "as long as the remaining salvage is marketable").[9] Clearly, the Government's vision for Southern Belize has been to accelerate the pace of development in a region that has always been regarded as the most economically depressed in the country. This has had serious implications for the protection of natural habitats and conservation of biodiversity in the region. Long-term economic growth and development in Toledo will depend on how well current and new development initiatives are able to balance the needs of people and the environment. Of special concern is how such initiatives will integrate the needs and capabilities of indigenous populations.

Development initiatives

Southern Belize is littered with the remains of defunct development projects. It is a common perception in the region that millions of dollars have been squandered implementing numerous projects without making substantial improvements to inhabitants' lives. This creates difficulties for current and future development attempts in the South. One interviewee who has worked in Southern Belize for many years describes this phenomenon:

> Many groups have focused or had focused on development work in Toledo. CARD [and] ESTAP …were all spending millions to make a difference in Toledo but in each case there is failure in having a sustained impact in improving the overall quality of life there. The health, education, and socioeconomic and other statistical indicators in the district still reflect appalling levels of poverty as compared to other parts of the country. Small pockets or groups might have benefited in the short-term from these projects but overall for the money spent hardly any of the intended goals have been realized. There is also a tendency for the project ideas to be conceived outside of Toledo with project implementers that are hardly in tune with or connected to the unique dynamics of the area. They [individuals and implementers] tend to work in the district with an agenda already externally packaged for how things should be done. Apparently there is very little sensitivity to local culture and little consultation with local stakeholders about what it is that they truly and deeply need in their development process. Development projects tend to be addressed in a piecemeal basis but there is no overall strategic planning and concerted efforts for development in the region. (Enriquez 2002)

Recently, the Government has been investing substantial resources in social and economic development projects and programs aimed at the South. Through the Environmental and Social Technical Assistance Project (ESTAP), the GOB adopted "a holistic approach to regional development" in the face of the Southern Highway's rehabilitation, through the development of a *Regional Development Plan for Southern Belize*.

The goals of this Regional Development Plan include the following: 1) enhance the quality of life of all peoples in the region; 2) ensure the efficient and sustainable allocation, and utilization of resources in the region; 3) promote and accelerate sustainable economic growth, and social development in the region; and, 4) increase and enhance the meaningful participation and contribution of the region's peoples in the overall development of Belize (GOB 2000c:1).

Implementation of this ambitious Plan now rests in the hands of the quasi-governmental Toledo Development Corporation (TDC) – created in early 2002. With limited resources and staff, how this nascent organization will fulfill its mandate is not yet apparent. The corporation's current Director, Ludwig Palacio, explains the role of TDC in Toledo:

> TDC will be run by a Board of Directors that will liaise with the Ministry of Economic Development, which is the Ministry that will work directly with the TDC. So there is significant Government interest. In fact, it was a vision of the Government to do it that way, because Toledo has been stagnant for so many years. This present Government has been giving it quite a bit of thought, of thinking to see what needs to be done in order to have the South develop at a quicker pace. I think that they are looking at the TDC to accomplish it – to address that particular problem of stagnation.

Another regional project Community-initiated Agriculture and Resource Development (CARD) is a seven year community-focused, sustainable livelihoods project initiated March 2000 under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives. The project seeks to "develop the productive potential of land use systems in a sustainable way and to ensure accessible support services to poor small holder families in the southern regions of Belize" (TIDE 2000). These types of initiatives affect resource management by influencing income-generation alternatives that relate to land use and natural resources.

Tourism

The only English speaking country in Central America with tremendous cultural and ecological diversity, Belize is a popular destination for foreign tourists. According to GOB's *Medium Term Economic Strategy 2003-2005*, "tourism is the single largest contributor to the country's economic growth and the largest foreign exchange earner for the country with one out of every four jobs in the tourism industry". As more traditional industries such as sugar, citrus and banana become less competitive on the world market it is likely that tourism will expand in importance. Additionally the GOB has made a commitment to develop and promote the tourism industry as a means to contribute to the Belizean economy.

According to the Belize Tourism Board Director Tracey Taegar, the Toledo District "offers the best of Belize in a one-stop-destination" with its significant marine and terrestrial natural resources and cultural heritage sites. Ecotourism is growing rapidly in the South and has the

potential to balance much needed economic development with sustainable land use and conservation. The private and non-profit sectors and several community initiatives are attempting to tap into the expanding market. However, foreign investors, with greater human and financial resources are better positioned to take advantage of the tourism market than rural communities. Additionally, the Belize Tourism Board is transitioning away from the small-scale ecotourism of the 1990s and toward large-scale, cruise ship and hotel tourism. This diverts investments from smaller, community-based efforts and increases pressure on archaeological parks, signature national parks, and island dive sites. Retirement immigration is also a significant force in Southern Belize tourism. Belize Tourism Board features a section on "*Retire in Belize*"; outlining the incentives, regulations and application process for those individuals looking to retire in Belize (BTB 2003b). Tourism expansion in the South is hampered by divisions between Government agencies, land-tenure insecurity, and territorial conflict with Guatemala.

Social issues

Territorial conflict

Guatemala claims the southern half of Belize's territory based on the colonial sovereignty that Spain held over the region via the Captaincy General of Guatemala (Shoman 1994). Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a series of small wars and treaties between Spain and Britain led to greater British control of Belize and its coastal territories. The British established permanent settlements in the area related to the rise of the logwood and mahogany industries. Following the fall of Spanish rule in the Americas, the ensuing Guatemalan governments continued to contest British claim to Belize. The Mexican and British governments officially recognized their southern and northern border, respectively, in 1893. However, the southern Belizean border remained contentious between the Guatemalan and the British governments. In addition to the Spanish colonial legacy, the Guatemalan government bases its claim to the territory on the fact that Britain never met the terms set in Article 7 of the 1853 Treaty of Belize in which Britain promised to construct a road linking Belize City to the Peten to facilitate cross border trade.

Territorial disputes between Britain/Belize and Guatemala continued to be heated nearly escalating to war several times between 1947 and 1977 (Shoman 1994). Each confrontation was marked by the build-up of Guatemalan troops on the border, which were removed after Britain deployed combat troops and the Royal Air Force to Belize.

These historical events have left much mistrust on both sides of the border and have politicized decision-making that involves border zones like the Toledo District. Over the past two years, Guatemala and Belize have been involved in diplomatic negotiations mediated by the Organization of American States (OAS) and facilitated by official representatives of Guatemala and Belize. The facilitators developed a series of proposals and presented these proposals to their respective governments in August 2002. These proposals sought to institute confidence-building measures between Belize and Guatemala and to resolve the territorial dispute. The proposals, which include a joint development fund to increase cross border trade and exchange between the two countries, may only be implemented after they have been put to a public referendum in Guatemala and Belize, and endorsed by the majority of electors in both countries. Government decisions affect Kekchi and Mopan Maya whose cultural groups span both nations. The GOB's support of projects and programs in Southern Belize carries many geopolitical implications.

Migration

The migration of agricultural labor from Honduras and Guatemala is more common in the South than elsewhere in Belize. The lack of "available" land to accommodate the influx of immigrants and farm workers increases pressure on national, leased and Indian Reservation lands. Clashes concerning land use practices frequently erupt between self-identified Belizeans and more recently arrived farm workers from Spanish-speaking Central American countries. Migrant and resident farm workers and fishermen from Guatemala and Honduras are perceived to hold different understandings of appropriate use of natural resources.

Social networks and civil society

In Belize, the general informality of working relations, tight integration of professional circles, significance of extended family, relatively small geographic and demographic size, and other factors lead to an active civil society and intricate social networks. In response to the challenges wrought by rapid and large-scale development, civil society organizations in Southern Belize have proliferated. In the realm of NGOs, different governing boards often consist of the same individuals or representative organizations. A person may serve on one board as a national forestry official and on another as an outside consultant. Family members, colleagues, and coworkers are often staff members of various organizations or serve on the board of other organizations. In this way, Government ministers, tourism operators, scientific researchers, elementary school teachers, and local hunters may know each other well and communicate on a first name basis. An individual with extensive knowledge of civil society organizations in Belize describes the make-up of Belizean civil society:

> In the evening time [high ranking government officials] go home to their villages and they're a part of local civil society. There is that kind of fluidity between different parts of the tripartite structure within Belize. It's inevitable. They will get involved with what interests them. You can look at this as a conflict of interests or as a situation where we have human resources constraints and we have to set up systems of governance so conflicts of interests don't happen but still utilize the fact that many people in Belize wear many hats at the same time. We go from meeting to meeting…. (Anonymous 2002).

If Belize is a country where everyone knows everyone, the Toledo District is a place where it seems that everyone works with everyone. The NGO landscape of Southern Belize is teeming with international NGOs, local conservation NGOs, gender advocacy groups, cultural organizations, and social clubs, among many others. The Maya have formed several NGOs that have been advocating for recognition of their aboriginal rights over lands and natural resources in the region. The Maya NGOs are also interested in making sure that "government projects are to a large extent practical and reflect the needs and priorities of communities" (Ch'oc 2002). Many environmental NGOs have been created to meet the growing environmental and development needs of the Toledo District by managing public and private lands for conservation. International NGOs, such as The Nature Conservancy,

have been flowing into the region to render support to these conservation initiatives. It is joked that there are more acronyms than people in the Toledo District. In this context, the "thickening of civil society" is associated with "fierce" competition to secure funding and inter-organizational "turf" wars.

Environmental issues

Biodiversity

The MMMAT SCP states that "some of the richest bioregions in the New World lie in the Toledo District of Southern Belize" (TIDE 2000). Converging factors such as high rainfall (three to four meters annually), a low population density, diverse terrestrial and marine ecosystems and a healthy population of many endangered species, result in a truly unique and important region. The region contains a multitude of plant and animal species. Southern Belize is home to the jaguar and the puma, manatee, and other rare and endangered species. The southern end of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System, the second largest coral reef system in the world, stretches into the Gulf of Honduras. Few areas in Central America can compare with the level of ecological integrity that the Toledo district currently enjoys, capturing the attention of a large contingency of donor agencies, natural resource managers and the international NGOs.

Watersheds and protected areas

Six principal watershed regions are delineated for Belize according to descriptions of principal watersheds from the USAID/GOB Environmental Water Quality Monitoring Program Final Report (Lee and Stednick 1995 in Boles 1999). These include the Northern Watershed Region, the Northeastern Watershed Region, the Central Watershed Region, the Southeastern Watershed Region, the Southwestern Watershed Region, and the Southern Watershed Region. The Toledo District contains most of the Southwestern Watershed Region and a portion of the Southern Watershed Region, both of which it shares with Guatemala. The Toledo portion of these two watershed regions is further broken down into eleven distinct subwatershed areas (see Map 4, p.38).

These subwatershed areas are: Deep River, Freshwater Creek, Golden Stream, Middle River, Moho River, Monkey River, Pine Ridge Creek, Rio Grande, Sarstoon River, Sennis River, and Temash River. The bulk of Belize's protected areas and reserves (see Map 5, p.39) are located within this agglomeration of subwatersheds.

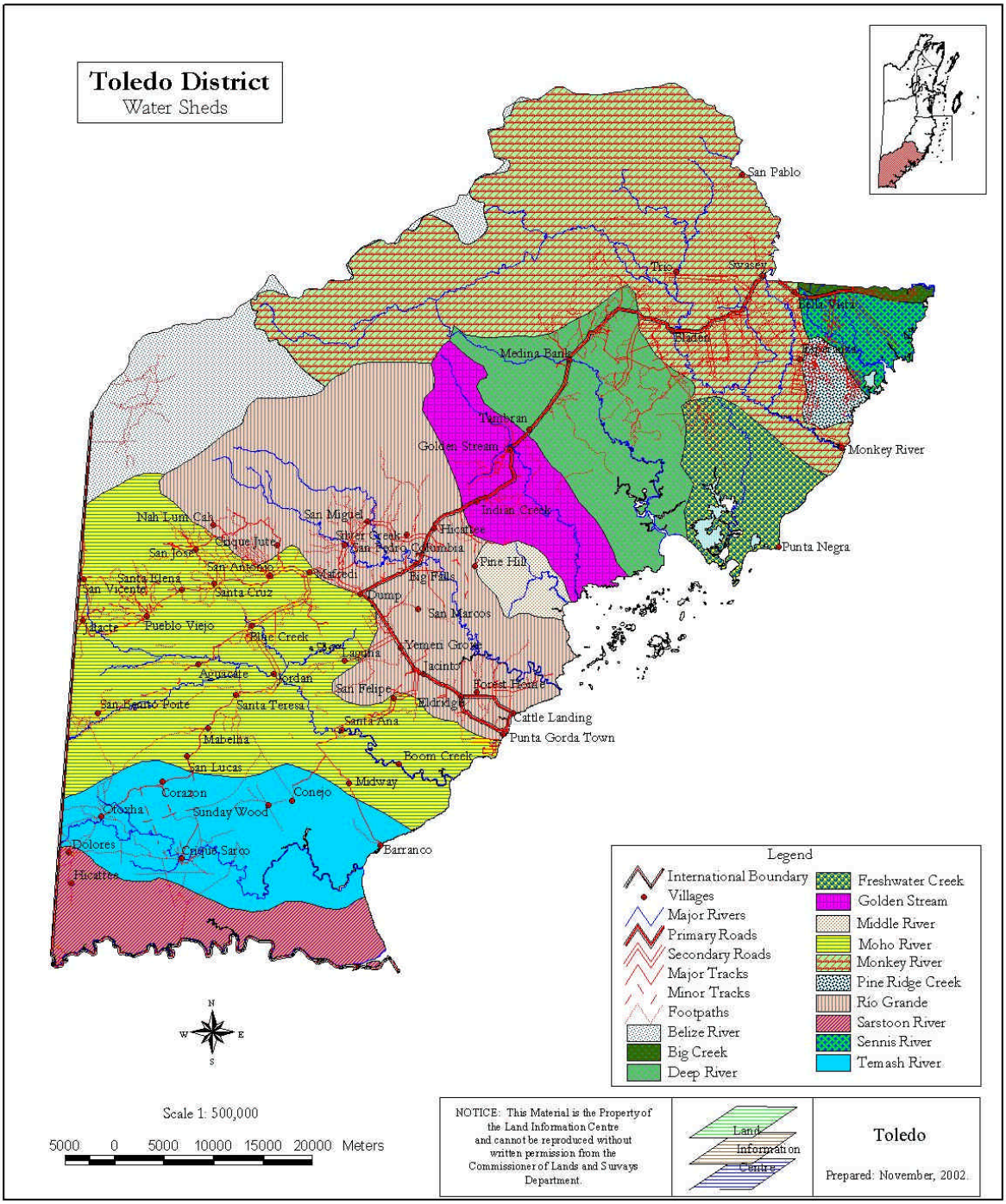
In Southern Belize, the preservation of the natural environment is an over-riding concern across sectors manifested in part by acres under protection. Over 715,000 acres of land in the Toledo District, is under some kind of protected area status (see Table 2, p.37). This includes three national parks, two wildlife sanctuaries, one nature reserve, seven forest reserves, two marine reserves, two archaeological sites, and a number of private reserves.

The Port Honduras Marine Reserve and the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve protect fragile coral reefs and other marine resources, and mangrove cayes. Forest Reserves in Southern Belize cover an estimated 350,000 acres (see Table 2, p.37). Private protected areas include Boden Creek Ecological Reserve and the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (the only officially registered private reserve in the region). Outside of officially declared protected areas and reserves, "[there] are little means to make an accurate calculation of how many pieces or blocks of land have been designated by their owners as 'conservation reserves;'" this is exacerbated by the tendency for developers to designate areas as such "due partly to the costs of drainage or leveling and partly as a sales attraction" (GOB 2000c: 130).

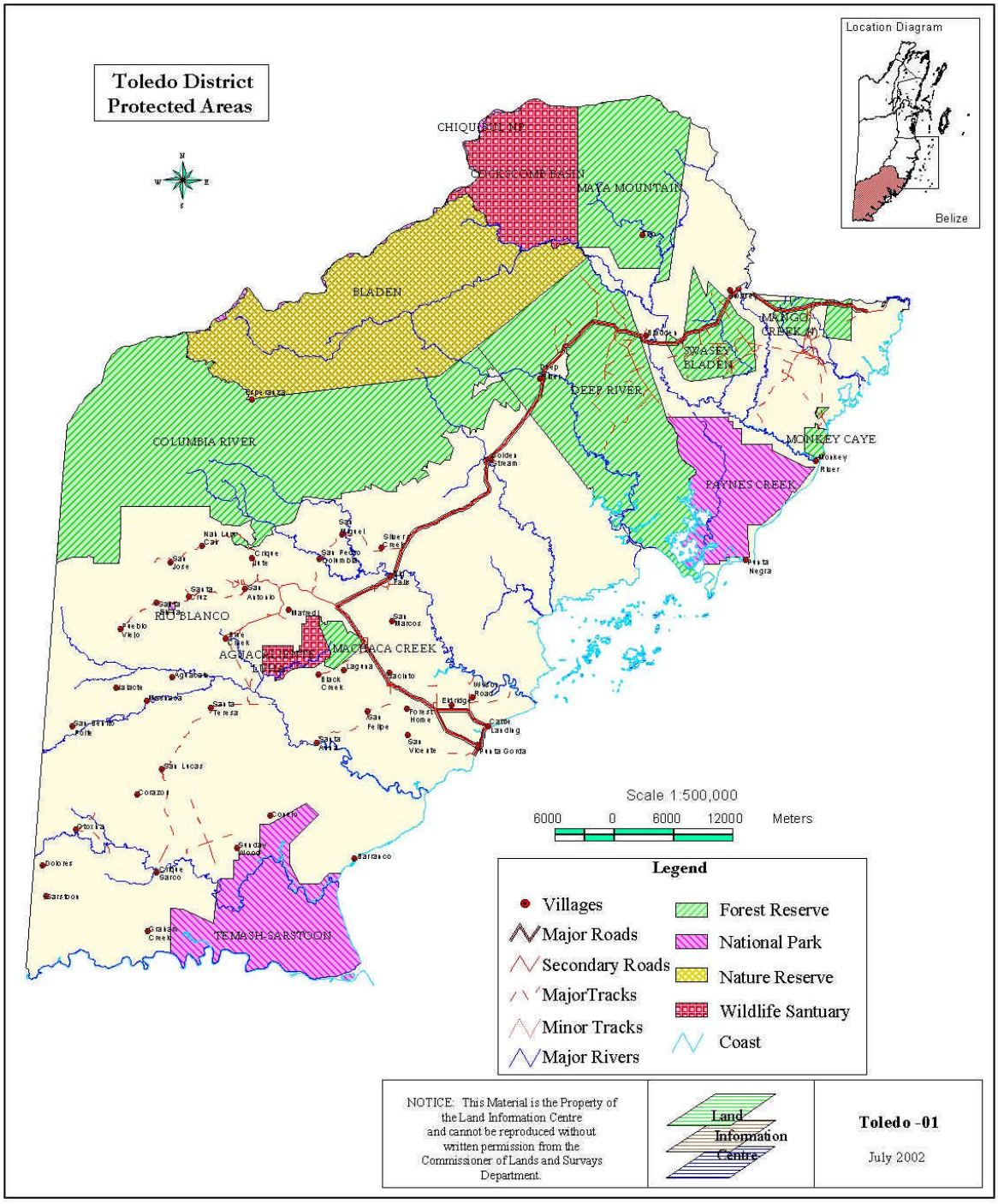
Table 2: Protected Areas of the Toledo District

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
National Parks				
Payne's Creek	1994	31,676	NPSA	Forest Department (management committee in place)
Rio Blanco	1994	100	NPSA	Rio Blanco Maya Association
Sarstoon-Temash	1994	41,898	NPSA	Forest Department (co-management with SATIIM in process)
Wildlife Sanctuaries				
Agua Caliente Luha	1998	5,492	NPSA	Forest Department
Cockscomb Basin	1997 extension	20,000	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society
Nature Reserves				
Bladen	1990	99,670	NPSA	Forest Department (with support from Bladen Consortium)
Forest Reserves				
Columbia River	1997	102,940	Forest Act	Forest Department
Deep River	1990	78,574	Forest Act	Forest Department
Machaca Creek	1998	3,756	Forest Act	Forest Department
Mango Creek	1989	35,549	Forest Act	Forest Department
Maya Mountain	1979	128,111	Forest Act	Forest Department
Monkey Caye	1996	1,460	Forest Act	Forest Department
Swasey Bladen	1989	14,779	Forest Act	Forest Department
Marine Reserves				
Port Honduras	2001	100,378	Fisheries Act	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment
Sapodilla Cayes	1996	33,401	Fisheries Act	Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism & Empowerment
Archaeological Sites				
Nim Li Punit	1995	121	AMMA	Archaeology Department
Lubaantun	1995	40	AMMA	Archaeology Department
Private Reserves				
Golden Stream Corridor Preserve	1998	9,554		Ya'axche' Conservation Trust
Boden Creek Ecological Reserve		7,600		Belize Lodge & Excursions

Source: Belize Forest Department (2003)



Map 4: Watersheds of the Toledo District



Map 5: Protected Areas of the Toledo District

Pollution

Despite the tendency of environmental organizations to paint Southern Belize as "pristine," the region is "impacted by pollution, unsanitary liquid and solid waste disposal practices, and increased use of agro-chemicals, speculative development, deforestation, uncontrolled fires and hunting" (GOB 2000c:139). The banana industry depends heavily on pesticides and fertilizers. While expansion of the citrus and banana industry has leveled off in the Toledo District, aquaculture is rapidly increasing: "Eight of Belize's fourteen incorporated and licensed shrimp farms are located in the southern region [holding title to around 30,000 acres of land] …approximately 9,250 acres of which are potentially suitable for production use" (GOB 2000c:46). It is likely that such human activity is responsible for the drastic reduction of coastal mangroves in recent years (Murray et al. 2002). Effluents from agriculture and aquaculture severely impact coastal communities and water quality. Aquaculture to date is largely unregulated yet "...has reached a point where the GOB needs to play a more tangible role, not only in terms of conventionally regulating issues, such as licensees and permits but also in relation to strategic analysis of the constraints of the sub-sector, and articulating a clear and definitive path for its future development" (GOB 2002b).

Hurricanes

Belize lies within the hurricane belt of Central America. In the past three years, four major storms struck Belize causing significant damage to tourist facilities, utilities, roads, bridges, and houses, as well as agricultural and fisheries export earnings. Southern Belize is gradually recovering from the devastation caused by Hurricane Iris in 2001. Estimates of the impact include damage costs over US$250 million and 13,000 homeless including 62 percent of the rural population (Monk and Penados 2002:7). In the Toledo District, the hurricane caused extensive damage to rural villages, forests, and the agricultural sector. Approximately 310,000 hectares of terrestrial ecosystems were severely damaged in southern Belize; "estimates range from 50-100 years before mature tree species once again dominate the landscape" (Monk and Penados 2002). In the transition period between relief aid and development assistance, rural communities depend increasingly on their local resource base.

Logging

Despite the setback to timber resources as a result of Hurricane Iris, the Toledo District contains extensive forest cover and commercially viable timber. However, unsustainable management and logging activities as well as a "questionable" leasing policy pose serious threats to the sustainability of the District's timber resources. Commercial timber harvests in neighboring South Stann Creek are already declining due to unsustainable practices (GOB 2000c:140). As of 2002, the Columbia Forest Reserve Management Plan was the only management plan in the District. Short term leases and lack of management plans provide little incentives for sustainable forest management. According to the ESTAP Regional Development Plan:

> There is considerably more to sustainable management of forest resources than constructing license plans and counting timber yields…. Sustainable management of forests also depends on development of collateral programs designed to promote plantation forestry, agro-forestry, silviculture, reforestation; better political awareness about the value of forests, particularity with regard to soil and water conservation; enforcement of existing legislation; and development of forest's recreational and tourism potential. (GOB 2000c:140)

Chapter Three: The Struggle for Land Tenure and Resource Control in Southern Belize

> The Belizean test of multiculturality lies squarely within the scope of state-local debates over natural resource conservation – Clark (2000b:28)

Introduction

The interplay of politics, community rights, and the control of territory and resources sets the stage for both opportunities and challenges to resource management in Southern Belize. While minority ethnic groups in Belize struggle for recognition at the national level, the Maya people of Toledo present the most outspoken and organized call for rights to natural resources. The 15,000 Mopan and Kekchi Maya form the largest demographic body in the region with 60 percent of the District's total population (Shal 2002a). The relationship of Maya communities to the land is embedded in their livelihood systems and culture. As the example of the Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) will show, large Government land holdings such as National Parks and Forest Reserves coincide with communities having longstanding cultural and historic claims to the land but no legal title. Indeed, the presence of sizable populations without officially recognized land tenure is the most pressing social concern in the Toledo District. These issues are pervasive throughout Southern Belize and reappear in subsequent chapters of this report. They are important forces affecting the interest and ability of indigenous communities to collaborate with other groups in natural resource management efforts in Belize.

Background

The ancient Maya lived in the 400,000 square kilometer area that is now southern Mexico, Guatemala, northern Honduras, El Salvador, and Belize. Maya civilization evolved in complexity from 1800 B.C. to attain its greatest cultural achievements between 250 A.D. and

1000 A.D. Due to uncertain causes, Maya society began to change rapidly by the middle of the 10th century A.D. The overall population shrank dramatically and numerous large settlements moved to other areas. At the time of European exploration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many Maya still occupied what eventually became Belize (Shoman 1994). The eventual arrival of European colonizers severely disrupted indigenous populations throughout the Caribbean coast and interior of Central America. The appropriation of territory and marginalization of indigenous populations continued through nineteenth and twentieth century transitions to national independence and into the present. The Maya, transformed by many challenges to their culture, currently live throughout parts of Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, and Belize.

Contentious debate surrounds the question of whether or not the Maya abandoned the southern region of Belize as a result of the conquest efforts of the Spanish colonizers prior to British settlement in the area now known as Belize. The issue of possible Maya abandonment has been a crucial point in determining the validity of claims to aboriginal rights over these lands. Regardless of the historical circumstances, the Kekchi Maya and the Mopan Maya are now firmly entrenched over a vast area of the Toledo District and the southern portion of the Stann Creek District. By the mid-1900s, the British colonial government established ten Maya Indian Reservations in the Toledo District in order to make land available for residential, farming and subsistence needs.

Currently, sixteen Maya communities, representing 51 percent of the Toledo Maya[10] population, reside within reservations. At least twenty villages lay outside reservation boundaries (TMCC and TAA 1997). The 1992 Belize National Lands Act, which replaced the Crown Lands Act after national independence in 1981, does not recognize these reservations (GOB 2000c). According to Belize law, the Maya do not have legal rights even to the land within the reservations (TMCC and TAA 1997). The lack of legal land tenure is a factor in the marginalization of these communities.

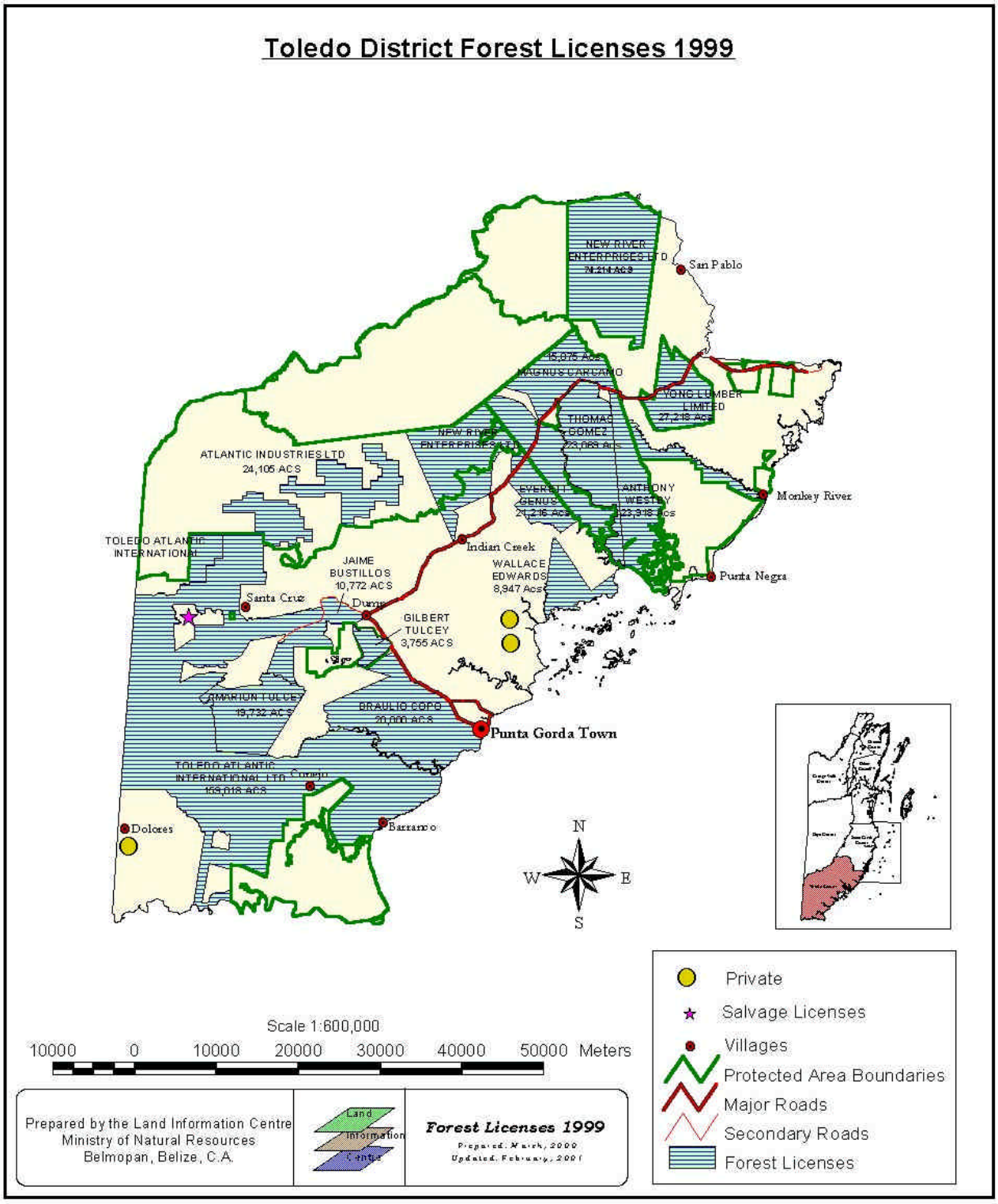
Nearly all Maya oscillate between cash and subsistence economies (Wilk 1991); however, many productive activities are dependent on resources to which they have no Government-sanctioned rights. Lack of control over productive assets contributes to poverty among the

Toledo Maya. According to Government economic assessments, the Maya represent the poorest sector of the national population (GOB 1998). This is more pronounced among the Maya of the Toledo District with 65.8 percent labeled as "poor;" 30.4 percent of that category is also designated as "extremely poor," existing on resources sufficient only for basic subsistence. Consequently, the incidence of poverty among the Maya is twice the national average (GOB 1998).

In an effort to reduce poverty in the southern region, the GOB decided that "new and special approaches and measures must be taken to assist the south in catching up" (GOB 1998:1). The most prominent intervention has been the Southern Highway Rehabilitation Project, which traverses the entire southern region of Belize. With the advent of this improved major highway, Maya leaders expressed concerns in the early 1990s that the new road would further marginalize them from the general populace if particular economic and social conditions were not urgently addressed by the Government. Due to their insecure land tenure situation, a principal concern was that the improved highway would prompt a wave of land speculation.

Another series of events exacerbated Maya fears. In the past decade, the GOB granted at least seventeen concessions for logging on lands totaling 480,000 acres in Toledo (see Map 6, p.46). In 1997, the Government issued a permit to a foreign oil and gas exploration company to probe for oil reserves on almost 750,000 acres of land in the District (ILRC 1998). In response, the Maya began to advocate for recognition of their rights over lands and natural resources, citing their longstanding and historical occupation of the land as justification for their claims. The GOB balked at the Maya demands for land tenure and natural resource rights. Garnering support from national and international NGOs, research institutions, and attorneys, Toledo Maya leaders raised the ante and advocated their cause more vigorously at national and international levels.

On November 29, 1996, Maya organizations initiated an action in the Supreme Court of Belize that challenged the granting of logging concessions. In the lawsuit, the Maya asserted rights over lands and resources that are included in the concessions and sought to have these concessions enjoined and declared in violation of Maya rights (Anaya 1998).



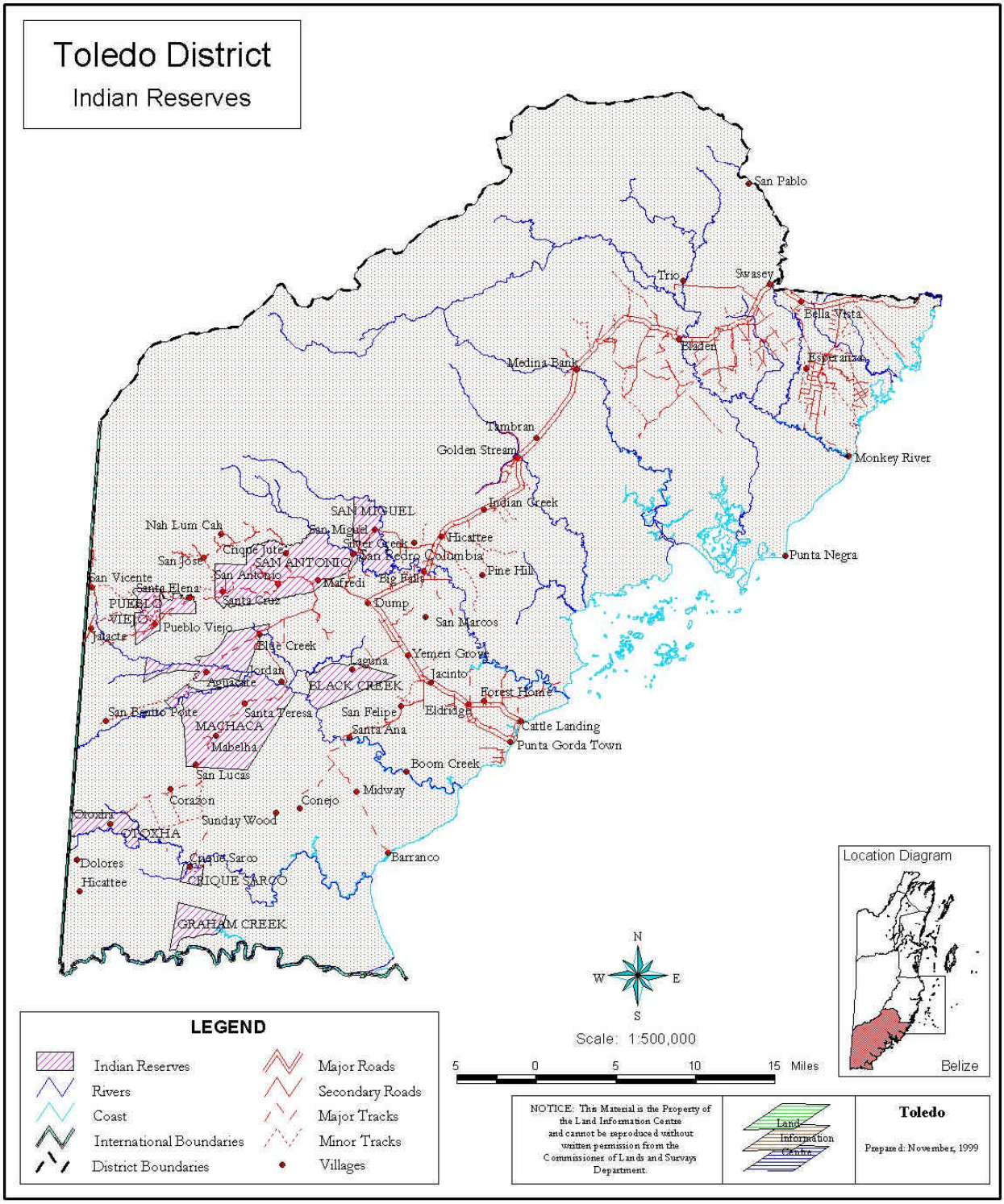
Map 6: Toledo District Forest Licenses

The Maya leadership also filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on August 10, 1998, in an effort to compel the GOB to recognize indigenous land rights and to challenge the legality of logging and oil concessions in the Toledo District. The conflict remains unresolved despite the ratification of several tentative agreements concerning resource use and indigenous rights by Maya leaders and the GOB.

Roads and Reservations

Opposition to the Southern Highway Rehabilitation Project pressured its primary funder, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), to abide by the Bank's policy of not constructing roads in contested zones (Lockwood 1997). Responding to concerns that the improvement of the Southern Highway would create environmental degradation and exacerbate social and economic problems, particularly for the Toledo Maya, the IADB approved US$2.6 million for the creation of an Environmental and Social Technical Assistance Project (ESTAP). The Project formulated a Regional Development Plan (RDP) for the South Stann Creek and Toledo Districts. For undisclosed reasons ESTAP dissolved in 1999 three years earlier than expected (TMCC 1999). Consequently, the Government created the Southern Region Development Corporation (SRDC) to fill the void left by ESTAP. After the Toledo District emerged as the focus area for the project, the SRDC transformed into another government-owned enterprise the Toledo Development Corporation (TDC).

The TDC is charged with executing the original RDP. The Plan specifies a set of development programs to complement the improvement of the highway. It identifies particular steps to mitigate potential negative social, economic, and environmental impacts arising from the substantial civil works project (GOB 2000c). Through these projects, the Government expects TDC to become the aggregated voice of Toledo. This arrangement enables potential investors to interact with a singular, representative body. The Government envisions that the Plan along with the Southern Highway Rehabilitation Project will accelerate the pace of development in a region that has always been regarded as the most economically depressed in the country.



Map 7: Toledo District Indian Reserves

Approximately one-third of the part of the Toledo District subject to the RDP is considered to be National Land, and is estimated to consist of 336,000 acres (GOB 2000c). National Land (including lease-land) is governed by the 1992 National Lands Act and is one of three designations that make up the Government's National Estate, which is administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRECI). Forest Reserves and National Parks comprise the remaining two categories. According to the Government, National Land constitutes public land "that is essentially a passive and un-managed resource" (GOB 2000c:91).

The Maya Reservations in the Toledo District represent the greatest exception to the conventional forms of land tenure in Belize. Approximately 70,000 acres of the Toledo District is officially classified as "Indian Reservation" (Emch 2003) (see Map 7, p.48). The reservations, first established by Britain under the Crown Lands Act, designated block possession of landholdings for the Kekchi and Mopan peoples of Southern Belize (Clark 2000b). The first reservation—a parcel of land measuring two square miles—was established in 1896 at San Antonio, Toledo District (GOB 2000c). Establishment ceased in 1962 with the extension of the Rio Blanco and Pueblo Viejo reservations. Despite the declaration of Indian Reservations, ownership of the land remains out of local control. "Reservation land is not owned communally by the Maya; the Government owns it. This system of tenure makes land ownership among the Maya on reservations impossible. Thus, national authorities have the power to eliminate Maya rights to this land" (Emch 2003:123, references omitted).

Maya organizations and the GOB fiercely dispute the legal status and function of Maya Reservations. The only statutory rules governing the reservations, adopted in 1924, have never been revised (GOB 2000c). The RDP states that the successor to the Crown Lands Act, the National Lands Act, "makes no mention of Indian Reservations as such, only referring to "reserves" which may or may not be applicable" (ESTAP 2000:127). Opposing this view, the Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC), a NGO that represents the Mopan and Kekchi of the District, claims that these reservations continue to exist under the laws of Belize.

The reservations, however, only include roughly half of contemporary Maya villages that exist today (IACHR 2000). The RDP also states that according to regulations the occupation of reservation lands should be at the discretion of the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys of the Ministry of Natural Resources. At present, *de facto* authority over occupancy resides with the village alcaldes[11] (a traditional, community-elected leader) and Village Council Chairmen (GOB 2000c). The ten existing reservations now encompass sixteen communities with an approximate population of 6,500 Maya (IADB 2001). The IADB Land Management Program Project Report (2001) states:

> There is negligible productive land available for expansion within the reservations and many additional Maya villages are now located outside the boundaries established under the Crown Lands Act. Based on recent estimates, Maya farmers occupy over 25,000 ha. of unleased national lands…
>
> While independent opinions vary, there is consensus that the reservation system has deteriorated to the point where confidence in the system has been lost, owing in part to the absence of any official administrative structure. To date, there is no formal policy on tenure of reservation land.

At least twenty Maya villages reside outside reservation boundaries. This is not a recent or unexpected phenomenon. In the *Maya Atlas* (1997) the TMCC and the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA) declare:

> The reserves were never physically demarcated nor defined in the country's constitution as the communal property of the Maya. The reservations constructed by the British to subjugate the Maya were not honored by the Maya. Many villages were constructed outside of the reservations without the government's approval, as the Maya regard all of these lands as their own, the home of their forefathers, who built magnificent temples to manifest their presence.

Maya Advocacy

Thirty-six Maya villages located throughout the Toledo District lay within or in close proximity to the lands on which the GOB has granted logging concessions. These concessions include forests around villages that are used by Maya for religious purposes as well as for farming, hunting, and gathering. According to Valentino Shal (2002a) President of the TMCC, the paving of the Southern Highway and the planned construction of a new

highway to Guatemala "will provide easier access to outsiders to claim land in the area" and is thus "an additional concern to the security of the land presently under Maya occupation." Anaya, an attorney with the Indian Law Resource Center, states that, from the standpoint of the Maya, "the issue is not simply one of environmental degradation; *it is more fundamentally one of ownership and control over the lands and resources at stake*" (1998; emphasis added). The current core interests and concerns of the Maya organizations confirm this assertion.

Five major NGOs claim to represent the Maya of the Toledo District. The Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC), the Kekchi Council of Belize (KCB), the Toledo Maya Women's Council (TMWC), and the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA) initially arose to address social and economic needs, cultural and gender concerns, and the lack of political representation. The rising importance of land availability and tenure necessitated the incorporation of an overtly political slant to the missions of these organizations. The politicization of land in Southern Belize prompted these Maya organizations to form the Maya Leaders' Alliance (MLA) in 1999. The following analysis discusses the interests of each of these organizations.

Toledo Maya Cultural Council

In 1982, a group of Mopan and Kekchi Toledo alcaldes established the TMCC as a response to the Government's appropriation and distribution of land without consultation of Maya communities. The men also feared what they perceived as the GOB's actions to erode the traditional alcalde system of governance in favor of the newer nationally-endorsed governance system of village councils (TMCC and TAA 1997). The leaders intended the TMCC to act as a representative body for cooperation among the Toledo Maya in order to promote unity and mutual understanding and to search for solutions to shared economic, social and educational problems. As conflict over land escalated, the TMCC grew increasingly concerned about the precarious land tenure situation of Maya communities. Response to this concern evolved into a primary objective of the TMCC: to ensure that the Maya continue to live in what they consider to be their ancestral territory (TMCC and TAA 1997). Since Mopan Maya and Kekchi Maya face similar threats, six representatives from

each group have been elected to the TMCC Executive Committee. As the Kekchi population is nearly double the Mopan population, this arrangement has altered power relations between the two groups.

Kekchi Council of Belize

Despite the efforts of pan-Maya organizations, long-standing tensions between Mopan and Kekchi people led to the existence of single-ethnicity advocacy groups. The KCB formed as a splinter organization of the TMCC (Wainwright 1998). After a series of community consultations, the KCB was incorporated in 1992 by a group of Kekchi leaders who felt it imperative for a legally established representative body to address the concerns of the Kekchi community in the Toledo District. The Council is a non-profit, non-religious, and non-partisan association that collaborates with governmental and non-governmental organizations to improve the living conditions of the Kekchi people by conducting leadership skills training, engaging in economic development projects, and documenting indigenous knowledge. The KCB's mission is to promote the enhancement and preservation of the Kekchi language and culture and to promote interracial and interethnic harmony in Belize and elsewhere (MLA 2003). According to KCB President Gregorio Ch'oc, the Council's primary interests include protecting and preserving all ancient and contemporary indigenous heritage including folkways, territory, monuments, and antiquities. In addition, the KCB attempts to make certain that development projects "are to a large extent practical and reflect the needs and priorities of the Maya communities" (Ch'oc 2002). Ever inclusive, the KCB programmatic portfolio now covers a broad range of aspects, including political and watershed management issues.

Toledo Maya Women's Council

Attention to interethnic divisions among the Toledo Maya contributes to the masking of other important community issues (Wainwright 1998). To respond to gender concerns, in particular, village-level women's groups formed the TMWC in 1997. Pulcheria Teul provided the impetus to organize the Council, prompted by her election to the Belize National Indigenous Council in the same year. The TMWC may be the most broad-based of all Maya organizations; its annual meetings host two representatives from every women's

group in Maya villages throughout Toledo. TMWC serves as a support organization for these groups. Based on anticipated social changes in the District and the realization that women will not be able to "move ahead" without training, it seeks to address gender issues and economic well-being through leadership training, marketing, communication, and administrative and business management skills (P. Teul 2002). The TMWC is also linked to direct advocacy through the mediation of domestic violence cases. Limited funding and staffing (Teul is the only full-time, volunteer staff member) force the TMWC to maintain the delicate balance between its own institutional strengthening and the facilitation of projects. The Council expands its capacity and impact by working closely with the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment and (SAGE) training with the Community-initiated, Agricultural and Rural Development project (CARD). Through these endeavors as well as its focus on women's livelihood concerns, the TMWC affects the issues of land rights and resource control in Southern Belize. The inclusion of the TMWC in the MLA is imperative for the full representation of community concerns given strong cultural barriers to women's advocacy and a distinct, gendered division of labor in many Maya communities.

Toledo Alcaldes Association

In 1992, the same year that the KCB emerged from the TMCC, the alcaldes from thirty-six Maya communities gathered to create the TAA. Incorporated into the GOB in 1994, the Association serves as the legal representative of Maya communities (TMCC and TAA 1997). The fact that each village contributes one elected alcalde means that the Association consists of a Kekchi majority. The TAA strives to preserve the traditional leadership structure and strengthen the role of alcaldes in community decision-making. These goals entail educating both its constituency and the national Government about the function and significance of the alcalde system. The TAA faces difficulty in realizing its objective because it must contend with other Maya organizations for legitimacy in representing indigenous concerns.

Maya Leader's Alliance

The shared goal of securing land claims forced Maya organizations to recognize the fragmentation of Maya leadership and take action to alter this reality. The TAA, TMCC, KCB, and TMWC assembled the MLA in 1999. Commonly dubbed "Maya Government," the Alliance formed for multiple reasons including the monitoring of development projects and the promotion of languages, traditions, knowledge, and skills that comprise Maya cultural heritage. More importantly, however, the Alliance sprang from the need for Maya leadership to collectively negotiate with the GOB for recognition of ancestral resource rights in Southern Belize. Continuing where the comprehensive documentation initiative of the *Maya Atlas*[12] left off, the MLA recently began implementation of the Maya Co-Management Project. In collaboration with the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)[13] and the Canadian International Development Agency, the project seeks to examine Maya land use and occupancy in Southern Belize in order to develop a land management system that asserts indigenous control and ownership of ancestral lands and resources. Geographer Joel Wainwright explains that projects like this encourage a more-unified Maya voice; "[B]ecause the case for land claims rests on indigenous rights—which are equated with being Maya—and not Mopan or Kekchi identities *per se*, in most public discourses leaders stress Maya identity, or claim to speak on behalf of 'the Maya people'" (1998:38).

Convoluted Interests and Competing Claims

A façade of unified parties and convergent interests hides the fissures in relations within and between indigenous groups and the GOB. The creation of an enabling environment for economic growth and development continues to be the main thrust of the GOB's strategy to address social problems and reduce the impact of poverty in Southern Belize (GOB 1998). In the National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan 1998–2003, the GOB outlines its priorities as employment/livelihoods (including access to land), health, education, the strengthening of civil society institutions, and the support of "decision-making processes based on partnerships between central Government, NGOs and local organizations such as Town Boards, Village Councils and other social groups" (GOB 1998:8).

At first glance, the GOB's plans for the southern region appear to be laudable and similar to the interests of the Maya organizations. After all, the Maya are also seeking to improve their living conditions and access to land. But skepticism about governmental intervention abounds in Southern Belize. According to Gregorio Ch'oc, President of the KCB:

> [The GOB continues] to mortgage the future of Belize on development that is ill-conceived. The environment is paying a high price. Over the last 30 years, about 60 million dollars have been spent in the Toledo District. You can go down here and see what has happened and ask what the hell has happened to the money. (2002b)

The Maya claim

Maya and GOB positions diverge on the issue of legitimacy in access to land. Based on the research of US anthropologists like Richard Wilk and Grant Jones, Maya representatives have submitted reports to substantiate their claim that the contemporary Toledo Maya are the descendants of Maya subgroups that inhabited the territory at least since European exploration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Anaya 1998). Government attorney Jose Cardona of the MNRECI has disputed these accounts with counterclaims portraying the Toledo Maya as immigrant groups with no ancestral linkages to the territory that predate British settlement (Anaya 1998). Put simply, the GOB sees itself as the rightful owner of all national land, including the Maya Reservations, in the southern region. Such a perspective relegates the Toledo Maya as squatters on Government property. Studies challenge this perspective by suggesting that the Maya Reservations actually formalized block land ownership for the Kekchi and the Mopan. Control over these designated zones of traditional forest use granted communities legal recourse in village/state conflicts over the management of these areas (Clark 2000b). To further complicate the matter, Maya advocacy organizations have demanded more than mere title to reservation land; they have pressed for a "Maya Homeland." According to Wainwright (1998), the TMCC has issued three distinct positions on behalf of the Maya claim since 1995:

1. The creation of a separate Maya state within Belize, including the creation of a Maya flag, and other tropes of Maya nationalism.

2. The creation of a Maya Homeland, which would seek to secure agricultural land-rights within the framework of a broadly Maya governance system, without abandoning their privileges as Belizean nationals.

3. The creation of a Maya Lands Administration Program (MALAP), which would advocate the creation of a new Maya Council that would have authority over all Maya villages and common lands (plus Reservation lands which are not claimed by any village) in Toledo. This proposal emphasizes that the MALAP-run area would not be autonomous from the Belizean nation in any sense, although land use decisions would be the purview of the Maya Council.

The *Maya Atlas*, however, states that the creation of a Homeland under the status of a "Freehold Title" is the ultimate goal of the Maya (TMCC and TAA 1997). According to the TMCC and the TAA, the goal is to gain "legal security for our ancestral land; we want to establish a homeland that will also be an environmentally protected area under the management of the Maya" (TMCC and TAA 1997:1).

According to Valentino Shal, the director of the TMCC, the GOB has never taken a concerted effort "to take a good look at the [Maya] land tenure issues" (2002). In fact, to date, the GOB has approached the Maya land tenure issue from the 1992 National Lands Act framework for land allocation. As previously indicated, "national lands" encompass all public lands (other than Forest Reserves and National Parks). From the Government's perspective, since the Act does not recognize the Maya Reservations, these lands are officially viewed as public lands. The Act states, "The Minister [of Natural Resources] may grant leases of national lands on such terms and conditions as he thinks fit and may likewise renew leases on such terms and for such periods as to him may seem proper" (GOB 2000a:9).

Leasing parcels of contested land is a long-standing Government initiative that exposes divisions within Maya communities. Government discussion on the privatization of reservations began in the 1940s (Emch 2003). Active de-reservation continued through the 1980s. This caused residents of reservations to find alternative ways to secure land.

Wilk (1991) explains that many farmers started to plant cacao in reserves in order to develop land rights. The threat of de-reservation even led to the formation of new organizations. "In 1985, a group of farmers from 10 villages formed a group called the Toledo Cocoa Growers Association (TCGA). Their main goal is to establish cacao on leasehold land and eventually gain title to that land" (Emch 2003:124).

In 1998, the IADB allocated funds to ESTAP for the purpose of resolving land issues in Toledo. ESTAP learned that many Maya communities favor private land leases rather than communal lands (Van Ausdal 2001). Since the 1980s, communal lands have become increasingly privatized through local land tenure rules. This process intensified under the 1992 National Lands Act. The appeal of leases results from many villagers' desire to access credit, to retain land claims during village absences, and to protect their farms through buffer zones. The leases create tensions in the Maya communities between those that favor privatization and those that prefer the traditional communal system.

The realization of Maya discord on the issue reveals a fundamental deviation from positions posited by Maya organizations. Although initially disputed by the TMCC, the Council did eventually acknowledge the shift within their constituency (Van Ausdal 2001). This contradicts the claim made in the *Maya Atlas* that "The Homeland proposal has the support of all the villages in the Toledo District" (TMCC and TAA 1997:8). Such contradictions bring into question Maya organizations' pronouncements of unanimous grassroots support for their struggle to achieve recognition of indigenous land and resource rights. Furthermore, the division strikes at the relationship between Maya organizations and communities. A senior official of a Maya organization notes:

> [There is a] lack of coordination between communities and [Maya] NGOs. Leaders make the decisions, without getting appropriate input from the alcaldes and communities. This includes the… TMCC. These NGOs make decisions that won't suit the whole district… [The Maya] NGOs in Punta Gorda[14] don't know what's happening in the villages. They don't live there, and don't know the problems and needs of the community. (Anonymous 2002)

The fear of setting precedents for indigenous rights is one reason for the GOB's reluctance to concede to Maya demands for legal dominion. Due to the nation's ethnic diversity, granting privileges to one group may trigger others groups such as Garifuna, East Indian, and Yucatec Maya to press for control of national lands. In contrast, Toledo Maya organizations believe that their case is unique and warrants special consideration. This disagreement raises the issue of divergent assumptions and understandings regarding the control of land in Toledo. Contrary to the GOB's view of land tenure, the issue for Maya advocates is not congruous with the acquisition of "property." Gregorio Ch'oc clarifies: "This isn't about a possession of resources; this is about a basic right. It isn't about 'taking' land but about land that is already being used" (Ch'oc 2002a).

The Government's stake

Although the Toledo District has been the most economically depressed region of the country, the area is abundant in natural capital including timber and mineral deposits (GEF 2000a). Consequently, exploitation of those resources plays a key role in the GOB's national economic development and poverty elimination strategies. These resource rich areas, however, straddle the land over which the Toledo Maya assert aboriginal rights. In their petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (see below), the TMCC claims "that the State has violated the Rights of the Toledo Maya indigenous communities in relation to their lands *and natural resources*" (IACHR 2000; emphasis added). Thus, the conflict goes beyond mere control or possession of territory; control over resources such as timber, petroleum deposits, and biodiversity is also at stake. It has therefore behooved the GOB to ignore Maya claims and to continue perceiving itself as the rightful owner of national land in the Toledo District. Cardona, representing the GOB's position, asserts that at one time "most of southern Belize was privately owned lands but through escheatment, lapse in leases, and acquisition of land in lieu of taxes, most of the Toledo District is now National Lands" (in Anaya 1998). As previously mentioned, the GOB effectively and conveniently considers the Toledo Maya as trespassers on Government property. The following discussion outlines some of the major economic and development interests that the GOB has at stake in Southern Belize.

Land as a political tool

Land and development rights are routinely used by officials in Government to reward partisan supporters and punish opponents (Duffy 2000). This abuse is so ingrained into the Belizean political culture that it occurs blatantly and without recourse. As a consequence land allocation, tenure, use, and management often have damaging social, economic and environmental consequences. As a political tool, land-related decisions can further short-term objectives, giving little consideration to long-term benefits for the people or the natural resource base. The People's United Party, now in its second five-year term, had been committed by its 1998 Manifesto to de-politicize land, but no significant progress was made towards achieving this goal. This situation continues despite a loan from the IADB in 2001 to implement a Land Management Program intended "to improve the enabling environment for private and public sector development through enhanced land security, effective land markets, and the promotion of a coherent land policy framework contributing to sustainable development and efficient use of land resources" (IADB 2001:1). Furthermore, at least up to 2001, there has been little effort on the part of the Government to consult with civil society on land issues (BAS 2002b).

Timber resources

Southern Belize contains the bulk of the nation's timber resources. Its seven forest reserves contain extensive stands of valuable timber species such as pine, mahogany, teak and gmelina. Harvests on Government lands dominate routine timber production in Toledo. Until Hurricane Iris in 2001, total hardwood extraction intensified under the perception that the Toledo District continues to harbor a large supply of natural timber resources (ESTAP 2000). At least seventeen licenses totaling about 480,000 acres have been issued for logging in the southern region (ILRC 1998) (see Map 6, p.46). This figure does not include numerous small-scale timber leases. The southern logging industry is one of the largest direct and indirect employers. Maya villagers, residing near the various logging operations, comprise the industry's primary labor force (GOB 2000c). While wage labor provides some financial benefits, the GOB has rarely consulted Maya communities before granting licenses in their area.

Despite this practice, the Chief Forest Officer Oswaldo Sabido recently began to work with the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment (SAGE)[15] to develop a mechanism for community consultation before issuing licenses. This significant sign of progress reveals collaboration between local advocacy NGOs as well as the public servant legally responsible for upholding forest laws and recommending timber licenses to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment. This combined effort originated from direct community input in a 1998 Logging Review Committee. A Maya representative on the Committee recommended that communities should be consulted before issuing permits. In addition, he suggested that Maya leaders should monitor logging concessions in the absence of a functioning mechanism to do so. According to Chief Forest Officer Sabido:

> [In] dialogue with and discussion on this with SAGE, it was decided that they would assist us by being the facilitator for community consultation with prospective licensees before the licenses are issued. And that is working reasonably well. It still has some glitches, moving a little slowly, but on a whole it's taking us where we want to go. A lot of people who are used to decision-making are used to doing things on the "fast-track." In Toledo especially when dealing with communities you need to take things one step at a time. (2002)

Oil reserves

In December 1997, the MNRECI granted an oil exploration license to a US/Guatemalan oil company, Compania Petrolera del Atlantico (Wainwright 1998; GEF 2000a). The license covers 749,222 acres of land in the lowland Toledo District (IACHR 2000). The prospects for oil extraction are realistic. Within the region, both Guatemala and Mexico produce substantial quantities of oil on geological formations similar to those found in the karstic hills of Southern Belize. Industry practice and laws in Belize dictate that a contract for petroleum operations guarantees oil extraction rights. These rights may last up to 25 years if commercially viable oil deposits are located. The TMCC claims that in granting the oil exploration license the GOB "placed a substantial portion of Maya traditional territory in a potential position of long term oil development and production activities without consulting the Maya people" (IACHR 2000).

Shrimp farming

Leasing land in Southern Belize for aquaculture also generates revenue for the GOB and frustration for indigenous communities. The industry is expanding at an astounding rate of over 160 percent per annum in Belize (Myvett and Quintana 2002). Written into the 2003 People's United Party Manifesto, the Government recognizes the US$25 million industry as an increasingly valuable sector for the nation, "We will: Facilitate the establishment of 4,000 new acres of shrimp farms, and expand the tilapia farms for small farmers" (PUP 2003). Aquaculture in Belize is based almost entirely on the production and export of Pacific White Shrimp. In addition to rural employment production and processing, the industry provides infrastructure development with roads and electrification and jobs through ancillary services such as freight haulage and customs brokerage.

Factors that have contributed to the rapid expansion of shrimp farming in Belize and the southern region in particular include the availability of suitable land, the existence of a trainable work force, and expanding public infrastructure and support services. Currently there are eleven farms, mostly concentrated on the coastal pine ridge soils in the South Stann Creek area (Myvett and Quintana 2002). National proposals for new shrimp farms specify coastal areas of the Toledo District. Accompanying the expansion of the industry has been the issue of land speculation. Since 1995, the Department of the Environment of the MNRECI has raised concerns regarding the unchecked leasing of national lands (and the de-reservation of forest reserves), often to accommodate scantily outlined proposals (BAS 2002b).

Towards a Resolution

Politics as usual

Formal and informal attempts to resolve the land dispute have taken place at grassroots and international levels. The TMCC claims that "the Maya people have consistently attempted to have the government address and resolve their concerns, administratively and judicially from 1995 to [October 2000] but to no avail" (IACHR 2000). Consequently, Maya organizations

resorted to legal action. In 1996, Maya organizations brought a case to the Supreme Court of Belize to assert their rights over lands and resources included in logging concessions. Although a brief procedural hearing was held before Chief Justice Meerabux in 1997, further hearings were adjourned indefinitely at the request of the Attorney General's office (IACHR 2000).

Simultaneously, grassroots actions targeted the land issue at the community level. Between 1995 and 1997, the TMCC and the TAA joined forces to undertake an extensive Maya Mapping Project. With support from the Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC), the University of California-Berkeley, and the MacArthur Foundation, the TMCC and TAA produced the *Maya Atlas* (1997). The Atlas depicts the dynamic interactions among various Maya communities and their complex relationship with their environment. In doing so, it determines the boundaries of a "Maya Homeland" by illustrating the extent of traditional land use and occupancy. At its release in Belmopan in October 1997, Maya activist Diego Bol introduced the publication proclaiming, "The Maya Atlas… is our tool to show our existence, a weapon to press for our legal right to a piece of the jewel, our desire to be active participants in the sustainable use of our resources…" (in Wainwright 1998:61). One of the Atlas' maps, immediately published in major Belizean newspapers, revealed seventeen logging contracts in the Toledo District. The GOB responded, according to Wainwright, "with its most explicit and honest policy statement concerning the conflict: the Maya have no land rights" (1998:64-5).

Frustrated by the Government's legal firewall, the TMCC elevated their claim to the international realm. In 1998, attorneys from the ILRC presented a petition to the Organization of American States' (OAS) Inter-American Commission on Human Rights against the State of Belize "for alleged violation of Articles of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man" (IACHR 2000). This petition prompted the GOB to respond to the Maya claims for the first time since the Belize Supreme Court hearings were adjourned. On November 18, 1998, the GOB and the TMCC made independent requests to the IACHR for a negotiation process that conforms to "friendly settlement procedures" (IACHR 2000).

The following two years witnessed fluctuating strife between the parties despite attempts at mediation. The TMCC expressed its exasperation with the GOB's failure "to engage in a meaningful dialogue" and to establish conditions "believed to be necessary in order for the friendly settlement talks to proceed in a fruitful manner" (IACHR 2000). After the TMCC attempted to withdraw from the negotiation procedures in 1999, the GOB finally replied to questions posed by the Maya organization (IACHR 2000):

> Will the Government of Belize immediately alter its course of action in regard to development activities on Maya traditional lands?
>
> Does the Government of Belize recognize that the Maya have rights to lands and natural resources in Southern Belize based on their traditional use and occupancy of those lands?

The Government's response sounded promising:

> The Government is prepared to commit to negotiating with the TMCC immediate interim measures and change the terms under which the Government permits activities
>
> The Government of Belize is entirely open to recognizing Maya traditional land resource tenure patterns

The response encouraged the TMCC by indicating that the Government was willing to discuss "immediate measures" and alter activities. However, the GOB avoided comment on defining the basis for indigenous rights. This evasion precipitated diplomatic backsliding. Through 2000, the Government failed to engage in negotiations with the TMCC and neglected to respond to IACHR communications.

In October 2000, the Commission reached a final decision and declared the validity of the TMCC's petition. As a member of the OAS, the GOB took the IACHR's decision seriously. Only days after the IACHR's decision, the Government and Maya leaders signed a historic and unprecedented agreement called "Ten Points of Agreement between the Government of Belize and the Maya Peoples of Southern Belize" (GOB 2000b). The Agreement was signed by the Prime Minister of Belize and by the Chairpersons of the TMCC, the TAA, the KCB, the TMWC, and the Toledo District Village Councils Association.

While the Agreement primarily focused on forging a partnership between GOB and the Maya leaders to design and implement development programs to benefit the Maya communities, the Government made what appeared to be an extraordinary concession by recognizing that "Maya People have rights to lands and resources in southern Belize based on their long-standing use and occupancy" (GOB 2000). However, as the statements below indicate, it is clear that the Government and the Maya leaders have different interpretations of indigenous rights. Gregorio Ch'oc, President of the Kekchi Council of Belize, remarked:

> It's the government's recognition that the Maya people have a right to the land and resources in southern Belize, particularly around their communities and the immediate environment. The larger framework [of the Agreement] will determine how we proceed *to provide titles or ownership of these lands and resources to the communities and how they will benefit, not only economically, but spiritually, socially, culturally, from the resources.* Maya people are pretty much a forest dependent people and as such their livelihood depends on it. It is important that we safe guard this. (News 5 Online 2000; emphasis added)

Said Musa, Prime Minister of Belize, elaborated on the Government's perspective:

> [This Agreement] is setting out a framework for us to work together to ensure that we have meaningful development here in Toledo that will benefit the people. [The Agreement] will ensure that the people who want the titles to their lands, their leases, who for years have been waiting for this, we will try and speed up that process now, so they can get their leases and their titles. Those who want to retain communal lands around their villages; we will respect that as well. There is enough land to satisfy both demands if you like, but it has to be done in an organized fashion and we have to make sure there is an equitable distribution of this land. … The concept of just having a whole section of Belize put aside and just say that this is a Maya homeland is not what this document is about. We do not subscribe to that and this is where we had to sit down and discuss this with the Maya leaders, that we felt you cannot balkanize, you cannot separate any part of Belize, because Belize belongs to all the Belizean people and any Belizean is entitled to come and live here in Toledo, whether it be Creole, Garifuna, Mestizo. Similarly, any Maya is entitled to live in any part of Belize. (News 5 Online 2000)

The Maya clearly interpret the Agreement as the GOB's recognition of Maya aboriginal land rights and acceptance of the Maya homeland, at least in concept. The Maya expectation, therefore, is for the GOB to provide land titles and ownership to the Maya within the framework of their Maya Homeland proposal. The GOB clearly disregards the Homeland

concept, but recognizes the need to grant the Maya individual land leases and titles within the framework of the National Lands Act. The Prime Minister referred to respecting "those who want to retain communal lands around their villages." Given the Prime Minister's pronouncement regarding the "Maya homeland", his reference to "communal land" can be interpreted as GOB's acceptance of the traditional Maya occupation (without title) of land. This is effectively GOB's concession to tolerate Maya "squatting" on Government lands, but cannot be construed as recognition of Maya aboriginal land rights. In the Agreement, the Maya leaders agreed that the Toledo Development Corporation will be the main agency for the implementation of the Regional Development Plan which was developed by ESTAP. Essentially, the Maya leadership endorsed the development plan for the South Stann Creek and Toledo Districts and, by so doing, made the most extraordinary concession of the two parties to the Agreement.

The GOB and the Maya leadership made a significant step forward by agreeing to cooperate with each other to implement development programs for the Maya communities. However, in regards to the Maya claims of indigenous land and resource rights, the GOB maintained the status quo and made little progress. Government and Maya leaders were expected to develop administrative measures and target dates for the implementation of the program within four months after signing the Agreement. To the consternation of Maya communities, these obligations remain unfulfilled. At present, energy and effort to resolve issues of land tenure and resource rights have dwindled.

Implications for Land and Resource Management

The prospects for a negotiated settlement in the Mayas' favor are fraught with difficulty. Notwithstanding international indigenous rights agreements, the power of the State decides whether or not it will accede to the Maya demand for recognition of their rights to land and resources. The financially burdened GOB has much at stake – control over land, timber resources, mineral resources, and the economic benefits that these derive. Maya communities face far greater risks; resource management decisions jeopardize their livelihoods, communities, identities, and self-determination.

Similar to other cases of indigenous land claims, the Toledo Maya do not hold sufficient power in the political realm to move the Government toward a framework of negotiation based on an understanding of indigenous people and their relationship to ancestral lands and resources. The Maya, therefore, attempt to use the sphere of international law and the legal process to shift the balance of power in their favor.

Land and resource management promises to remain a contested process with a diverse and divided rural population. The future of communal lands faces pressure from people who desire individual land leases. As ESTAP (GOB 2000c) and Van Ausdal (2001) revealed, many Maya communities favor private leases rather than communal holdings. While possibly a device of Government co-optation, the appeal of individual title derives from the current situation of land tenure insecurity. Understandably, people seek to establish stable livelihoods and communities. Legalized individual leases, however, already clash with collective land holdings in villages. These conflicts lead to rifts between Maya leaders as to who best represents community voices. While the leaders of NGOs are elected through their own members, alcaldes and village council chairmen are elected by entire villages. Questions of authority, legitimacy, and accountability drive the tense relation between Maya organizations. One alcalde shared his discontent, "The KCB and TMCC don't represent the people. The TAA and the Village Council Associations do represent the people's views" (Anonymous 2002). The GOB ensures the escalation of conflict with its current focus on restructuring the Lands Department, creating a Land Distribution Authority, and expediting the process of granting individual titles under the National Lands Act (PUP 2003).

While a fractured Maya leadership impedes the prospect of instigating changes in Toledo-wide land policies, international networking with indigenous advocates helps to establish a legal basis for the recognition of Maya Reservations. Although these areas are not recognized by the National Lands Act of 1992, pre and post-colonial governments never dissolved their integrity. It is important to remember, however, that these areas, drawn up by the British between 1896 and 1962, represent a small portion of places in which the Toledo Maya historically and currently live. Reservation lands, in turn, serve as a formal tool for communities to assert more inclusive resource rights.

Apart from the acknowledgement of indigenous rights, crucial decisions of how rights are implemented in land management still lies in the hands of the GOB. The negotiation of their interpretation will continue into the future.

The articulation of indigenous control over land and natural resources highlights the claims and interests of communities, NGOs, and government. Oftentimes, these groups compete with each other. On one hand, the GOB seems unwilling to concede authority over valuable resources. It grants land titles, distributes concessions, sponsors development projects, and disregards reservations without consulting the people who live in the immediate area. When concerns are raised, the GOB must be forced into negotiations. On the other hand, the history of Government interaction with the Toledo Maya shows prospects for reconciliation. The State realizes that it must contend with its marginalized but vocal indigenous citizenry. The GOB now recognizes aboriginal rights, traditional land use patterns, and ancestral occupancy. It shows flexibility in its willingness to sponsor community consultations for development projects and timber concessions. In addition, the Government permits the practice of community co-management on national lands. The formation of one particular NGO, the Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management, exposes the conflict between Government and communities concerning national lands, reservations, and resource rights. It also suggests the tremendous potential for innovative management strategies and new State-community relationships.

Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management

Issues of politics, ethnicity, and the control of natural resources interface with protected area management in the case of the Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM). The organization attempts to reinforce the culture and livelihoods of six communities surrounding the Sarstoon-Temash National Park by incorporating them into its management. SATIIM emerged in direct response to the surreptitious creation of the Sarstoon-Temash National Park. In 1994, the GOB established the Park without consulting communities in the area. This action provided the impetus for community organizing and

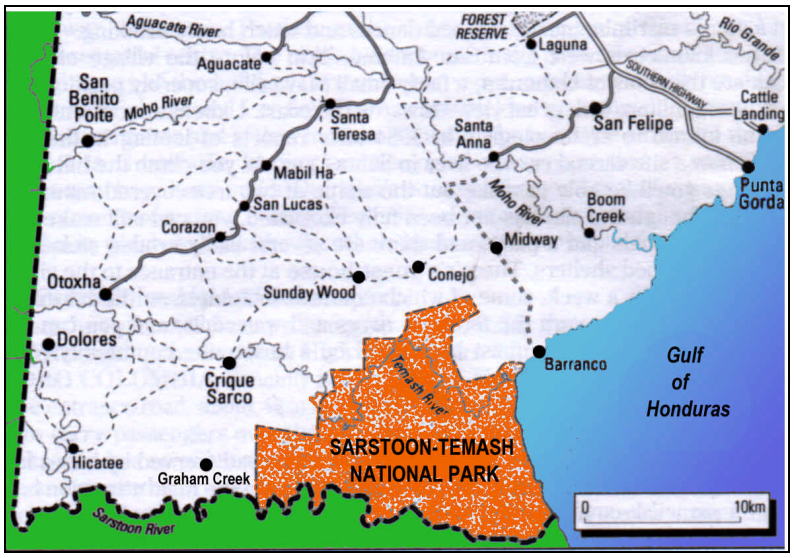
advocacy.[16] Furthermore, it led to new relationships, greater livelihood security, and enhanced conservation management.

Sarstoon-Temash National Park

The 41,898 acre Sarstoon-Temash National Park (STNP) consists of a large complex of rivers, estuaries, wetlands, and rainforests. Enclosed by the Sarstoon and Temash Rivers, the wet forest and wetland ecosystems provide habitat for many rare and unrecorded plant and animal species that exist nowhere else in Belize (see Map 8). It is the second largest and one of the least accessible National Parks in the country. Affirmed in the National Anthem of Belize,[17] the nation holds an affinity to an area few will venture to see:

> *…Our fathers, the Baymen, valiant and bold*
> *Drove back the invader; this heritage hold*
> *From proud Rio Hondo to old Sarstoon,*
> *Through coral isle, over blue lagoon…*

Such romanticization, combined with geopolitical and economic aspirations of the GOB, led to the Park's creation in 1994. The Government's financial need to exchange conservation measures for foreign aid conveniently fit with its desire to secure the southern border with Guatemala. In addition to the area's natural bounty, multiple reasons provided the momentum for establishing the Park (Caddy et al. 2000; Lumb 1998).



Map 8: Sarstoon-Temash National Park

In the formation of the STNP, the MNRECI neglected to take account of the 750 Maya and Garifuna citizens that lived near the Park's perimeter and that depended on resources encompassed by the new boundaries. The Kekchi villages of Crique Sarco, Sunday Wood, Conejo, and Midway fell within two miles of the Park. Barranco, a Garifuna community, was situated on the coast just northeast of the park. A small settlement, known as Temash Bar, was also encircled by the Park. In addition, the Park partially covered the Graham Creek Maya Reservation (see Map 7, p.47). The lack of any permanent governmental presence or demarcation of boundaries meant that residents were unaware of its creation.

In 1996, three years after the Government declared the protected area, the local communities gradually learned of the Park's existence through media and governmental sources (Caddy et al. 2000). The appropriation of ancestral land and livelihood base infuriated the communities who subsequently attempted to have the park dismantled. In 1997, however, community representatives invited members of governmental and non-governmental organizations to a meeting in Barranco to discuss available options. Nearly 72 participants attended the Sarstoon-Temash National Park Stakeholders Workshop including leaders from each of the affected villages, and members of the following organizations: KCB, TAA, the National Garifuna Council (NGC), the Belize Center of Environmental Studies, Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT), the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Coastal Zone Management Authority, Belize National Association of Tour Guides, The Nature Conservancy, Indigenous Mapping Project, and the Forest Department (Lumb 1998). At the meeting, community representatives recognized that seeking co-management of the park could formalize their precarious land tenure situation. By the end of the workshop, a steering committee was formed to begin the difficult task of securing co-management. After the EcoLogic Development Fund (EDF)[18], ESTAP, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome provided financial assistance and capacity training, the Steering Committee registered with the Government as SATIIM in 1999.

SATIIM's area of operation extends along the coast from the Sarstoon River in the south to the Moho River in the north (see Map 8, p.68). Currently SATIIM works with the 550 Kekchi and 200 Garifuna residents in the original villages around the Park (Caddy et al.

2000; Eltringham 2001). In addition, SATIIM is incorporating the new Kekchi village of Graham Creek that recently developed on the boundary of the park and the border with Guatemala. Led by Gregorio Ch'oc, also the President of the KCB, the Executive Board of SATIIM consists of representatives from each village as well as members of KCB, TAA, NGC, PACT, and the Forest Department.

Indigenous management

Protected area management takes unconventional meaning under the purview of SATIIM. Beyond the management of natural resources, the organization emphasizes the documentation and use of traditional knowledge systems related to the surrounding environment. This approach inserts an explicitly strong cultural component into the practice of protected area management and connotes the significance of the relationship between the communities and their environment. SATIIM strives to simultaneously meet economic, cultural, and ecological goals. Economic goals include maintaining control of land and resources at the local level, creating employment, and building local capacity through training. Cultural goals involve demonstrating the value of indigenous knowledge and bridging the divide between Maya and Garifuna communities. Ecological goals consist of managing the park through a blend of Western and traditional environmental knowledge. Ch'oc elaborates on the importance of bridging competing knowledges to provide long-term security:

> It has to be through adapting local knowledge and processes in a way that allows [indigenous people] to bridge their local knowledge and subsistence tradition into that of the market-based economy and contemporary knowledge of natural resource management systems for effective … management. (2002b)

SATIIM also advocates for complete self-governance for Maya communities although the earlier secessionist calls for a Maya Homeland have been dropped. The organization aims to strengthen traditional governance structures within villages. Even without a formal co-management agreement, alcaldes act as guards by enforcing Park rules and monitoring activities. Ch'oc compares the situation of the Maya and management of the National Park with other indigenous struggles for land rights:

> Several co-management agreements have been signed between indigenous people and states. Most have recognized indigenous people's rights. But in Belize it has always been like if I give [the Mayas] their rights, others will demand theirs. This is nonsense. It has absolutely no basis for granting rights of people. Human Rights are not negotiated. (2002b)

In fact, SATIIM draws on precedents from First Nations' agreements with the Canadian Government to pattern their own request for co-management. The organization's guiding vision is to formalize the relationship between communities dependent on Park resources and the Government. Securing a co-management agreement with the GOB, however, proves to be a difficult task. To a large extent, this difficulty is due to the different conceptions each holds regarding "appropriate" management. In contrast to the Government's technocratic perspective, SATIIM understands local resource control as the key to sustainability:

> People need to be told that the way they manage has had a positive impact on their resources. What I hear especially from Belmopan or the environmental elites is that every activity that rural or indigenous people engage in is bad, bad and bad. These people (indigenous and rural) are persons with practical real world environmental knowledge and those people are dying out. The world community is starting to understand that it is the local knowledge that has allowed local people to have green space around their communities. This must be the cornerstone of any successful management program unless it is the intention to build a "Berlin Wall" around these areas. (Ch'oc 2002b)

Toward collaboration

The interethnic composition of SATIIM from its inception distinguishes it as a unique resource management organization. Caddy et al. (2000) explain that SATIIM's formative workshop, held in English, Spanish, Kekchi, and Garifuna, was the first time different ethnic groups collaborated to decide how to jointly manage a protected area. SATIIM continues to bridge historical cultural divides by uniting the Garifuna of Barranco, and the surrounding Kekchi communities. This merger carries implications for the incorporation of gender concerns in management and project decisions. Pronounced differences exist between Garifuna and Maya women concerning expectations and expressions of public involvement. While Garifuna women take an active and vocal role in the participatory activities of SATIIM, Maya women in the area have been less inclined to attend general meetings and express their concerns (Lumb 2002). These differences require SATIIM to implement

different strategies for the incorporation of all community issues. Nevertheless, specific cultural norms among the Garifuna and Kekchi may be changing as SATIIM enters its sixth year.

Legitimate community participation in the planning and implementation of all conservation and development initiatives remains an elusive goal for SATIIM. The goal of genuine participation dovetails with the objectives of larger projects assisting SATIIM. Imperiled resources in the region, SATIIM's innovative management strategy, and hard work by the organization's leaders and consultants determined SATIIM's selection for a medium-sized project sponsored by the GEF. The Community-Managed Sarstoon-Temash Conservation Project (COMSTEC) aims to "reduce land degradation and conserve globally significant biodiversity resources in the Sarstoon Temash National Park" (GEF 2000a:18). The project supports co-management and complements the rural development activities of the Government's CARD project (described elsewhere in this report).

Regardless of its public image as a community-based organization, SATIIM receives criticism from its constituents (Caddy et al., 2000). The situation relates to the general claim that the leaders of Maya organizations based out of Punta Gorda are not in touch with village life. In addition to lingering resentment over the establishment of the STNP, the lack of tangible benefits from income-generation projects breeds skepticism among communities. These tensions may be reduced in the future as communities reap the eventual harvests of projects like organic cacao production and shifting agriculture replacement, both facilitated by EcoLogic Development Fund.

SATIIM also contributes to larger resource management initiatives in the Toledo District and Central America. The organization is an active member in the Toledo Watershed Association (TWA), an evolving District-wide federation of conservation and land management actors now under the auspices of the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment (See Chapter Six). In fact, SATIIM was encouraged to apply for GEF Small Grant Programme funds in order to support the emergent TWA. Additionally, the STNP falls within priority areas established under international conservation programs (GEF 2000a).

Complementing corridor projects in northern Belize, the Park forms a component of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor conservation and land use management initiative in Southern Belize. The Park also forms part of the coastal component of the Sarstoon-Temash/Sarstún marine complex, a key bi-national section of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System (WB 2001). Inclusion in prominent and collaborative programs like these generates greater legitimacy for SATIIM and, hence, advances its ultimate goal of securing community control over Maya and Garifuna land, heritage, and futures.

SATIIM exemplifies the promise and peril of collaboration. The organization itself arose from the shared concerns of six villages. Representatives joined forces with experienced NGOs and Government liaisons in Toledo attempting to resolve the dilemma of a National Park. Instead of dismantling the Park, they have used it as a vehicle to assert their own desires. SATIIM has worked with larger projects and international NGOs to locate funding and build its own capacity. Additionally, through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, SATIIM learned from the experiences of successful indigenous groups with similar priorities and problems. Now SATIIM continues to form a co-management agreement with the GOB in order to secure its position in the national sphere. Each of these partnerships, apprenticeships, and friendships expand and improve its impact within its jurisdiction and far beyond. The move toward greater fulfillment and complexity through collaboration has not been easy. The remote communities SATIIM claims to represent continue to question motives, actions, and leadership of the organization. Their justifiable skepticism stems from a history of malevolent interaction with more powerful outsiders. State, NGO, and business actors have all attempted to impose self-serving schemes on the communities around the STNP. In terms of traditional rights, self-determination, and co-management, SATIIM itself has maintained an unstable relationship with the GOB. SATIIM's co-management agreement with the Government remains to be signed.

Conclusion

In the south of Belize, rural communities have always utilized resources from their surrounding landscape and waters. The rigid demarcation of territory and the establishment

of exclusive protected areas and concessions do not correspond to the practice of everyday life for most inhabitants of Toledo. Based on current and historic use and occupation, international indigenous treaties, and the legal underpinnings of the Maya Reservation system, the Maya make a strong claim over lands and resources in Southern Belize.

Attention to politics, ethnicity, and control over natural resources reveal the patterns and idiosyncrasies in negotiations between indigenous people and the GOB for the establishment of land tenure and livelihood security. The conflict encompasses the entire population of Southern Belize. Ch'oc explains, "[R]epresentation of Toledo does not rest on the shoulders of the Mayan people but all the people of Toledo. Land tenure is not just a Mayan problem though it tends to be viewed as such" (2002b).

Ironically, the international border dispute with Guatemala forces the GOB to recognize and rely on Maya communities in Belize. The participation of Maya translators and negotiators serving on Government commissions help to establish legitimacy for settlements of indigenous groups (Shal 2002b). These occurrences confirm the fluctuating tendencies of Government to use the existence of southern settlements as a basis for defense of national sovereignty. "The very people that have not been allowed on their own lands are now the same ones that the Government is counting on to protect its territory in Southern Belize," proclaims Ch'oc (2002b). Communities play the literal and figurative roles of border guard since the use of lands by villages throughout the region is a factor in securing the demarcation of boundaries.

SATIIM provides an example where indigenous management in Southern Belize corresponds with some of needs of the Government. Similarly, the rights and concerns of indigenous people directly relate to the control of land and management of natural resources. SATIIM presents a unique case in Belize in which the goals of strengthening of indigenous culture, livelihoods, and land tenure are attained directly through the protection of natural resources. In this process, SATIIM must work across ethnic, class, professional, organizational, regional, and national boundaries. This effort is making progress toward improving the organization, assisting communities around the National Park, reconciling tensions between ethnic groups, and expanding SATIIM's impact far outside of the Sarstoon-Temash area. The

benefits of networking with diverse people and organizations are crucial for the nation of Belize, proposes a high-ranking Maya leader, “Each different group must be asked to come together on their own terms. This strengthens the unity of the country. This is collaboration on a whole other scale” (Anonymous 2002).

Chapter Four: Forces that Promote and Constrain Collaboration

Collaborative approaches to resolving disputes, optimizing resources, and engaging in joint decision-making are increasingly called upon in natural resources planning and management. Factors promoting a more widespread adoption of collaboration include recognition of the need for broader community and stakeholder involvement, accelerated loss of biodiversity, and changing conservation strategies. Four case studies of collaborative approaches to conservation in the Toledo District of Belize are presented in the following chapters, illustrating many of these points. The cases and the conclusions that follow them are structured around three central questions:

- What are the challenges to effective collaboration?
- What factors foster collaboration?
- What opportunities exist for increasing collaboration?

Before addressing these questions in the context of the case studies and the Toledo District, however, this chapter asks these questions about collaboration more broadly, drawing on alternative dispute resolution and organizational literature. The chapter focuses on the first two questions in reverse order, starting with facilitating factors. In other words, why does collaboration occur and what forces help it along? Next, the chapter addresses what makes collaboration a difficult process. The answer to the third question, regarding opportunities for expanding collaboration, is introduced through the layout of the case study approach. Detailed responses to this last question are provided in the individual case studies, as so many opportunities are site-specific.

Factors that Foster Collaboration

Individuals, governmental agencies, and nongovernmental and international organizations are coming together in a number of fields such as education, development, tourism, natural resources management and joint problem solving for a variety of reasons. Diverse parties may come to realize that they share common problems and aspirations or feel there is a need to move forward in the face of conflict or uncertainty. Collaborative processes are often initiated in order to explore new opportunities or solutions that would not otherwise be possible (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). A variety of factors may encourage organizations and individuals to "build bridges," or enter into new partnerships and initiatives rather than "going at it alone." The following section highlights several of these factors, including: **power differences** among actors; the "wicked" **nature of the problem** at hand; the absence of suitable **alternatives to collaboration**; the perception of **crisis**; a shared **sense of place**; the identification of **superordinate goals**; **leadership**; **public pressure**; and **personal relationships**.

Power differences

Organizations and individuals choose to collaborate when they perceive that their potential power within a collaborative body would be sufficient to allow them to serve their interests more effectively than they would be able to using other processes, such as litigation. When considering whether or not to enter into a collaborative endeavor, parties must develop an understanding of the power relationships that exist among organizations with which they hope to be involved. Gray (1985) describes this situation as turbulence in the space in which organizations interact, referring to a situation in which one party cannot achieve its goals without greater coordination and cooperation with other parties. Sufficient countervailing power must exist among other stakeholders to prohibit unilateral action by any one stakeholder (Susskind and Cruikshank 1987).

The nature of the problem

Collaboration is also a response to issues that resist resolution because of their complexity. Questions and problems that are raised in the field of natural resources management and planning are often "wicked" in nature. The term "wicked" signifies that a problem is not discrete, where all the information that is needed to solve it can be succinctly stated such as in a mathematical equation (Rittel and Webber 1973). These wicked problems exist in a social space and context because they are a direct result of the variation and diversity of the actors involved (CogNexus Institute 2003).

"Wicked" problems can outstrip the organizational resources, jurisdiction, and expertise of any single organization. The lack of scientific understanding that surrounds these problems can lead to uncertainty; this is a classic problem in natural resource and environmental disputes. Individuals may have competing claims of knowledge or lack the resources and expertise necessary to overcome uncertainty, access risk, or determine a solution that is acceptable to all the parties involved. An example of a wicked question might be how to build a strategy to protect endangered species where overlapping and conflicting mandates, professional and political interests, and a large number of actors add considerable complexity to the issue. Additionally, it could be balancing the needs of development with questions of ecological integrity. For these reasons, organizational collaboration in conservation and development is occurring at an increasing rate (Brechin et al. 2003).

Collaboration can offer parties a means to bring together mutual knowledge, perspectives, and interests while forging innovative solutions to complex problems. The collaborative pool of resources, skills, and knowledge that is brought together by different organizations may be greater than the sum of its parts. When relationships among collaborating partners are formalized to take advantage of complementary strengths for the purposes of conservation and development projects, such "niche arrangements" may maximize project effectiveness (Brechin 1997).

The alternatives to collaboration

New forms of alternative dispute resolution, and collaboration in particular, have come to the fore in reaction to the perceived inefficiency of political lobbying and the narrow and often unsatisfactory outcomes of litigation. In the United States, for example, the proliferation of laws such as the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act all provided new and important legal means for parties to take action in order to settle natural resource oriented disputes. The specificity of legal obligations established in these laws encouraged the use of litigation as a primary means of resolving disputes in natural resource cases. However, these legal channels often proved inefficient in handling disputes where the problems were complex and involved competing interests, expertise, and knowledge. These natural resource disputes often lasted for years and, given the limited range of remedies available in the context of the courts, ended in judgments that rarely satisfied either party (Bacow and Wheeler 1984). The "wicked" nature of these problems made legal action in many cases ill-equipped to arrive at effective solutions.

Belizean law ranges from specific regulations such as the 1992 Environmental Protection Act (which outlines Government and citizen obligations and roles and responsibilities) to more general laws such as the 1992 National Lands Act (which provides few specific requirements and gives a great degree of discretion to the Minister responsible for lands). These realities limit, to some degree, the legal options that interested parties have at their disposal to explore litigation as a tool to resolve disputes. Consequently, they may not offer the types of resolution desired.

Other forms of dispute resolution may involve political lobbying and public pressure. Lobbying can be a very effective way to alter natural resource management decision-making especially where legal power over a resource is in the hands of a Government Ministry and does not require direct parliamentary action to affect the status of that resource. At the same time, the resource is susceptible to the political currents of the day and gives very little security for its long-term management. These ministerial-level land use decisions are often based on political pragmatism and for this reason they are very unpredictable.

Collaboration is not only a compelling alternative to individual people; when other alternatives are less attractive, organizations often join in collaborative endeavors. This especially occurs when organizations are confronted with an impending crisis or a challenge that must be met.

Crisis

Crisis is often a natural call to action. Throughout history, individuals have been called to act collectively in the face of a perceived crisis or threat (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, eds. 2001). For action to occur, however, the perception of a threat must be coupled with the power and ability to respond (Kottak and Costa 1993). Crises that motivate people to action can take a variety of forms (Hewitt 1997; Quarantelli, ed. 1998). Stakeholders may perceive an impending regulation as a threat and may join forces to address the regulation (Bentrup 2001). In other instances, impacts of national development projects like large mines bring people together from across the globe (Kirsch 1997). Highway development, increased logging, expansion of destructive agricultural practices, foreign land ownership, and their associated effects, can also be powerful incentives for parties to work together.

Sense of place

While crisis has shown to be a strong motivator for collaboration, people often feel a sense of belonging and value for a place whether it is threatened or not (Feld and Basso, eds. 1996). Collaborative natural resource management, therefore, is often intimately tied to a "sense of place." Environmental policy specialist Charles H. W. Foster states: "Places are considered to be physical locations imbued with human meaning [that] display three primary characteristics: a landscape setting, a set of associated activities, and significance to people. Thus, place involves both humans and nature, not the presence of one to the exclusion of the other" (Foster 1995 as cited in Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000).

The variety of ways that a place is recognized and created provides opportunities for bringing people together in a particular area. People know their environment through the inevitability of their coexistence and interaction with it. In conferring significance to the physical environment, meaning is not merely attached, but rather drawn from people's surroundings at

a particular moment (Ingold 1993). The understanding is drawn from the environment through a person's relation with its biological, hydrological, and geological components, in addition to recognized social, historical, and spiritual characteristics. Collaboration itself can help shape a sense of place. When people perform any action, the action occurs socially and materially in time and space and imparts the physical world with meaning (Werlen 1993). This meaning can be shared among people working together and lead to collective senses of place. A place is then the spatial and temporal axis of conscious human interaction (Casey 1993). How a place becomes identified and made meaningful is a process that involves shared actions and understandings. This process can help reveal the different values and levels of influence among the people and groups involved collective action (Crewsswell 1996; Massey 1994).

A "sense of place" and its three characteristics identified by Foster—setting, activities, and significance—motivate and provide context to collaborative efforts. A sense of place helps define the scope of the area being managed and the problems to be addressed. Places help to reveal the various ways that people identify with and relate to them. Such identification provides a wellspring of energy and concern emanating from an individual or group's association with and care for a particular place.

Superordinate goals

Conflict surrounding natural resource issues is often a result of competing positions, interests, and claims over a specific resource in question. It may take the form of advocacy for endangered species protection versus the building of a dam for rural electrification (Wondolleck 1985). These competing positions are often bridged when a superordinate goal enters the discussion.

Superordinate goals, as stated in the classic work of Muzafer Sherif, are:

> [G]oals that could not be attained by the efforts and energies of one group alone and thus created a state of interdependence between groups… Superordinate goals were indeed effective in reducing inter-group conflict: (1) when the groups in a state of friction interacted in conditions involving superordinate goals, they did co-operate in activities leading toward the common goal and (2) a series of joint activities leading toward superordinate goals had the cumulative effect of reducing the prevailing friction between groups. (Sherif 1958: 355)

These goals can bridge divides among parties. A goal that exists beyond the conflict changes the dynamic of interaction in a variety of ways and provides incentives that would otherwise not exist. A superordinate goal provides a context in which to build positive relationships and understanding. It sets the stage for the development of a process that leads to greater understanding of not only positions but interests. Finally, it may lead to a vision that extends beyond an adversarial view of the situation ("if you get it then I don't") to a practical understanding of the joint gains that can be achieved through cooperation and collaborative action (White and Runge 1995).

Leadership

Leadership can catalyze collaboration. An individual or organization may possess the energy and vision that mobilizes other parties to participate (Selin and Chavez 1995). Leaders in collaborative processes often have a variety of characteristics that allows them to mobilize or champion these processes. Leaders may take on the role of "cheerleader-energizer, diplomat, process facilitator, convener, catalyst, and promoter. They are not superhuman; rather, they put a lot of energy into moving projects forward" (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000: 178).

Public pressure

The general public can have an effect on the possibility of collaboration. Though the wider public is not directly involved in the collaborative process it can steer the interests of parties who participate in that process. Public interest can change the political stakes of collaboration and raise the awareness of an issue, which may promote the furthering of the project (Yaffee et al. 1997).

Personal relationships

Many collaborative processes begin with existing friendships and relationships among actors. Friendships provide legitimacy and the initial trust and respect that are necessary for collaborative endeavors to take root (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Yaffee et al. 1997). Collaboration can also come about through existing inter and intra-organizational arrangements. In addition, relationships provide legitimacy to initiatives that are currently underway.

Challenges to Effective Collaboration

Collaboration, like all close interpersonal interactions, is in many ways a "dance of adaptation." Relationships among individuals involved in a collaborative process must be able to change and adapt to new challenges that are posed. A variety of challenges are documented in the literature on collaboration. These theoretical perspectives will be later used as a means to analyze the four case studies.

Negative preconceptions

Differing perceptions and values present real challenges to the collaborative process. Perceptions may stem from cultural norms or professional knowledge and views. Negative personal views and characterizations about other individuals and organizations among participants can also hinder collaboration (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). When personal views impair the process, parties tend to adopt opposing positions and can restrict the conversations to an adversarial and less constructive tone. Differences in perception pose the greatest challenge to collaboration when they are value-laden and rooted in identity or a strongly held ideology (Carpenter and Kennedy 1988; Gray 1989; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987; Wondolleck et al. forthcoming). Strong positions may make it difficult for parties to arrive at "reasonable compromises" (Susskind and Weinstein 1980) and may limit willingness to subdivide complex problems into solvable increments (Gray 1989; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987).

Differing conservation paradigms

Conservation practitioners and researchers continue to debate the relative value and efficacy of integrated conservation and development in the tropics. On the one hand, critics like Terborgh (1999) argue that development-oriented strategies, like alternative income generating programs for individuals living near protected areas, have largely failed. Instead, they call for a return to approaches for conservation that focuses on enforcement, such as boundary monitoring. Extreme crises in biodiversity, they suggest, call for extreme measures. Critics of this "barbed wire and border guards" approach suggest that it ignores both on-the-ground management realities, such as lack of resources to enforce contested boundaries in the absence of community support, and the rights and needs of the individuals who are often displaced by protected areas (Brechin et al. 2002). The critics of the "resurgent protectionist paradigm" raise the important question of "conservation for whom?" Organizations view communities through different lenses depending on their chosen conservation approach. Interaction with community members built on mutual respect is central to an approach that values protected area neighbors as partners in conservation rather than simply as threats to biodiversity.

Conflict and competition among groups

Historic conflict and organizational turf can constrain or impede greater collaboration. Mutual ill will, especially when the relationship between organizations has been marked with past instances of intense conflict, can have lasting effects. Bitter adversarial positions can imperil future consensus on any issue (Selin and Chavez 1995; Yaffee et al. 1997). The animosity held by individuals taints the types of possibilities organizations can envision collectively and may impede the development of relationships that are necessary to facilitate a collaborative process. While past conflict can impede collaboration, so too can current competition for scarce resources.

Groups receive their funding and self-identity by carrying out specific tasks. Those tasks are often related to organizational survival. Organizations may carry out specific contracts with donors, they may take care of a given protected area, or they may be in charge of specific services or products. "Turf" of this nature, like the turf or territoriality of street gangs, is

highly protected by many organizations. Territoriality comes from the fact that the interests of a given organization are viewed as crucial to meeting organizational goals and ultimately preserving its survival (Peck and Hague 2003). Organizations may fear that collaboration will lead to higher costs due to increased competition from one or more parties on their turf. For this reason, many organizations prefer the gains that multilateral action provide their organizations (Levine and White 1961).

Peck and Hague (2003) cite three primary reasons for turf conflict:

1. An organization perceives the other as a direct and regular competitor for resources that are not likely to be shared;

2. An organization perceives the "marginal cost" (in terms of money, time or energy) of the proposed cooperation greater than the perceived benefits of collaboration;

3. The degree to which the organization feels it is flexible to change its current goals, tasks and philosophy to adopt the course of action being proposed.

Collective decision-making prompts organizations to consider these turf-related costs. Costs of this nature can make groups unresponsive to collaborative proposals and may continue to be a hindrance until the perception of costs shifts to make collaboration more appealing.

Resource constraints

Financial and human resource constraints are a common threat to collaboration. Resources are needed for various aspects of collaboration from undertaking joint fact-finding to paying for mediators (Gray 1989). Collaboration requires resources in the form of money, time, and personnel (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). Often there is need for a resource pool. This can be a pool of funds that is created and collaboratively administered by members (Gray 1989). The lack of funds to distribute among members who are less financially capable can be a barrier to their participation. These discrepancies may lead to power imbalances that will discourage the participation of parties with fewer resources.

Community capacity issues

Rural communities often lack the human and financial resources needed to participate fully and fairly in the collaborative process. Individuals and organizations from communities may lack time, funds, and paid personnel to participate and implement collaborative plans so as to truly take advantage of the benefits. There are numerous examples in the United States where plans for community development were created, but the town lacked the professional and financial resources to implement the vision (Aspen Institute 2003).

Lack of resources and professional staff must be specially considered in the collaborative process. Research in developing countries shows that support is “critical for self-help grassroots organizations in the early stages of their development, since these organizations rarely possess the requisite technical or financial capacity to implement development projects" (Bryant and Bailey 1997:181). Resource disparities among participants can lead to resentment of more powerful parties (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). Without attention, community participants may be marginalized by the collaborative process or discontinue their participation in it.

Power and politics

The potential for collaboration is “hindered when significant power differences exist among parties or when certain parties are not perceived as having a legitimate claim to participate in consensus forums” (Selin and Chavez 1995 p 193). The potential for collaboration is severely diminished when there is a lack of countervailing forces amongst parties, and when a single party or small group of parties can act independent of the collaborative body (Gray 1985, Susskind and Cruikshank 1987). Individuals and groups need to feel a sense that they will gain more from a collaborative process than they would by pursuing other options (Gray 1989). Power imbalances can limit opportunities for certain parties to provide input, thus limiting the potential for their interests to be met. Imbalances of power can take a variety of forms. Specifically, power can take the form of control over the collaborative group’s agenda, control over strategies and suggestions, control of information, and the ability to authorize actions unilaterally (Gray 1989). All of these factors can impede the collaborative process, thereby discouraging participants to engage one another in a constructive manner.

These theoretical perspectives give insight to the case studies in the Toledo District. They provide a lens of analysis to give a sense of why collaboration occurs on the one hand, and what prevents collaboration on the other hand. The factors described above will be referred to in the cases that follow.

Opportunities for Increasing Collaboration: Case Study Approach

Collaboration is occurring in the Toledo District at a rapid rate. Conservation practitioners are attempting new means to address large landscape-level problems that affect local communities, regional ecological integrity, and the development of Southern Belize. To gain insight on opportunities for collaboration in the region, four Southern Belize collaborative initiatives were studied: the Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect, the Toledo Watershed Association, the Golden Stream Corridor, and the Bladen Management Consortium. Methodology that draws from alternative dispute resolution and organization literature was used to analyze these cases.

The cases were selected both for their visibility and because they provide insight on constraints, opportunities, and lessons that could apply to future efforts at regional collaboration. Additionally, they represent a range of geographic scales around which collaborative efforts are organized, from a single protected area to the entire Toledo District.

Each case is introduced with a detailed background section. These narrative descriptions provide the reader with the contextual richness of the story. The reader is introduced to the various actors, their relationships to one another, and the historic issues that affect development and conservation management decisions of the area. In addition, the situational factors that led to the beginning of each collaborative initiative are thoroughly discussed.

Each of the four case studies illustrates the challenges posed to collaboration. This section specifically addresses aspects of trust, shared vision, conflict and competition, resource constraints, power and politics, organizational barriers, and community issues in the

respective collaborative endeavors. The analysis of these difficulties provides a thematic understanding of the challenges posed to collaboration.

All the cases discussed show promise and potential for collaboration and provide regionally-specific insights on collaboration in Southern Belize. The case studies highlight the strong relationships that exist, the political support for collaboration, the perception of joint gains, shared concern, and the drive to move forward.

Chapter Five: TIDE and the Maya Mountain Marine Transect

> What's unique about the [transect] is the interchange between the reef, the estuaries and the rivers; it's a water-based ecological system. So the ecology leads to social organization. – Peter Esselman (2002)
>
> Marketing is everything. We are looking for something sexy. You need a sexy name that will sell quickly. I like the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor. It's marine, it's the Maya Mountains and it's in a corridor. It sells the ridges to reef concept. – Wil Maheia (2002)

Introduction

The Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect (MMMAT)[19] concept was first developed by a Belizean environmental research non-governmental organization (NGO), with funding and technical support from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The MMMAT represents an effort to confront the challenges posed by expanding development in Southern Belize. This case study will look at the three coastal and marine protected areas within the MMMAT, and analyze the potential value of the MMMAT concept as a forum for promoting multi-stakeholder discussions and coordination in light of the events that have taken place over the past decade.

Background

The MMMAT as an ecological system

The MMMAT was defined as a conceptual land management unit by the Belize Center for Environmental Studies (BCES)[20] and TNC in the mid-1990s that would protect biodiversity and natural ecosystem functions in the Toledo District through a corridor of public and private protected areas (TIDE 1998:6) (see Map 5, p.39). The conceptual million-acre corridor area is comprised of six large watersheds that empty into Port Honduras: Monkey

River, Payne's Creek, Deep River, Golden Stream, Middle River, and Rio Grande watersheds (TIDE 2000:6-7) (see Map 4, p.38). This corridor connects the Maya Mountains to the coastal waters and reefs associated with the Gulf of Honduras. Five ecosystem types are found in the MMMAT: upland forests, coastal plain, freshwater, estuarine and shallow near shore, and coral reef. These ecosystem types support large and increasingly uncommon predators like the jaguar, rare and threatened birds like the yellow-headed parrot, 29 of the 78 natural vegetation types in the country, as well as manatee and other species directly dependent on fresh or salt water (TIDE 2000:7). A Site Conservation Plan (SCP) prepared by TIDE for the MMMAT states that what integrates this entire site, and serves as an indicator for overall ecosystem health, are the freshwaters that flow through it. Should the quality of these waters degrade, not only would the fish and mammals living in the streams suffer, but so too would estuarine and near shore communities and coral reefs due to their sensitivity to water quality degradation (TIDE 2000).

The upland forests of the corridor area, which total 99,671 hectares, run from the Main Divide of the Maya Mountains down through karstic foothills to the coastal plains. These upland forests comprise the eastern half of Columbia River Forest Reserve, the entire Bladen Nature Reserve, and the western third of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary (see Map 5, p.39).

Almost half of the corridor area is represented by wetland ecosystems, which include Pine Savanna, Riparian Forests, and Estuaries and a Shallow Near Shore Region (including expansive stands of mangrove forests). On the southern side of the corridor is the Main Divide of the Maya Mountains and the Deep River Forest Reserve, which stretches from the mountains to the coastal plains and includes significant wetlands. Adjoining is the Payne's Creek National Park which contains a major wetlands network. The wetlands of both the Payne's Creek National Park and Deep River and further along the coast are contiguous with the Port Honduras Marine Reserve, a coastal embayment which contains about 130 cayes (GOB n.d.[1997]). Further offshore is the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve. This reserve contains eight small cayes along the southernmost tip of the Belize Barrier Reef.

The coastal plain pine savannas – grasslands and pine forests with patches of oak and palmetto – account for about 42,500 hectares. Rich riparian forests stripe the abundant waterways. The rest of the coastal plain is comprised of about 127,500 acres of what was formerly Broadleaf Forest but has now been heavily exploited (TIDE 2000:14). More than 90 percent of the human population within the corridor lives in this area, and therefore the area has the highest concentration of human activity (residential, farming, hunting, etc.). Approximately 35 percent of the land within the corridor has been converted to settlements and farms with plenty of accompanying roads including the newly paved Southern Highway (TIDE 2000:14).

Lands belonging to three NGOs – Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE), TIDE, and Fauna & Flora International (FFI) – are also located within the corridor. A for-profit tourism venture, Belize Lodge & Excursions, owns and manages the 7,600 acre Boden Creek Ecological Reserve, which also lies within the corridor. About 3,000 hectares of the corridor area is Maya Indian Reservation[21] (see Map 7, p.48), and the rest is evenly divided between private and national land (TIDE 2000:9).

The MMMAT as a concept

The MMMAT concept was the brainchild of Lou Nicolait and Evan Cayetano of the now defunct BCES. Through the efforts of Evan Cayetano, BCES established a branch in Punta Gorda. After three years of conducting ecological assessments, BCES and TNC staff determined that the most vulnerable forests that needed urgent protection were in the southern part of Belize within an area spanned by the Deep River Forest Reserve and the coastal embayment of Port Honduras. Although protected areas existed, there was growing concern that they were vulnerable due to the absence of management plans or on-the-ground management. BCES recognized that the six-watershed area which comprises the MMMAT could eventually be managed according to the concepts of a biosphere reserve for sustainable use and resource protection (BCES 1997:2). More specifically, BCES identified the area east of the Maya Mountain Divide, including the Bladen Nature Reserve, Deep River Forest Reserve, Payne's Creek National Park, and Port Honduras Marine Reserve as "critical lands to maintain [in] protected status or be placed under some protected status in order to maintain

biological diversity" (TIDE 1998:6). For BCES, the final goal would be the improved management and use of the six connected watershed areas that empty into Port Honduras, through the preparation and implementation of management plans for the coastal and marine portions of the corridor, i.e., Payne's Creek National Park, Port Honduras Marine Reserve, and Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve. It was deemed necessary to have the plans completed in order to ensure protection of the areas and also to finalize sustainable use plans for appropriate sites within the marine reserves (BCES 1997:3-4).

TIDE and MMMAT

TNC decided to support the efforts of BCES to conceptualize a corridor concept for the region, later dubbed the MMMAT, and to make the corridor a reality. TNC hired a marine scientist, Will Heyman, to assist BCES with the technical and institutional support to do conservation work in Southern Belize.[22] In May 1994, Will Heyman was asked to open a BCES office in Punta Gorda, which would facilitate BCES' corridor development work in Southern Belize. According to Heyman:

> By the summer of 1994, I met Wil Maheia, who was working on his M.S. in Idaho… In the course of about one year, a Peace Corp Volunteer came in [to work at BCES-PG], I worked with Wil Maheia, and Evan Cayetano came in and became the Director of the PG branch of BCES. The idea at the time was that BCES would begin to transfer more of its operations to Southern Belize. (2003)

BCES depended almost entirely on TNC for funding, and had to close its doors in 1996 when TNC withdrew funding. According to Heyman, Wil Maheia continued to work "wearing the BCES cap" for another year-and-a-half promoting the corridor concept at the communities although he was not getting a salary. Soon after, Heyman and the TNC-Belize Director met with Maheia and together decided that a new organization – the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) – should be formed out of the BCES remnants. According to its Executive Director, TIDE was conceived as a grassroots initiative in response to the negative environmental effects from activities such as manatee poaching, illegal fishing, illegal logging, destructive farming methods, and other types of unsustainable development. Its original staff was made up entirely of volunteers, and its early efforts involved protection of the West Indian Manatee. TIDE has branched out substantially from

its initial manatee focus. Aside from managing public and private lands, it also provides fly-fishing and kayaking tours via its for-profit arm, TIDE Tours (TIDE 2003c). TNC has been one of TIDE's main partners since TIDE's inception. TIDE has adopted the MMMAT as a critical focus area, including the BCES goal of ensuring protection of the three coastal and marine portions of the corridor – Payne's Creek, Port Honduras, and Sapodilla Cayes.

From 1999 to 2002, TNC focused much of its efforts at promoting the MMMAT concept. The main purpose of the MMMAT concept, as originally envisioned, was to guide economic development in the transect so that long-term ecological and socioeconomic benefits would be maximized at the ridge to reef scale. TNC hired a consultant to take the lead in developing a first version Site Conservation Plan (SCP) for the MMMAT, following a planning methodology developed by TNC.[23] The second version of the SCP, which was completed in December 2000, contained an overview of conservation targets and goals for the MMMAT, described the stresses and sources of stresses on the five ecosystem types, critical threats and strategies, as well as monitoring and capacity building action plans. As stated in the document, the SCP "yielded a series of specific action plans for threat abatement, monitoring, and increasing TIDE's conservation capacity [within the MMMAT]" (TIDE 2000:76). TNC hired another consultant, Peter Esselman, to draft the third generation of the MMMAT SCP, this time with a refined and new analysis of aquatic biological communities (TIDE 2002a).

The main aim of the SCP is to "help tie together the multiple demands of terrestrial and marine conservation through the freshwater systems that unite them in a Ridge to Reef Corridor" (TIDE, 2000:77). TIDE organized a two-day meeting in January 2002 to present the SCP to the public of the Toledo District in an "attempt to draw together key stakeholders from the local NGO community and the government" (TIDE 2002b). The meeting had the following objectives: 1) to present the history and ideas behind the delineation of MMMAT, 2) explain the concepts and approach behind the SCP methodology, 3) seek feedback about the validity and accuracy of the SCP analysis and TIDE's proposed solutions to conservation challenges, and 4) to form partnerships and collaborations between national and local stakeholders (TIDE 2002b).

Several interviewees for this study commented that the approach that TIDE followed to gain support for the MMMAT concept and the SCP fell short on a number of levels. It was not clear to participants if the meeting was to seek meaningful input to the SCP or if TIDE's intention was simply to obtain consensus among the participants for the SCP. Nevertheless, TIDE was criticized at the meeting for failing to consult adequately with stakeholders within the MMMAT area during the formulation of the SCP and failing to involve other organizations in developing the plan. One participant encapsulated the feelings of many at the meeting:

> The plan was all environmentally focused, with no significant socioeconomic component. People are viewed as threats in this plan…. (Caddy-Foster 2002)

Another participant reiterated concerns about the SCP planning approach:

> Stakeholder involvement was brought in after [TIDE] had already proposed [the SCP]. TIDE's objective was to receive comments on and inputs to the plan. However, support for the SCP was not generated for several reasons: 1) participation of stakeholders was not there, 2) there was too much of a major focus on biodiversity issues, and 3) TIDE did not pay attention to the communities straddling the area, which are in severe poverty…. The SCP will not succeed unless the framework is hinged on community participation. (Morrison 2002)

From the BCES and TNC studies, there seems to be compelling ecological evidence that supports the legitimacy of the MMMAT as an important corridor for conservation. The SCP consultant remarked that it is "rare that you find these protected areas that stretch from the ridges to the reefs, in systems that are so little degraded" (Esselman 2002). There have not been problems with the technical and ecological side of the SCP. But it is very clear that stakeholders' concerns are directed at the legitimacy of the plan from the local social and political perspectives. According to Esselman:

> …the suggestions [from the meeting] were to hold wide-scale community consultations [on the SCP] and even to go so far as to hold a complementary process, like a socio-SCP, as a counterpart to the ecological-SCP. To go out on a community by community basis and find out what the resource conservation issues are. (2002)

Most of the discussion on the second day of the meeting explored pathways by which collaboration could occur to salvage the MMMAT concept. As a result of this discussion a watershed taskforce was set up, which was charged with taking the steps necessary to lead to

a watershed association of some geographic scope (see Chapter Six). To date, only a few organizations (including TIDE) have shown interest in making this watershed approach a reality.[24]

According to TIDE's Executive Director, the SCP "will continue to evolve like a management plan. We will have a draft here and there but I don't know if we'll ever have a draft that says this is the final draft" (Maheia 2002). To date, TIDE has not followed through on the suggestion to hold wide-scale community consultations. TIDE has instead appeared to be content at gaining a foothold in the MMMAT area by becoming involved in the management of the coastal and marine protected areas of the MMMAT – Payne's Creek National Park, Port Honduras Marine Reserve, and the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve. Even in these locations, TIDE has faced tremendous challenges.

TIDE and Payne's Creek

TIDE has been struggling with gaining management responsibility of the 31,676-acre Payne's Creek National Park (PCNP), which was officially declared in 1994. According to TIDE's draft management plan (1998) for PCNP, the national park is very rich in biodiversity and contains outstanding areas that contribute to the comprehensive coverage of natural communities. The Ycacos Lagoon within PCNP drains directly into the coastal embayment of Port Honduras.

In a letter to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (TIDE 1999), TIDE stated that it "was counting on participating in the co-management of the PCNP" and strongly believed "that the park cannot be managed without a sound management plan, approved by Forestry and the communities." In September 1998, TIDE prepared a draft management plan for PCNP at the "invitation … of the Forest Department (FD), Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)" (TIDE 1998:6). In the plan, TIDE recommended that, since Payne's Creek is contiguous with Port Honduras Marine Reserve, the two areas should ultimately be managed as one unit, "under one management authority…to be called the Port Honduras Management Authority" (TIDE 1998:7-8). TIDE further proposed that this management authority should also be made responsible for the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve since "it has essentially the same users" as Port Honduras (TIDE 1998:7-8). TIDE's vision at the time was that the now-

defunct BCES would initially act as the "implementing arm" of the management authority, with TIDE taking the "responsibility for strengthening and capacitating the authority particularly [in] community and stakeholder aspects" (TIDE 1998:36). The draft management plan, which lacked significant community input, remains in its draft stage.

As a result of TIDE's interest in the PCNP, and community requests for more involvement in the management of the national park, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRECI) made a landmark decision on February 22, 1999. The major elements of the decision were as follows:

- The PCNP will be managed by an interim committee composed of one representative from TIDE, four representatives from the Punta Negra and Monkey River communities, one representative from the Coastal Zone Management Authority and one representative from the Forest Department. (It was subsequently decided that two representatives from Punta Gorda would also sit on the committee.)

- The mission of the interim committee is to complete the draft of an appropriate management plan based upon the original plan submitted by TIDE for the approval of the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment.

- The interim committee will also establish an appropriate mechanism for the sustained co-management of the national park by the local communities, local NGOs which have community support, and the Forest Department.

- The interim committee has the authority to pursue such activities as it may consider of immediate necessity for the protection of the PCNP and to foster community involvement in the management of the park….

- The Managing Director of TIDE is to liaise with the Forest Department to facilitate the selection of community representatives on the interim committee (GOB 1999).

At the first meeting of the interim committee, the Executive Director of TIDE and a representative from Punta Gorda were elected co-chairpersons of the committee. The committee also expressed its support of "the management plan as drafted by TIDE" and

strongly urged the Forest Department to "draft a Memorandum of Understanding such that TIDE in partnership with the surrounding communities become the managers of the PCNP, on behalf of the Forest Department in accordance with the management plan" (TIDE 1999).

TIDE and the Payne's Creek Communities

TIDE subsequently initiated management activities at Payne's Creek. With funding support from TNC and other sources, TIDE hired people from the local communities as rangers and installed ranger stations in Payne's Creek and Abalone Caye (within Port Honduras) in order to deter illegal harvesting of mahogany and to stem illegal poaching of manatees especially from across the border (Guatemala and Honduras) and as a way to enforce conservation values in this area. Up to that point, TIDE was the only NGO engaged in on-the-ground protected areas management in the Toledo District.

TIDE's positive working relationship with the communities, however, did not last long. This relationship breakdown was probably due to TIDE's unilateral engagement in PCNP management activities and little, if any, community input and involvement in the management of the national park. TIDE had even gone as far as to submit a proposal for the co-management of PCNP between themselves and the Forest Department, which has legal jurisdiction over national parks. According to the draft agreement, the staff of the national park would be responsible for the day-to-day management of PCNP with advice from TIDE, which would also be responsible for reporting to and consulting with the Forest Department in respect to PCNP management.

The management plan that was originally circulated in draft form in 1997 had been partly used by TIDE to conduct some management activities in the park. According to TIDE's Executive Director, Wil Maheia:

> The Ministry of Natural Resources knows we manage [Payne's Creek]. We have a working committee but no formal agreement. We know the Government won't kick us out so we have not gone through the formalities of paper work. (2002)

Recently, the chairlady of the Monkey River Village Council, who also sits on the PCNP Interim Committee, proposed that the management of the PCNP be given to the communities

of Monkey River and Punta Negra (Sandlin 2002a). The reasons offered for this request included the fact that the two communities were instrumental in the declaration of the Payne's Creek area as a national park, and that they have "consistently supported the management" of the park (Sandlin 2002a). The following reason was also given:

> Both communities [Monkey River and Punta Negra] originally supported the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) [sic] management of the park. After four years of management by TIDE, however, little has been done. In fact to date no management plan has been developed and if any benefit has accrued it has been to TIDE and not to the communities. It should be noted, however, that in seeking direct management of the park, it is not the intention of the communities to go against TIDE but merely the belief of both communities that they can derive more benefits from managing the park themselves. In fact most NGO's [sic] have given the idea that they are merely interim managers while they train communities to manage their own resources. Monkey River and Punta Negra would like to be among the first to take these organizations at their word. (Sandlin 2002a)

In relation to the management plan, Sandlin was probably referring to the fact that the management plan postulated by TIDE had, after almost four years, not been updated to include community input. In response to this unprecedented move by the communities, TIDE applied to the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT)[25] for funding to revise and update the PCNP management plan (GOB 2003f). Before the grant funding was approved, TIDE was required by PACT to submit to the Forest Department a proposed "Methodology for Revision and Finalization of the Payne's Creek National Park Management Plan" for review and approval. In this document, TIDE noted that the PCNP Interim Committee "ultimately makes decisions on behalf of Payne's Creek National Park" and that the committee "proposes to give TIDE the responsibility of the day-to-day operation and administration of the Park" (TIDE 2003). The Forest Department subsequently approved the methodology but reminded TIDE that "the custodial responsibility of the management plan remains with the PCNP Interim Management Committee" (Belize Forest Department 2003). A few days later, PACT received a letter from the chairlady of the Monkey River Village Council requesting that PACT suspend the grant funding to TIDE for the revision of the management plan. PACT responded that for the suspension of the project to be considered, the request would have to come from the Interim Management Committee, at which both Monkey River and TIDE are represented (Woods 2003).

According to Maheia, the breakdown in relations between TIDE and the communities was exacerbated by party politics, particularly as a result of the electioneering that took place in preparation for the 2003 General Elections. Like much of Belize, Monkey River is very divided along party lines (People's United Party and United Democratic Party). For example, PUP supporters do not shop at the grocery stores of UDP supporters, and vice versa. Monkey River representatives (Eleanor Sandlin and others) recently asked TIDE to agree that the communities should manage Payne's Creek. Maheia has reiterated that he has nothing against Monkey River and Punta Negra managing Payne's Creek. However, he believes that they cannot and should not do it on their own. According to Maheia, the GOB-appointed management committee has not played its role, as directed by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Even though it has the authority to do so, the committee has not completed the PCNP management plan, nor taken steps to establish an appropriate mechanism for the sustained co-management of the national park by the local communities, local NGOs, and the Forest Department. The people on the committee appear to be committed to the management of Payne's Creek, but have not been able to work effectively as a group because of the communication breakdown between the community representatives and TIDE. TIDE has been chairing the committee, but at every meeting of the committee the respective representatives change. According to TIDE's Executive Director, Wil Maheia, even though the Forest Department has jurisdiction over Payne's Creek, they seem content to observe how the situation plays out.

The Sapodilla Cayes

The 33,401-acre Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve (SCMR) was legally designated in 1996. That same year, it was further recognized as a component of the Belize Barrier Reef World Heritage Site (Barborak et al. 2002). A management plan for the SCMR was drafted in 1994 by the Fisheries Department.

According to several sources, TIDE was offered the management of the SCMR in the early 1990s but turned down the offer. The question of who would manage SCMR was again brought up at a meeting of the Tri-National Alliance of the Gulf of Honduras (TRIGOH)[26] in Honduras in 1997. TIDE again did not express any intention to manage the SCMR, although

the Toledo branch of the Belize Tourism Industry Association[27] (BTIA) did express interest at that same meeting (Anonymous 2002). Several interviewees suggested that TIDE's decision not to be involved in the SCMR's management was due to the fact that its leaders felt that they did not have any competition in the MMMAT's marine area and could absorb the management of the SCMR indirectly. According to TIDE's Executive Director, Wil Maheia:

> The Nature Conservancy wanted TIDE to manage the Sapodilla Cayes, but did not offer financial support. TIDE had human resources to manage SCMR, but did not have the funds. (2003)

In the meantime, thousands of tourists were making use of the Sapodilla Cayes every year, with most of the tourists coming from Honduras and Guatemala. Honduran tourist guides began to complain about the lack of a management presence in the area and the deleterious effect that unchecked visitation to the cayes was having. In 1999, BTIA applied for the management rights of the Sapodilla Cayes. BTIA cited that it was important to empower local constituencies, which would be the association's primary goal along with preserving the ecological integrity of the cayes and reef system.

Several interviewees commented that TIDE and TNC expressed great concern when it became known that BTIA was applying for the management of the Sapodilla Cayes. Both organizations felt that BTIA was not adequately equipped to manage the SCMR. These same sources claim that BTIA membership swelled after it became public knowledge that BTIA was poised to receive the mandate from the Fisheries Department to manage the SCMR. The new BTIA members called for a change in leadership of the BTIA. BTIA officials have alleged that the unprecedented increase in membership of the association was encouraged by TIDE in an effort to change the leadership structure of the BTIA and derail the signing of the co-management agreement with the Fisheries Department (Anonymous 2002).

In reaction to these events the members of BTIA formed a new organization, the Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment (TASTE), so as to retain control of the management of the Sapodilla Cayes. TASTE and the Fisheries Department subsequently signed a co-management agreement for the SCMR in 2001. According to the CEO of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (the Fisheries Department's parent Ministry) TASTE

was selected to manage the SCMR because it presented the only proposal and submitted a good plan. The Fisheries Department, however, has been carrying out the day-to-day management of the marine reserve. At a February 2003 meeting of protected area management agencies in Belmopan, a high-level Fisheries Department official announced that TASTE will get delegated management of the SCMR in 2004. In the meantime, TASTE has joined various NGO associations in an effort to familiarize itself with protected area management issues. These associations include the Toledo Watershed Association (see Chapter Six), the Association of Protected Area Management Organizations (see Chapter Nine), and the Tri-National Alliance for the Gulf of Honduras (see Chapters Two and Nine). TIDE is also a member of each of these associations.

TIDE and Port Honduras

TIDE has had more success with community relations in its efforts at Port Honduras. In 1993 and 1994, the Port Honduras coastal embayment was subject to two rapid ecological assessments (REAs), which were led by TNC's Florida and Caribbean Marine and Conservation Science Center, and included the participation of the Government of Belize, NGOs, and community-based organizations. The results of both REAs confirmed the results of earlier studies which documented the importance of Port Honduras as a critical habitat area. The REA reports concluded that the area warranted special management under marine protected area regulations. Residents of Monkey River, Punta Negra, Punta Gorda and nearby communities, and the Port Honduras cayes use the Port Honduras area for small-scale commercial fisheries, largely for lobster and finfish. These residents – particularly fishers – agreed with the conclusion of the REAs and proposed that Port Honduras be declared a marine reserve, mostly due to their concerns about the unabated gillnetting and poaching of manatees in the bay of Port Honduras by Guatemalan and Honduran fishers. The over fishing and illegal fishing by foreign nationals may not be surprising given the relative richness of the fisheries resources in Southern Belize compared to those in coastal Guatemala and Honduras. Also, Southern Belize has only about 4,500 coastal inhabitants and 125 fishers whereas the Atlantic Coast of Guatemala alone has 130,000 inhabitants and 5,000 coastal fishers (TIDE 2000:18).

From early on, TIDE responded favorably and proactively to the marine reserve proposal to protect the areas from these trans-boundary pressures. As a result, one of TIDE's original objectives was to protect the West Indian Manatee. According to TIDE's Executive Director, Wil Maheia:

> Fishing boats were coming in from Guatemala exploiting the resources… In one weekend they had killed about nine manatees. We only have around 150 in [the Port Honduras] area…. Without TIDE the manatee would have been extinct. (2002)

This experience at Port Honduras was crucial to TIDE's development; as mentioned previously, the organization's *raison d'etre* eventually evolved and moved into protected areas management and development. After three years of planning meetings and workshops sponsored and conducted by TIDE, the reserve was legally established in January 2000. The 100,378-acre reserve extends from the mouth of the Rio Grande to the mouth of the Monkey River and goes five miles out to sea. Due to community attendance at these series of meetings and workshops, the reserve has, from its inception, been characterized by a high degree of community participation (Barborak et. al. 2002:16), mostly of fishers from the coastal communities of the Toledo District.

The planning sessions also resulted in the creation of a management plan for Port Honduras in 2000. According to Barborak, et. al. (2002:16), the management plan was designed as "a collaborative effort that included participation by representatives from the local communities, TIDE, and The Nature Conservancy." The plan proposed that the Belize Fisheries Department and TIDE "will be responsible for the overall management of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve" and also recognized that "community and stakeholders will be imperative to the success of the reserve" (TIDE 2000:62). The Fisheries Department, which has jurisdiction over all marine reserves, and TIDE signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the co-management of PHMR in May 2001 (GOB 2001). The main features of this MOU are as follows:

- A management committee shall be instituted and maintained by the Fisheries Department to advise on matters pertinent to the proper development and management of PHMR. It is important to note that the only agencies specified to be on the committee are the Fisheries Department, Forest Department and the Coastal Zone Management Institute.

- TIDE is responsible for the day-to-day management of the PHMR (including all aspects of recreation, visitor use, equipment maintenance and public awareness and education campaigns) with direct advice from the Fisheries Department.

- The Fisheries Department is responsible to assist with additional security and enforcement, as well as to assist with providing infrastructure.

The reserve is therefore managed by TIDE, with advisory input from the management committee; presently comprised of representatives from the agencies specified in the MOU, as well as from TIDE and local communities. TIDE's Executive Director claims that the "Port Honduras advisory committee is a good model for community involvement…. Communities are officially involved in hiring and firing decisions at TIDE." The committee meets every three months to address policy and management issues in the reserve. According to a WCS report to the World Bank:

> Management of [PHMR] is truly a community-based process, as the reserve's manager was born within the area that presently comprises the reserve, and community members chose the reserve's six rangers. (Barborak et. al. 2002:16)

Analysis

While the MMMAT concept has merit from an ecological standpoint, its potential as a forum for multi-stakeholder discussions and coordination will be more difficult to promote. The following discussion will attempt to disaggregate the lessons vis-à-vis interests, challenges, and characteristics of multi-stakeholder collaboration, and will suggest opportunities that may still exist for promoting multi-stakeholder discussions and collaboration in the MMMAT.

Challenges for collaboration

Lack of trust

TNC's involvement in Southern Belize from the early stages of the MMMAT discussions has been viewed suspiciously; this suspicion reflects on TIDE as well. The TIDE/TNC connection is strong and goes back to the pre-TIDE days when BCES was still in existence. As stated previously, the MMMAT concept was first developed by BCES in the mid-1990s, with funding and technical support from TNC, as an effort to prepare for expanding development in Southern Belize (mainly as a result of the rehabilitation of the Southern Highway). An NGO representative based in Punta Gorda observed that TNC promotes the MMMAT on their website "as if they are the manager of the whole thing" (Anonymous 2002). Others have suggested that TIDE and TNC are more interested in raising money on the name of the MMMAT than they are about working hard to make sure that the MMMAT becomes an actual multi-stakeholder management reality. But the harshest accusation leveled is that "TIDE is a TNC organization" (Anonymous 2002). In response, TIDE's Executive Director stated:

> We are not a TNC organization. We have partnerships with them like we do with Rainforest Alliance, WWF [and others]… A lot of people still don't give us credit for what we have done. Some of our own people don't give us a lot of respect…. [We] are locally based. All our board [members] were born and raised here. Out of 27 employees we have only two people that were not born here…. [We] have to have our own identity. We are not TNC; we are TIDE. (Maheia 2002)

An INGO official based in Punta Gorda put it another way:

> [Local] NGOs are… everywhere and they are [usually] affiliated with a group outside – owned may be too strong a word, but… controlled by NGOs from outside. Where would Programme for Belize be without TNC, or YCT without FFI, SATIIM without EcoLogic, TIDE without TNC…? (McGill 2002)

In general, according to Chief Forest Officer Oswaldo Sabido, there is a certain amount of skepticism in Government circles when you talk about NGOs. Sabido asks: "Where's the hidden agenda? What do these people really want?" Questions such as these create a barrier to Government-NGO cooperation. This barrier could be removed by greater transparency, that is, by "developing closer relationships so that people are aware of what is happening and

they can see what is being done," as Sabido suggests. The growing perception is that NGOs have many more resources than Government agencies, especially in relation to the NGOs' agenda and the areas under their jurisdiction.

Without question, TIDE has been the dominant player in protected areas advocacy and management in Southern Belize. Besides promoting the MMMAT concept, TIDE has also attempted to gain management responsibility over Payne's Creek, Port Honduras, and the Sapodilla Cayes. This attempt by TIDE to become involved in the management of coastal and marine protected areas has led some officials of key stakeholder agencies to suggest that TIDE would like to have and maintain a "monopoly in conservation" in the region (Anonymous 2002). TIDE's Executive Director disputes this suggestion:

> [We] don't get credit for [our protected areas management efforts], but when it comes to community involvement… name me any other park – here or in the United States – where the manager was born and raised in the park and the rangers too. [Our park] managers are overseen by an advisory group. We have an advisory board that oversees the management. For example the advisory committee could sanction a ranger, if he were out of line. (2002)

The monopoly view is probably strengthened by what many see as the similar conservation strategies that TIDE and TNC have adopted for the identification of critical habitats, the lobbying for the legal protection of these "hotspots", preparation of protected area management plans, and actual management of protected areas. The fact that TIDE has, with TNC's financial support, been acquiring lands in the Toledo District through their Private Lands Initiative has not helped matters either. TIDE's Executive Director has a different point of view of what he calls [TIDE's] "buying back Toledo":

> Belizeans don't have access to the lands any more…. Over the past year, tenure of seafront properties has changed from local to foreign owned [sic]. When I was growing up there wasn't anyone in this town interested in seafront property. The seafront was for everybody. There were no fences. [These lands] should be in local hands. It is our intention to repatriate some of these lands. When we own it, it's not TIDE owning it but the people of Belize.

Conflict and competition among groups

Competition and rivalry. Competition and rivalry characterize interactions between NGOs, and between NGOs and communities, and is related to territoriality, funding, and visibility.

TIDE's original goal was to create a niche for itself at the MMMAT level (so that all other organizations would play a secondary or support role). At the same time, TIDE worked feverishly to gain management control of the three coastal and marine reserves within the MMMAT. In particular, it successfully lobbied to create the Port Honduras Marine Reserve. According to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Sergio Garcia, there was "all sorts of infighting" between TASTE and TIDE over the rights to manage Sapodilla Cayes (2002). The Belize Fisheries Department signed a co-management agreement with TASTE for the Sapodilla Cayes. According to Garcia, TASTE had presented an acceptable proposal and plan. Although the working relationship between the two NGOs has vastly improved recently, this squabble created a serious rift at the time between TIDE and TASTE.

The communities of Monkey River and Punta Negra are presently at odds with TIDE over the rights to control the management of Payne's Creek National Park. TIDE and the communities are represented on the Payne's Creek Interim Management Committee, which was supposed to be a forum for overseeing the management of the national park. However, a leading community representative has proposed that the communities be given full management responsibility of the PCNP, and TIDE has been trying to salvage its lead role by proposing to update the management plan for the park.

Funding relationships. The relationship between local NGOs and donor agencies has impacted how local NGOs interact with each other in the MMMAT region. In regard to funding, ESTAP (GOB 2000c:183) notes:

> Funding is a constraint for most NGOs and CBOs in the region, and the high cost of operation in the region contributes to the unsustainable nature of their work. The absence of proper guidelines and legislation to regulate (and regularize) their activity has meant that many NGOs and CBOs still operate in a climate of suspicion.

One NGO official agreed with this view, saying that "[NGOs] are not honest with one another. Ideas are sources for funding, so people aren't always willing to share" (Caddy-Foster 2002). The director of a Punta Gorda-based US NGO agreed that this is especially the case with TIDE:

> I get the impression that TIDE might be more ambivalent [to pursue collaboration] than the others. Because they are seeing all these other NGOs coming into the area and thinking they might be taking away from their area. (McGill 2002)

Various stakeholders see TIDE as being more interested in raising money than working hard to make sure that the MMMAT becomes an actual multi-stakeholder management reality. Indeed, the strong partnership between TIDE and TNC has not only translated to a secure funding source for TIDE, but has also increased TIDE's international visibility. This has made TIDE the most marketable NGO in Southern Belize, evidenced by the number of awards, donations and grants that the NGO has received over the last five years. Meanwhile, other organizations have had to struggle to gain visibility and secure funds for their work. Maheia recognizes that TIDE's "bold and aggressive" fundraising strategy has affected its relationship with other organizations, but points out that "at the end of the day we are proud to know we are one of the biggest employers in this town and contribute to the economy of the [Toledo] District while conserving our natural resources" (2002).

Fragmentation and division. Civil society organizations have been proliferating in Southern Belize. Although some of these organizations have formed various alliances, others seem content to operate on their own or do not have the will to collaborate with others. The Maya Leaders' Alliance (MLA) and the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment (SAGE) are probably the only good examples in Southern Belize of multi-organizational coordination, albeit for cultural and economic interests.[28] The protected area management organizations and landowners of the Toledo District, however, have not been successful at setting up networks.

At a meeting of protected area management organizations held on January 23, 2003, in Belmopan City, it was noted that protected area management organizations operate in isolation from each other and therefore have little impact on the development of Belize and protected areas at a national level.[29] Often these organizations are faced with similar problems but do not network with other agencies and end up dealing with their problems alone, including searching for funding support. This exacerbates the fragmentation among NGOs that already exists. As explained by an INGO official based in Punta Gorda, "There are more NGOs arising; more people looking for the same amount of money" (McGill 2002).

Organizational challenges

TIDE's capacity to manage its ambitious protected areas portfolio has been called into question. Some see TIDE's portfolio as too large for one organization to handle. The Executive Director of Friends of Nature, Lindsay Garbutt, who previously worked at TIDE, commented:

> [TIDE's] popularity grew faster than their institutional capacity; therefore as an organization they never… developed proper strategic planning to know what… to do versus what… the opportunities [are] out there. [As] an organization they tried to grab all the opportunities that were out there, whether or not it was in their strategic plan. This means [that TIDE has] stretched itself very thin. (2002)

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries CEO Garcia echoes this view; he feels that TIDE created this predicament for itself by jumping into projects "knowing that the money is there," even though their human resources are limited. Other interviewees commented that TIDE's staff has been rendered ineffective by poor management for real conservation on-the-ground. Monkey River community leaders claim that after four years of management by TIDE, little has been done at Payne's Creek National Park (Sandlin 2002a).

TASTE's capacity to manage the Sapodilla Cayes has also been questioned. Although the Fisheries Department signed a co-management agreement with TASTE, the agreement was mostly symbolic because the Fisheries Department retains day-to-day management responsibility for the reserve. Several sources indicated to the project team that this reluctance to transfer management responsibility to TASTE stems from the fact that the Fisheries Department does not yet have full confidence in TASTE's ability to manage the reserve on its own. Although TASTE is comprised of prominent and successful persons experienced in business management, few of its members are experienced or trained in natural resource management.

Other challenges – sovereignty issues

The Sapodilla Cayes have long been a contentious issue for the Governments of Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras. Long-standing territorial claims to the Sapodilla Cayes and other border regions have set the grounds for this dispute. In addition to Belize, both Guatemala

and Honduras claim the Sapodilla Cayes as part of their territorial boundaries. Each of the three countries also has substantial economic interest in the Sapodilla Cayes and the surrounding marine area. The economic concerns over the fishery and the area's importance for tourism are fundamental to all three countries. The surrounding waters of the Sapodilla Cayes are a rich and productive fishery in which all three parties have a vested interest and on which part of the coastal economies of the three countries are dependent. As succinctly stated in a televised Belizean newscast on October 14, 2002:

> The cayes that make up the Sapodilla Range are among the most beautiful along the entire barrier reef. Every year, thousands of tourists make use of these islands, but most of them come from Guatemala…. As for who actually has sovereignty there is no debate. The cayes are all Belizean. (News 5 Online)

All of the cayes within the Sapodilla Cayes archipelago are national land; some are leased to several Belizeans. Nevertheless, negotiations have been ongoing between the three countries for several years. These negotiations may have a dramatic effect on the management practices of the Sapodilla Cayes. In August 2002 a facilitation team developed a settlement agreement that called for the development of the Belize-Guatemala-Honduras Ecological Park. The park would include the Sapodilla Cayes and other parts of the barrier reef system. This puts into question the future management by TASTE of the area. Under the specified terms all three countries would be involved in the management of the Sapodilla Cayes and surrounding marine area.

In addition, the facilitators also put forth a proposal for a joint development fund to increase cross border trade and exchange between the three countries. It is difficult to know what impact further development in the area will have on the management decisions of the Sapodilla Cayes.

In the context of the ongoing dispute, the Fisheries Department has had to make decisions about whether to consult with Honduran and Guatemalan stakeholders (i.e., tour operators, tourists and fishers) in the Sapodilla Cayes. Pressure exists not to consider these non-Belizean stakeholders, because it is perceived as potentially fostering territorial claims of those countries. However, TASTE's Coordinator, Jack Nightingale, does recognize the potential benefit of involving non-Belizean stakeholders:

> I think it has to be a great idea. For a start, let's face it, the tour operators that have been coming here for the last thirty to forty years from Guatemala, whereas they say this is Belizean, they also recognize the joy they have in being able to use it. If we continue with that kind of relationship which is good, because they are bringing business, perhaps we would like to bring Belizeans in to enjoy more of it, rather than it all be Guatemalan. So that there could be a greater balance of things that would make it excellent. (News 5 Online 2002)

Opportunities and facilitating factors

Existing relationships

While the MMMAT concept has not yet translated into a forum for multi-stakeholder discussions, and less so into a multi-stakeholder management reality, there are existing relationships and emerging collaborative efforts that have good potential for success.

Emerging coalitions. At the invitation of BAS and UNDP-Belize, eleven protected area management organizations from across Belize (including TIDE, TASTE, and YCT) met on January 23, 2003, with the intention of formally creating an Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO). Meeting participants recognized that, although other umbrella organizations exist in Belize, a national network for protected area management agencies is needed. Other networks do not deal specifically with protected area issues, have broader objectives and goals, and consequently may not address areas of concern to protected area managers. Meeting participants supported the creation of APAMO and agreed to work together to form the association, which would have the following objectives: 1) Provide GOB and funding agencies with advice and recommendations to improve and promote management of protected areas; 2) Highlight and promote the contribution which protected areas make on the economy and environmental image of Belize, and social well-being of Belizeans; 3) Foster communications between protected areas managers so as to enhance coordination; 4) Facilitate technical support to member agencies; 5) Provide a forum for discussion and prioritization of issues, and concerted action; and 6) Create a networked voice for protected areas managers. A committee, comprised of representatives of agencies present at the meeting, has been set up to coordinate the formalization process of APAMO (Salas 2003:9).

Working relationships. Whereas there has not been much success at formalizing multi-agency coordination in Toledo, informal interactions between and among agencies do exist. For example, due to a lack of financial resources, Forest Department personnel in Toledo are unable to effectively perform their duties, namely, monitoring of logging operations, and enforcement of forest and wildlife regulations. Consequently, the Forest Department depends on the goodwill of community members and NGO personnel to report illegal activities in protected areas. A forest officer, Wayne Bardalez, posted in the Toledo District observed:

> The Forest Department [is] handicapped due to lack of resources. …GOB has not provided financial support. NGOs, which have good experience, have been helping the Forest Department to do its monitoring. (2002)

TIDE has loaned its vehicles and boats to Police Department, Fisheries Department and Forest Department staff on a number of occasions to conduct patrols in protected areas and to monitor reports of illegal poaching or logging activities. According to Bardalez, the Forest Department raided an illegal logging operation in Sarstoon-Temash National Park in mid-2002 with transportation assistance from the Community-initiated Agriculture and Resource Development Project (CARD)[30] and with the support of the Police Department. Although some NGO officials believe that "[GOB] sees NGOs as interfering," these same officials see it as an opportunity to counteract GOB's ambivalence about NGOs by capitalizing on these Government agencies' reliance on NGOs.

Conservation easements are another example of working relationships. Although conservation easements are not permissible under Belize's laws, landowners can impose restrictive covenants on their properties. In effect, two landowners may execute contracts that bind each other, which may be recorded as an encumbrance on the title. In other words, conservation easements work on private land once the owners are in agreement. The easements are legally binding between the landowners under their own arrangements. TIDE and the Ya'axche' Conservation Trust (YCT) have signed such an "easement" for one of TIDE's properties. In September 2001, representatives of TIDE, YCT, and the Forest Department attended a Land Trust Rally in Baltimore, Maryland, to learn more about how such easements work.

Shared concerns and interests

The five ecosystem types located within MMMAT are interconnected. Therefore, the MMMAT is an integrated corridor from an ecological perspective. In the words of Esselman: "Even if socio-politically the corridor idea is not embraced, it's still functioning as an ecological entity" (2002). Occurrences at one property would likely have impacts at another property. Whether the various stakeholders are currently interested or not, this ecological contiguity across various protected areas provides an opportunity for CBOs, NGOs, INGOs and policy makers to join forces to improve management of this unique corridor and address shared concerns.

Since the folding of BCES and the establishment of TIDE, other environmental NGOs are now involved in protected areas management in the MMMAT region. These include NGOs that have co-management agreements with the Government of Belize, notably, TASTE, which is involved in the management of the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve; Belize Audubon Society, which manages the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary; and the Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE), which is concerned with the protection and management of the Bladen Nature Reserve[31]. Friends of Nature, which manages Laughing Bird Caye National Park and the Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve, also operates in Southern Belize, but not within the MMMAT region. Some of the Maya organizations are also interested in the protection of natural resources: The Toledo Maya Cultural Council, for instance, trains young Mayas in conservation management and is represented on the Board of the Ya'axche' Conservation Trust. The Kekchi Council of Belize (KCB) promotes "sustainable economic development to foster productivity and self reliance" and community co-management of protected areas. The KCB is the lead agency involved in SATIIM, which (as of April 16, 2003) is negotiating a co-management agreement with the GOB for the Sarstoon-Temash National Park.

International NGOs and foundations have also demonstrated concern for the protection of resources in the MMMAT region. TNC has long been a key player in promoting the MMMAT concept. This INGO also has a marine research program based in Toledo. As part of its global restructuring, TNC is in the process of setting up a permanent country office in Belize, of which its marine program would be one component.

The Oak Foundation, a private US-based foundation, has set up a Belize country office (based in Placencia, Stann Creek). This foundation invests in marine conservation initiatives and has already approved grants to TIDE and other NGOs. A UK-based NGO, Fauna & Flora International (FFI), purchased a 9,554-acre parcel of land, known as the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve, which is managed by YCT. Even the US Government has added to this diverse organizational landscape: Peace Corps-Belize has assigned several volunteers to work with local counterparts on community-based conservation initiatives at villages in Toledo and other parts of the country.

Conservation initiatives in the Gulf of Honduras provide opportunities for larger-scale collaboration. This prospect is possible due to renewed efforts to reconcile international territorial disagreements. The governments of Belize, Guatemala and Honduras have been involved in diplomatic negotiations mediated by the Organization of American States (OAS) and facilitated by official representatives of Guatemala and Belize to arrive at a mutual resolution of the territorial dispute. The facilitators have developed a series of proposals and presented these proposals to their respective governments. One of these proposals includes the development of a Belize-Guatemala-Honduras Ecological Park established "in the form of an Agreement binding under international law between Belize, Guatemala and Honduras" (GOB 2002a). The facilitators have noted that the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System project and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridors Project provide "a natural platform and an enabling environment for the establishment of the Ecological Park" and may also be able to provide technical and financial support (GOB 2002a). The Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve falls within the proposed Ecological Park, and would therefore benefit from this tri-national initiative. It must be noted that Belize's sovereignty over the Sapodillas would not be affected by this tri-national initiative. The proposals may only be implemented after they have been put to a public referendum in Guatemala and Belize, and endorsed by the majority of electors in both countries.

Political support

The GOB appears to be very keen on promoting the involvement of NGOs and CBOs in the management of public protected areas. Of the three new terrestrial protected areas that were

declared in 2002, all are based upon some kind of a co-management structure. The entire Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (to which the Forest Department belongs) receives a mere 1.6 percent of the national budget. Given these extreme resource constraints, it is highly unrealistic to assume that the Forest Department can adequately manage the nation's protected areas (Ravndal 2002). "Co-management" arrangements are therefore expected to continue indefinitely.[32]

The GOB has signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with various NGOs and CBOs for the co-management of protected areas. For example, as previously mentioned, TIDE is managing the Port Honduras Marine Reserve on behalf of the Fisheries Department. TASTE has signed a co-management agreement for the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve. The Rio Blanco Mayan Association (representing Santa Cruz and Santa Elena villages) has been charged with the management of the Rio Blanco National Park. SATIIM is poised to enter into an agreement with the Forest Department for the management of the Sarstoon-Temash National Park. These MOUs call for the NGOs/CBOs and the GOB to share management responsibilities. While resource constraints make it difficult for GOB to provide financial assistance, the GOB has helped by writing up support legislation, providing technical assistance and training, and providing "moral support" (Garcia 2002). According to Chief Forest Officer Sabido:

> [Forest Department personnel are] trying to develop more coherence between the different stakeholders especially those people who are managing protected areas or who are directly involved with the whole issue of sustainable use of the forest resources. We are trying to facilitate the participation of the different NGOs or CBOs as much as possible in the initiatives that have started. And also through the Mesoamerican Biological Corridors Project, we also have helped to basically fund and facilitate community and NGO initiatives that tend to bring different stakeholders together. (2002)

Insights on TIDE's future role in MMMAT

TIDE has been and will continue to be a major player in Southern Belize, given the funds and contacts that it has at its reach. The majority of interviewees, including directors of other leading NGOs and officials of Government agencies, recognize TIDE's importance and influence. A high-level Government official commented:

> TIDE seems to have a lot more expertise, more prominence, perhaps more voice in what happens with the coastal and marine areas…. On the political front, TIDE seems to be very articulate and is able to get the ears of the decision-making people…. TIDE following its mentor, TNC, takes a much more corporate approach to conservation than say, YCT, which is trying to develop a more community-based management that involves several communities and a particular ethnic group in Toledo. (Sabido 2002)

The director of a newly established NGO in Southern Belize stated:

> I think TIDE is the leading organization [in Southern Belize]. For a long time it was the only one. It has a huge local, regional, national and maybe even international recognition. It can play a leading and extremely important role in the development of that whole area. (Garbutt 2002)

A former TIDE Board member put it another way:

> TIDE's leadership as an NGO in the area comes through its access to substantial international funding and support resources. This organization gets the most funding of all the NGOs in the Toledo District. By virtue of that, TIDE is poised as a leader but it doesn't necessarily have the strongest consultative leadership and shared strategic vision to independently take the organization ahead…. (Enriquez 2002)

TIDE's leaders have been willing and ready to take on new leadership roles for the NGO in various conservation projects. When a leadership gap presented itself at Payne's Creek, TIDE immediately jumped in. As the trans-boundary pressures on the fishery resources of Port Honduras increased, TIDE took that as a chance to lobby for the protection of the coastal embayment.

TIDE has had several chances to take the lead with championing the MMMAT concept and, for a number of reasons, is still well-positioned to do so. TIDE is the one organization best suited to playing this leadership role because of its political connections, the substantial (albeit stretched) human and financial resources at its command (compared to the other NGOs in the region), its historical involvement with the MMMAT and its technical grasp of the importance of ecological corridors, and its programmatic presence across a wide swath of the Toledo District (via the management of private and public protected areas).

However, given the scale and complexity of the MMMAT, TIDE will not be able to "go it alone." It is already difficult for TIDE to effectively manage the many different initiatives on

its plate. A former TIDE Board member and a former TIDE staff member both believe that TIDE does not have the institutional capacity at this time to take on more than it currently has, even if it would like to realize the huge financial gain and prestige that would come to the organization by increasing its portfolio.

For TIDE to expand its reach and be more effective, it may need to join forces with other organizations. As echoed by a former TIDE employee:

> Certainly some sort of an alliance is necessary. How that would be structured I don't know. NGOs are territorial. I don't know how much the different NGOs will be willing to share power or benefits that come. (Garbutt 2002)

It is clear that the process of improving coordination and collaboration among organizations is not without its challenges. However, there is an opportunity for enhanced collaboration if leadership to do so materializes. TIDE may indeed find it challenging to effectively handle its current responsibilities and expand its outreach at the same time. Nonetheless, TIDE could use this as an opportunity to strengthen its organizational capacity by, among other things, developing an updated organizational strategic plan with measurable objectives and clear evaluation procedures. As noted by an NGO official, "the MMMAT is bigger than just TIDE." TIDE therefore has the opportunity to demonstrate through its actions that is truly committed to the notion of sharing responsibilities and pooling resources with other agencies to improve protected areas management across the MMMAT.

Conclusions

The above discussion leads to the following insights regarding the future of the MMMAT as a multi-stakeholder forum:

- With the development of the Site Conservation Plan, the MMMAT went from a concept to an actual conservation strategy. Although having a strong ecological foundation, the SCP lacks a significant community component. Additionally, insufficient stakeholder consultations held during the SCP development process have resulted in a lack of support of TIDE's MMMAT SCP, even though land managers in the MMMAT region recognize the ecological significance of the corridor.

- It appears that TIDE may hold the cards for the creation of a meaningful multi-stakeholder forum in Southern Belize. An effective collaborative process is not possible in the Toledo District without TIDE. However, other organizations also need to play a role in creating a meaningful multi-stakeholder forum in Toledo. Although such a forum is not possible without TIDE's involvement, the same holds true if the other key organizations are not involved.

- The MMMAT concept and strategy still remains as the most comprehensive effort to date to promote multi-stakeholder coordination and effect multi-ecosystem management in Toledo. Compared to the other NGOs in the region, TIDE is best positioned to play a lead role in the promotion and formation of this effort, whether as prime instigator or technical advisor. If not TIDE, another organization in the region could try to mobilize this effort. Regardless, it seems clear that without a concerted effort to do so, with someone taking the lead, a meaningful multi-stakeholder forum will not be implemented in Toledo.

- Whether the various stakeholders are presently supportive or not of the MMMAT SCP, the contiguity of the five ecosystem types provides an opportunity for land managers and policy makers to join forces to improve management of this corridor both at the individual land management unit level and at the landscape level.

- Because of the lack of organization among the protected areas agencies in Toledo and the inability to coordinate their efforts and to lobby with one networked voice, the management agencies are weak and have little impact on the development of Belize and protected areas at a national level.

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Chapter Six: The Toledo Watershed Association and SAGE

> The survival of Toledo's globally significant environmental resources will greatly depend upon local institutions' collaborative capacity, rather than competitive instincts. (TWA 2002b)

Introduction

The story of the Toledo Watershed Association (TWA) represents the continued development of the collaborative initiative born out of the Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect (MMMAT) concept. It highlights the tendency among organizations to work with other organizations like themselves rather than across sectoral boundaries; it also reveals the potential shortcomings of such an approach. By working predominantly with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and communities while involving Government and industry to only a limited extent, the TWA initiative may be more constrained for resources and less able to build broad support for initiatives.

The story of TWA also highlights the desire among NGOs to define and defend organizational turf. Organizations in Toledo exhibit reluctance to share information, ideas, and especially credit for projects given the funding that reputation draws. Finally, it demonstrates the power of models of success to motivate attempts at collaboration. Two types of organizational models underlie the TWA concept and are frequently referenced by participants in the initiative – the Sibun Watershed Association (SWA) and the Belize Alliance of Conservation NGOs (BACONGO).[33] While the story is complex, it reveals a great deal about organizational interests and inter-organizational dynamics in Toledo.

Background

As discussed earlier, the Site Conservation Plan (SCP) for the MMMAT was presented in a weekend workshop in Punta Gorda in January 2002 by the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment's (TIDE's) consultant responsible for the plan. Anselmo Castaneda of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridors Project also helped to facilitate the meeting. According to other organizational leaders in attendance, it had been anticipated that the meeting would include community leaders, such as alcaldes, but none were present (Caddy-Foster 2002). Instead, the group consisted largely of NGOs – including TIDE, the Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment (TASTE), Belize Audubon Society (BAS), the Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM), and John Spang of Village Farm, as well as Government officials and representatives from a fishing cooperative.

The MMMAT SCP document was viewed with mixed feelings by meeting participants. While the SCP made a strong case for the region as an ecological entity, they felt, it was not based on community consultations and therefore did not adequately address central sociopolitical realities in the area. Secondly, because the analysis followed a threats-based framework, it presented human activities as threats, which was received negatively by organizations with a development focus. Finally, TIDE was put forward as the logical leader of the initiative, raising concern among other local NGOs who were already wary of TIDE's relative power in conservation and land management in Toledo. While several NGOs present at the SCP presentation made suggestions for additions, some participants felt that TIDE did not incorporate their ideas into subsequent drafts (B. Teul 2002). In sum, participants in the SCP meeting perceived that the document did not incorporate the interests of a spectrum of groups, nor did it address social issues. This perception contributed to a lack of ownership of the document among these groups.

Nonetheless, the argument made by the SCP for an integrated approach to conservation was compelling to several of the group leaders present at the meeting. A watershed vision emphasized the interconnections among organizations managing properties and reserves in the same region, and the value of unified efforts over piecemeal and often overlapping projects. While these groups suggested that significant consultation with communities and

fellow NGOs would be necessary to strengthen the document and to account for the realities of communities' needs for access to resources and interest in development opportunities, they also expressed guarded support for greater collaboration at the multi-watershed level as suggested in the SCP. The second day of the SCP presentation workshop was largely devoted, in fact, to working out potential mechanisms for more collaborative watershed management in the MMMAT (Esselman 2002).

The Sibun Watershed Association

One significant contribution to thinking about watershed collaboration among the NGO leaders was a TIDE-organized presentation by Rigoberto Blanco of the Belmopan-based Sibun Watershed Association (SWA) (Esselman 2002; Genus 2002). SWA popularized the idea of watershed-based collaboration in Belize and serves as a model for collaboration initiatives in Toledo. SWA is recognized in Belize as an example of a successful grassroots, community-driven watershed organization that has yielded tangible improvements for communities and ecosystems through education and advocacy efforts. It is also respected for its public involvement strategies. Among other involvement mechanisms, SWA relies on a community-based board that meets monthly in each of the eleven key communities in the watershed on a rotating basis (Blanco 2002; Esselman 2002).

SWA's mission statement, as presented in its *Sibun River Watershed Atlas*, states:

> [SWA is] a non-government community-based organization primarily committed to protecting the integrity of the Sibun River's natural ecosystems for the benefit of future generations, while recognizing the diverse interests of all of its inhabitants. (Boles 1999)

As noted, SWA is a "community-based organization," or a partnership among communities, rather than a partnership among organizations. Nonetheless, SWA also involves a broad spectrum of partners in collaborative management of the watershed. They successfully involve not only diverse communities, but also Government and industry partners. Through the efforts of SWA, citrus industry landowners in the region have increased stream-side buffers, communities have developed improved laundry facilities away from the river, a gravel-mining company has stopped washing gravel in-stream, and Government enforcement of environmental violations has increased with the help of SWA-trained community river

watchdogs. The effort began as an idea in 1993 with encouragement from the Belize Department of the Environment, and eventually SWA became a chartered organization in 1997 (Blanco 2002; Esselman 2002). A major flood provided additional impetus for forming the organization and raised community consciousness about the need for protecting the river (Blanco 2002).

The consultant who led the creation of the second version of the SCP for the MMMAT, Peter Esselman, explicitly envisions, in the longer term, an organization modeled after SWA to manage the six-watershed corridor. Such an organization, like SWA, would involve a range of community leaders, industry representatives, and NGO partners. According to Esselman:

> A positive example of community-based watershed organization, [SWA] has really been successful at drawing together communities and incorporating interests of communities in advocacy and outreach . . . I always use the SWA model. It's real. They have the citrus representation. They have 11 communities involved. Government support. They have the support of NGOs with cash as well as the University of Belize . . . They started by getting *Lighthawk* and flew community members around the watershed talking about upstream and downstream connectivity and how all communities are tied together by water. (2002)

In addition to using over-flights of the watershed to build a sense of place among participants, SWA conducts education in schools and facilitates youth participation in river-related environmental projects. A leading SWA education project is a "mobile classroom" that they take from community to community, predominantly for youth education. Furthermore, SWA produced a *Sibun River Watershed Atlas* with support from the Ministry of Education that explains, in an accessible style, the natural history of the Sibun Watershed and the threats to watershed health, as well as provides a history of the Watershed Association.

Though SWA has been successful in bringing together a broad spectrum of interested parties in the watershed and achieving positive results, the organization also faces resource constraints in terms of staff and finances. While they are a membership organization, they are predominantly grant-funded. Their capacity to conduct projects at any given time is therefore highly dependent on their success in gaining funding. SWA began with significant funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), but the grant eventually ended.

In 1998 and 1999, SWA was in "a slow period (Blanco 2002)." With reduced funding comes reduced ability to attract staff. Sergio Garcia, CEO of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Cooperatives, who is familiar with SWA comments, "I think that SWA, normally once they have money they flourish, but once they can't access money they decline . . . When resources dry up, people find other jobs" (Garcia 2002). Maintaining funding may similarly prove to be a challenge for a watershed management organization in the Toledo District.

What's in a name? MMMAT, MMMC, PHWA, TWA . . . ?!

While the MMMAT, as it was first dubbed, or the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor, as it was subsequently marketed, have currency in the sense that organizations aside from TIDE and TNC attach a geographic area to the name, these particular names are still firmly identified with TIDE and TNC. According to Valentino Shal of the Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC), the Maya groups objected to the name "Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect [because it] was a concept created on paper – TNC and TIDE did not consult locals in the development of this plan, so there is no ownership of this idea by the local people" (Shal 2002c).

The region is advertised by TNC, for example, in a manner that suggests that they, through TIDE, manage a regional initiative for the area. According to an NGO leader: "TNC promotes the MMMAT on their web site as if they were the manager of the whole thing" (Anonymous 2002). Leaders and staff of other organizations working in the transect express clear distaste for this presentation, as it appears to ignore their own important contributions to land protection and conservation development in the area and further supports their suspicion that TIDE desires to be *the* conservation organization in the district.

The subsequent evolution of the initiative to work collaboratively at a multi-watershed scale appears to be driven by the desire of the other NGOs to prevent its domination by TIDE. Instead of a collaborative process run by TIDE the other leaders pushed for a separate organization or working group to coordinate management. Nonetheless, early meetings were still called by TIDE and held at TIDE's office, as TIDE had both the convening power to draw attendees and the space to accommodate a large group.

The naming of the new working group or organization became a major point of contention. On the one hand, TIDE and TNC had already been marketing the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor and so had a stake in keeping the title and the corresponding symbolic ownership of the concept. Maintaining such ownership would be key for both recognition and funding (Maheia 2002). TIDE's peer NGOs, on the other hand, sought to change the name in order to both broaden ownership and distance the group from TIDE and the predominantly ecological SCP.

Building off the idea of a watershed association, like the SWA in Central Belize, the country director of Fauna & Flora International (FFI), Emma Caddy-Foster, in consultation with others, suggested the name "Port Honduras Watershed Association." This name captured the reality that the six watersheds of the MMMAT flow into Port Honduras, a "bay" within the larger Gulf of Honduras. Caddy-Foster became a lead driver in the process (Esselman 2002), along with the TIDE consultant, Peter Esselman, and a few others (Caddy-Foster 2002). The NGO leaders met several times, with varying levels of participation, to work toward creating the Port Honduras Watershed Association.

Though the group continued to meet in the TIDE offices, TIDE representatives were often absent. The other NGO leaders grew increasingly impatient as TIDE staff continued to drag their heels. It ultimately became clear that TIDE was opposed to, or at least ambivalent about, the creation of this new organization (McGill 2002). A comment from Wil Maheia, TIDE's CEO, in fact, suggests his outright opposition to a new organization: "There are just too many associations in Punta Gorda. We don't need more" (Maheia 2003).

Expanding beyond the MMMAT

At one time, some members of the watershed association discussion group suggested expanding their watershed management effort south beyond the original six watersheds of the MMMAT to encompass the entire Gulf of Honduras watershed, including the parts in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as Belize (Caddy-Foster 2002). While other members wished to keep it to the original geographic scope, organizational realities forced a southward expansion, drawing in all of the Gulf of Honduras watershed area within Belize. The area of

coverage was thus not as large as the tri-national region pushed by Spang, but it went beyond the original MMMAT. The motivating organizational reality was funding (TWA 2002a).

Since TIDE had not delivered on start-up monies for registering the group and the other NGOs wished to move forward, a source of project funding was required. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF), administered by the United Nations Development Programme, offered an opportunity through its Small Grants Program (SGP). All key partner organizations in the incipient Port Honduras Watershed Association, however, had already received GEF/SGP Grants in 2002 and thus were ineligible to receive another. At this point, Caddy-Foster approached SATIIM, which seeks to protect the culture and livelihoods of communities bordering the Sarstoon-Temash National Park by involving them in the management and operations of the park. SATIIM had not yet applied for a grant with GEF and furthermore was interested in becoming involved more explicitly in watershed management activities while simultaneously expanding their sphere of influence northward. They thus agreed to submit the grant on behalf of the group (TWA 2002a).

Another name change

Since the initiative would no longer be within the MMMAT/Port Honduras watershed only, a new name was felt to be needed. After some discussion, the group agreed to the name "Toledo Watershed Association" despite the slight northward extension of the area beyond the Toledo District and into the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary in the southern Stann Creek District. Another suggestion for a name change, presented at least half in jest, was TANGO, the Toledo Association of Non-Governmental Organizations, a Toledo District equivalent of the country-wide BACONGO, the Belize Alliance of Conservation NGOs. TANGO, in many respects, would be an appropriate name, as the association as established in the proposal would have resembled more closely an advocacy coalition than a broad, collaborative watershed management body.

Nonetheless, the name Toledo Watershed Association, more in line with the original SWA-like vision, was chosen and written into a proposal to GEF/SGP. Caddy-Foster presented the concept paper at the meeting of the partner NGOs. She expressed the evolution of the concept as follows:

> The impetus to realize this institutional development coalesced at a workshop held by the TIDE in late January 2002 to discuss watershed management issues in the Port Honduras area. A review of the many actors, interests, conservation programmes and development initiatives present in the Port Honduras watershed by the participants revealed many complimentary and often overlapping activities and concerns. The participants therefore identified the need for a process to enable the different institutions active in watershed management to streamline the diverse initiatives, and ensure that shared goals could be more readily met through a pooling of resources and effort. (TWA 2002b)

The members would keep each other informed about approaching threats and current projects, and the group might come up with collective policy statements or documents. The threat of shrimp farms was raised as a possible first target for policy action, for example. The proposal also called for a staff person to manage the coalition and move projects forward. At the time the concept paper was written, membership included SATIIM, Ya'axche' Conservation Trust, TIDE, TASTE, Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education, and Village Farm. The concept paper left the door open for membership by "other interested *organizations*" (TWA 2002b, emphasis added).

Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment

The concept paper for TWA was submitted to the UNDP GEF/SGP, but not through SATIIM. Instead, the paper, with only a few small modifications, was presented under the banner of the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment (SAGE). According to the current proposal, TWA will not become an organization in its own right, but instead will become a commission within SAGE.

SAGE was formed in 1997 by a group of existing NGOs to address the negative impacts of the Southern Highway expansion. In the words of Pablo Mis (2002), "Empowering local leaders is the goal of SAGE and SAGE has made great achievements." Specifically, SAGE sought to ensure community representation in the Environmental and Social Technical Assistance Project (ESTAP), which had been set up as a condition of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) loan for the highway project to mitigate expected impacts and conflicts from the highway.

The IADB report suggested that the social and ecological ramifications of the highway would be severe and largely negative, especially for the Maya, whose land title is not secure. It was further understood that the highway would bisect the corridor connecting the Maya Mountains to the coast, while opening up land for increased land speculation and development, farming, ranching, logging, and mineral exploration. Each of these activities would impact both communities and the environment. SAGE was thus conceived by several existing NGOs, including both Maya and conservation NGOs, as an umbrella group to unite efforts of these groups to address these highway impacts and ensure community involvement in decision-making related to the expansion (P. Mis 2002).

Many of the founding members are involved in the Board, which includes:

- Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE)
- Kekchi Council of Belize (KCB)
- Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC)
- National Garifuna Council (NGC)
- Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA)
- Toledo Maya Women's Council (TMWC)
- Two other founding members, the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) and the Society for the Promotion of Education and Research (SPEAR), stepped down from the Board in 2001 but maintain an advisory relationship with SAGE.

The organization managing the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve, TASTE, also recently became a member of SAGE. SAGE is thus an umbrella organization made up of local indigenous organizations and well-endowed national organizations, with one representative of each on the Board. Each group works on different issues and brings unique strengths to SAGE. For example, the TAA brings the ability to access communities through the member alcaldes (P. Mis 2002). SAGE has now officially registered as an association under Belizean law.

Pulcheria Teul and Pablo Mis ran SAGE's day to day operations until Mis' recent departure from SAGE. They are both Maya and are key players in several other organizations in Toledo. Teul assists with the operation of TMWC and Pablo Mis led efforts to expand community co-management in Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary through the Aguacaliente Management Team. Pulcheria Teul is intimately tied into the fabric of civil society in Toledo through personal and professional relationships. In addition to formal ties through the board and cross-membership in the organizations noted above, SAGE is connected to Ya'axche' Conservation Trust (YCT) through Pulcheria Teul, whose husband Bartolo Teul is the head of YCT. Furthermore, Pulcheria Teul is connected to TASTE, Toledo branch of the Belize Civil Society Movement, and SATIIM through working relationships and friendships.

As the highway has neared completion and having secured community representation in ESTAP (now the Toledo Development Corporation), SAGE moved on to other related issues. SAGE's main focus is now on illegal logging. They seek to: 1) reduce and prevent illegal logging and corresponding degradation of environment; 2) involve the local community in monitoring to promote jobs, local control/involvement, and capacity building/training; and 3) ensure that local communities are able to enjoy benefits of forest resources.

These goals were particularly important to them given the large number of logging concessions granted to logging companies in the South through the late 1990s and the extremely limited ability of the Forest Department to ensure compliance with the requirements of the concessions. With no fuel, few staff, and not even a functioning vehicle, the Forest Department was (and is) almost totally unable to enforce restrictions, especially against highly armed illegal loggers. Abuses are thus rampant. When Hurricane Iris struck, it leveled Toledo's forests, curtailing logging as so little timber was left standing. Salvage operations were undertaken; however, the same extraction activities caused substantial damage (P. Teul 2002; P. Mis 2002). A large new salvage logging concession was recently granted to the company ECOFOR[34], much of it in the headwaters of Golden Stream, as well as beyond, without public involvement. This concession prompted SAGE to seek a Memorandum of Understanding with the Forest Department that would formalize SAGE's role in public involvement and ensure adequate community consultation prior to the granting of new concessions. Such an MOU has been drafted but has not yet been signed.

Prior to TWA's incorporation into SAGE, the Project Team heard the suggestion from several interviewees that SAGE should take the lead on regional watershed management. For one, it was felt, they already had strong ties with key rural communities and a stock of community trust. Secondly, they have both funding and human capacity as well as experience in training and working with rural people. Third, observers felt that a totally new organization, such as TWA, would simply be one organization too many for Toledo. Finally, watershed management was seen to fit neatly with SAGE's existing focus on illegal logging (Genus 2002; P. Teul 2002). While SAGE's director feared possible conflict with TIDE were SAGE to take on the watershed management role (P. Teul 2002), TIDE's operations manager and executive director both actively supported SAGE's leadership in the initiative (Genus 2002; Maheia 2002). The following quotes suggest opposition to a new organization and support for SAGE.

NGO staff believe SAGE should lead watershed management efforts

- SAGE has now taken up the functions that would have been TWA's. This is good for SAGE, and will strengthen it as an alliance. (Maheia 2002)
- SAGE does have a whole Southern Belize remit and is running the forest monitoring program right now. There is no reason why SAGE should not take [watershed management] on. We don't need another bloody NGO. (McGill 2002)
- We need to be careful about developing a new project or forming a new association, which doesn't really make sense anymore, as all of these groups are already involved in the management of these areas, so all we need is collaboration. (P. Teul 2002)
- SAGE will have a component that is dedicated to watershed, hence the watershed stuff will be handled by SAGE. That way we will not create another association for Toledo, and Lord knows we do not need another. But this should make SAGE stronger. (Maheia 2003)
- SAGE has potential and would gladly take it on. We would need more staff people if there were funding and also include other organizations. (P. Teul 2002)
- When they called the meeting to form the watershed association, I suggested that SAGE play that role. We do not need another association. (Maheia 2003)

Analysis

This section of the case study presents constraints on collaboration and opportunities for increased interaction among individuals, agencies, and other organizations in the region. Dimensions of the current debate among NGOs on how a watershed management body should be structured are then examined.

Challenges for collaboration

Interviewees identified dozens of constraints that they felt might limit watershed-based collaboration in the Toledo District. The following challenges were cited most frequently and forcefully.

Community issues

Limited community capacity and interest. As noted earlier, NGO leaders in Southern Belize suggest that community capacity in the region is much less than in the Sibun watershed, limiting potential for leadership from the grassroots and demanding more of existing NGOs with greater knowledge and skills to manage the process (P. Teul 2002). Another limiting factor, suggested by Rigoberto Blanco of SWA, is that in the MMMAT area few settlements lie directly along watercourses. In his experience, it is these communities that are most responsive and involved as they most clearly recognize their connection to the water bodies (Blanco 2002). However, starting out with a few small projects with one community along each major river, he suggests, could represent a good starting point, to build upon small successes.

Insecure land title. Land title is not secure for local communities, including Garifuna and Creole people, but most seriously for Maya communities. A lack of secure title and the likelihood of future exploitation of community land by outside companies limits incentives for land stewardship. As Caddy-Foster noted,

> A community might be concerned about the state of their forest, but there is some company coming in that the Government is going to let clearcut the whole area pay them a pittance and that is the only option they have, then they will try to get a job with the company. There is no legal mechanism by which communities, as opposed to individuals, can obtain security over their lands. (2002)

Resource constraints

The few trained natural resource management and development professionals in Toledo are pressed for time and so find it difficult to participate in meetings. Instead, they feel they need to focus on their own projects. They are thus not as interested in broader scale collaboration, except to the extent that it relates to their own piece of land. Ken Karas of Belize Lodge & Excursions, for example wants to focus on the Golden Stream corridor and Jake Marlin is most interested in the Bladen Nature Reserve and the management of the Bladen Consortium: "The [Bladen] Consortium would play whatever role it needs in the MMMAT plan in order to protect Bladen" (Marlin 2002). The following quotes from land managers further express the challenge of limited time against the demands of collaboration.

> The main problem they are facing is the inability of different organizations to come together and work. Everybody has their own thing to do and not much time to work together. When someone tries to call a meeting, no one has time for it. (B. Teul 2002)
>
> We cannot be attending all these meetings because we have lots to do. (Maheia 2003)

Organizational barriers

Lack of accountability. Several interviewees highlight the problem of accountability. While funders may suggest that they favor collaboration among local organizations, if they do not monitor and evaluate outcomes of the collaborative projects they support, less pressure will be placed on NGOs to actually follow through with project plans. A lack of monitoring may in fact encourage non-action, as noted by Emma Caddy-Foster of FFI:

> People get money and they don't implement it the way they said they were going to do it . . . Nobody gets back on them and no one makes sure that it is actually done right . . . Recommendations don't mean anything unless there is punishment or withdrawal of funding . . . It is a problem of accountability that is lacking across the board . . . The only people that have any power to change any of this probably aren't even in Belize, the people with money that give money to NGOs and to the Government, that say 'account for this.' (2002)

It may also be difficult for communities and Government to hold NGOs accountable, especially since NGO funding often comes from sources outside the country or region. John McGill, himself an NGO staff member, underscores the danger that these organizations may pose: "NGOs may be a move against democracy, as NGOs are not really accountable" (McGill 2002).

Lack of strategic plans among local organizations. Lack of strategic plans among local organizations allows manipulation by outside funders. Pablo Mis of SAGE and Aguacaliente argued that, "Funders don't understand the reality down here. We need to be clear about our needs. What they want to fund may not be what we need most" (P. Mis 2002).

Conflict and competition among groups

Information equals funding for many NGOs. While information sharing may ultimately result in an "expanded pie" of funding for the region if it facilitates collaboration and interests new donors, when it comes to dividing up the existing funding pool, NGOs are reluctant to share ideas with one another. Bartolo Teul of YCT, for example, believes that cross-sector projects could attract new funding, but he worries that the reluctance among organizations to share information could prevent the success of such efforts (B. Teul 2002). Teul explained that, "Collaboration is weak at present among Toledo NGOs. They are not honest with one another. Ideas are sources for funding, so people don't want to share" (2002). He later expanded this explanation:

> In Belizean culture we tend to want to do things by ourselves so if it succeeds it is us that gets the good name. We don't want to share that recognition with others . . . NGOs will lose their fame if they start working with or through others. (2002)

Power and politics

The NGOs in Toledo hold varying levels of power, both in comparison to one another and in comparison to the international NGOs (INGOs) with whom they partner. While greater collaboration among local NGOs could strengthen their collective bargaining power in relation to the INGOs, larger, more powerful local NGOs may be able to capture the funding and recognition of collaborative efforts more easily than smaller organizations. This imbalance leads to fears about collaborating. TIDE, for example, is the most powerful board member of SAGE. This could be a key reason for TIDE's active support for SAGE as the leader of the watershed management initiative. Will they try to dominate the process? SAGE's leader suggests diplomatically that, "Working with organizations bigger than you can pose a threat and we have to be very careful" (P. Teul 2002).

Differing conservation paradigms

Unlike TNC's "science-driven" conservation approach, the other NGOs claim to take a more "people-centered" approach. The TNC consultant on the MMMAT SCP argues that a more people-centered approach is important in the Belizean context.

> I've clearly recognized that TNC's methodology and the focus on biodiversity, while it is appropriate for the socio-political sphere of the States, is not really appropriate for down here. A lot of targets that are biological should really be social and economic indicators. I don't mean to suggest that the methodology is invalid, rather that it is not yet fully compatible for a developing world context and thus needs modification to include more social and economic considerations. (Esselman 2002)

The grant proposal for TWA also suggests the need for a more "balanced" paradigm:

> The citizens of Toledo struggle daily with the highest poverty figures, lowest employment and poorest social services in the country. Faced with these great life challenges, conservation has little use in their vocabularies. To be successful, conservation efforts will therefore have to become equated in community perspectives with qualitative livelihood improvements, for without local support, watershed management regimes will never prove effective or sustainable. (TWA 2002b)

The groups most tied to traditional, mostly Maya, communities are even more "people-centered." John McGill, a consultant to SATIIM, and Valentino Shal of TMCC expressed the differences in focus:

> I can endorse the SATIIM philosophy – using the park to attract new funding for development in surrounding communities – not the TNC [planning and methodology], where development is only done for protecting the park, whereas SATIIM does the opposite. (McGill 2002)
>
> One thing that stands out in my mind is that reserves are designed in a way that doesn't take into account the people that are in the area . . . It is important to preserve the environment, but people are part of ecosystems. (Shal 2002c)

Other challenges

- **Lack of shared ownership** for the MMMAT Site Conservation Plan. The feeling that this is a TIDE plan is pervasive, as discussed in Chapter Five. Without broad buy-in, success may be limited.

- **Disincentives**. Legal frameworks do not support conservation. Tax disincentives, like the land speculation tax, lack of land trust laws, lax enforcement of land use laws, and limited ownership title security all inhibit conservation.

  > There is no incentive for any conservation to take place. There's no tax incentives. There are no incentives to do anything sustainable . . . Except the Queen's law not to cut anything within 60 feet of the river, anything goes. (Marlin 2002)
  >
  > The laws in Belize are designed to exploit, not conserve. (B. Teul 2002)

- **Need for funding**. Funding is needed for SAGE to coordinate partners, both to cover meeting expenses and to cover the cost of staff time: "First we need to support someone to be a full-time advocate for this group" (Esselman 2002).

- **Politicization of natural resource management issues**. Several party politicians have used natural resource issues as a basis for gaining support for either the UDP or PUP. Due to strong divisions in communities, information is often not shared among residents of opposing parties (B. Teul 2002; P. Teul 2002).

- **Turf**. The intensity of territoriality is evidenced by the following quote from SATIIM's consultant, John McGill:

  > With the coastal zone, we were careful about not moving into TIDE or TASTE territory. The coastal zone is demarcated into little fiefdoms. We extended our influence up to the mouth of the Moho River, thinking that north of there is approaching into TIDE territory. TIDE goes up to Monkey River, and then you are into maybe the Friends of Nature area. (2002)

Opportunities and facilitating factors

While the challenges to collaboration are many, the interviewees also suggested a number of opportunities that could promote collaboration.

Potential for joint gains

Complementary strengths and geographic coverage. While the desire to "divide up Toledo" among NGOs is viewed by some as a constraint to collaboration, it is viewed by others as an opportunity. It was in fact the sense among NGOs that they were often "tripping over each other" that led to planning for joint watershed management in the first place (TWA 2002b). By focusing on specific geographic areas or leveraging the unique skills and strengths of particular organizations, a collaborative management body might be able to produce the most results with limited resources.

Division along lines of expertise is also an option. SAGE itself is recognized as a leader in community involvement. Other organizations are more connected to outside agencies or donors. Alan Genus, Operations Manager of TIDE suggests the following arrangement:

> TIDE's role would be monitoring. Golden Stream [YCT] is grassroots. They have an office and do development activities, so they could do outreach . . . [Also] different organizations have different relationships with funders. They could bring these to the table. (2002)

The idea of organizing a collaborative body along lines of complementary strengths illustrates the notion of organizational niche arrangements (Brechin 1997). According to this argument, organizations should join forces and each do what they do best in concert with one

another to maximize effectiveness in conservation and development. With respect to SAGE/TWA, it appears that the participating NGOs plan to do just that.

Interest in moving forward

Interviewees presented mixed views about the possibilities for collaboration, but a majority of NGO players, at least, felt that it could happen. Further, they suggested that moving forward was necessary, despite the obstacles. They felt that once the process began to show success, that momentum would build.

> I don't know what is going to happen, but I know that it is a good thing to do. (Caddy-Foster 2002)
>
> There's more of a critical mass, more permanent people. There is more of a chance it will come to fruition . . . I have a feeling that this is going to happen. (Esselman 2002)

Other opportunities

- **New draft of Site Conservation Plan**. TIDE is currently working on a fourth draft of the SCP that would include more of a socioeconomic focus (Esselman 2002). This process presents a new opportunity to involve communities and fellow NGOs, as well as other participants, to promote broader buy-in.

- **The recent salvage logging concession to ECOFOR** in the middle of the MMMC heightens the perceived need for a coordinated response to logging.

- **Ties between local NGOs and large international NGOs** suggest access to substantial funding.

- **Greater emphasis among funders on trans-boundary collaboration** for conservation could tie in well with the Gulf of Honduras initiative, if SAGE/TWA efforts can be thematically connected with the broader transnational efforts (Blanco 2002).

- **International recognition for Toledo's biodiversity** and increasing exposure of Toledo to the rest of world suggest the possibility of new funding opportunities.

- **A new natural resource management (NRM) program at the University of Belize** is currently in its third year, training future natural resource managers (P. Teul 2002), and the University of Belize has recently opened a Toledo campus. Perhaps some graduates of the NRM program can be encouraged to participate in conservation in Toledo.

SAGE/TWA: Debates and dimensions

SAGE/TWA is still taking shape and several issues remain in flux. Key interviewees discussed a range of questions related to watershed management through the SAGE/TWA amalgam. While they agreed on a number of points, such as the need for information sharing, they disagreed about how these inter-organizational relationships should be structured. The central questions framing their debates are described below.

Should SAGE/TWA act as a pressure group or a multi-stakeholder collaborative?

Given that a watershed model along the lines of SWA inspired initial discussions about collaboration in the Toledo district, the shift toward a single-sector model is significant. Peter Esselman, who had been a key driver in the discussion about a watershed association, suggested that while narrowing the field may be better than nothing, broad collaboration is needed in the long run. Upon learning that TWA was to be founded only by NGOs and modeled after BACONGO, not SWA, Esselman commented:

> That will be a point of conflict, a point of debate. I don't agree with that. She [Caddy-Foster] voiced it to me as not wanting to have a huge organization, but as a conversation between the players. If we can't muster the energy to make it happen as a multi-stakeholder approach at the transect level, then I think it's good to have us come together once a month and share. That's something that hasn't happened and needs to happen. That's if we are pulling back . . . [But] the future is not as an NGO forum. (2002)

A key concern about starting as an NGO-only forum is that it may limit future participation by non-NGOs. For example, Esselman (2002) asked, "How willing would [Sorenson] be to participate in a heavily NGO-laden organization?"

How should communities be involved?

The NGO leaders developing plans for the TWA debated how to involve local communities in the organization and in watershed management efforts. The discussion revolved around the following questions. While the framing of the questions may change with TWA falling under SAGE, the core issues remain.

- Should communities be directly represented in TWA or should they be involved through their representatives in TWA member organizations?
- What sort of training is necessary to ensure meaningful community participation?
- How does past experience with conservation projects influence community attitudes?
- What issues might a collaborative body face in terms of representation from communities?
- What are the best methods for reaching community members?

Emma Caddy-Foster of FFI favored indirect involvement of communities, largely because she wished to avoid raising false expectations among community members. She argued that: 1) communities in the South had already been thoroughly surveyed, 2) they were tired of plans being made with no follow-through, 3) they would like to see even small tangible results, and 4) their interests were sufficiently represented through the potential association's member NGOs which were already working in communities and often included community members on their boards (Caddy-Foster 2002). This sentiment was captured in the grant proposal to GEF:

> The [watershed association], itself a purely institutional-member body, will therefore be ensured a high level of stakeholder participation by virtue of the broad interest groups their respective member groups provide them access to. (TWA 2002b)

John Spang, on the other hand, felt that more direct community involvement was necessary, and unsuccessfully pushed for representation of local people through the Toledo Alcaldes Association, but without success (TWA 2002a). According to Alan Genus of TIDE, the rationale for NGO leadership in watershed management is that the communities lack capacity: "With SWA, the communities took the lead. Here the organizations are taking the lead. Here the capacity is different. People are more set-back and don't have the capacity" (2002).

The following comments illustrate perspectives of several additional interviewees on community involvement. Statements are grouped by category of concern.

Beliefs about Community Involvement

Success hinges on community involvement and education

> The indigenous people must be viewed as key players. Effective collaboration is not possible without them. (B. Teul 2002)
>
> Education to communities is key to everything here. They need to understand the whole purpose of why we are trying to protect this area. (P. Teul 2002)

Broader representation would enhance credibility

> I feel like we would have a more substantive organization if we focused on the community level and not the NGO level. (Esselman 2002)
>
> It is important to have not only leaders, but also other people from the community present at meetings. (B. Teul 2002)
>
> In order to involve women it is necessary to work with the TMWC or to invite women directly to meetings, as alcaldes and other men will often not announce that a meeting is taking place to women in the village. (B. Teul 2002)

Past history poses barriers to involvement and trust

> People in the communities are tired of being censused. They see someone with a clipboard and they run the other way. (Caddy-Foster 2002)
>
> Communities don't want to listen anymore. [NGOs] talk about doing innovative things, but don't do anything. Conservation groups only like to talk about conservation, but communities [see their problems as] more pressing than the environment. (Saqui 2002)

Ensuring contact between representatives and constituents is a challenge

> [Representatives] are supposed to be reporting back to their communities anything that they get involved in and they don't always do that. Communities within themselves have their own internal dynamics, whereby you could have somebody go to a meeting, hear about something and not go back and tell anybody. (Caddy-Foster 2002)
>
> YCT attempts to contact the community through radio shows, newsletters, and a booth at community events. (B. Teul 2002)

Training for community members is essential and requires compensation

> For communities to participate meaningfully in the conservation concept there has to be aggressive training for community members, for example PACT's leadership skills training . . . I hear at meetings that Mayans think that [training] is a waste of time: 'While you're training, our people are starving. Training will not help us put food on the table.' . . . When we think about designing training, we need to start thinking about offering a stipend to participants (including transportation). (B. Teul 2002)

What role should Government play?

To date, Government has played only a limited role in the discussions surrounding watershed management in Toledo. NGO leaders appear to be of two minds about Government involvement. Some feel that their current lack of involvement confers freedom, while others believe that their absence represents a missed opportunity. Government may be faced with declining resources, but they could bring legal authority, skills, and institutional-level influence, as well as possible money to the table. Similarly, Government has mixed feelings about NGOs. The limits faced by governmental agencies create a void that NGOs are called to fill, but NGO leaders feel that Government may still have important roles to play, as revealed in the following quotes.

> The Government of Belize (GOB) is notoriously ambivalent about NGOs. They see NGOs as interfering, [but some agencies] are happy to offload responsibilities on them . . . If the government is going to rely on NGOs, they have to inject transparency. (McGill 2002)
>
> Government can be stronger, I suppose . . . In terms of management of a national park, they have weight, they could speak up, they can make things happen. (Caddy-Foster 2002)
>
> Government needs to commit themselves to put people that can make decisions in these meetings they have with NGOs. And NGOs need to block the cloud of suspicion against Government and recognize that government has huge resources that can be tapped into. Instead of working on separate projects hampered by resource constraints, NGOs and Government should pool resources and work on joint projects . . . In the enforcement area, government has to play a key role. Government needs to recognize NGO capacities and the fact that NGOs are not trying to work against them. Both are supposedly working for the development of the communities. (Garbutt 2002)
>
> We haven't had any problems with Government. Since they have no funds they say, 'Go to it'! (Caddy-Foster 2002)

How should industry be involved?

Agriculture is a leading industry in Southern Belize. As the Southern Highway nears completion, enhancing transportation and access to markets and labor in Toledo, agriculture will expand rapidly. Agricultural sectors include citrus, bananas, forest products, and rice, along with a smaller acreage in crops like habanero and mangos, and subsistence swidden corn production. Aquaculture, especially shrimp farms, is also expanding throughout Belize

and is viewed as a threat in the South. Finally, cacao, and organic cacao in particular, is increasingly grown in Toledo, mostly in connection with conservation development projects. Bananas and citrus in particular are grown at massive plantation scales and conventional processes demand significant inputs of fertilizer and pesticides. These inputs and associated land use practices present challenges to the maintenance of ground and surface water quality in the region. As the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary director noted,

> [Citrus and banana plantations] cut all the way down to the river. They also aerial spray and pollute community water. They don't listen because they are too powerful and always busy. (Saqui 2002)

Improvements in large landowner practices could thus yield substantial water quality benefits. Finally, according to locals, the foreign laborers associated with large plantations engage in harmful fishing and land use practices. As major landowners with serious impacts on water quality, the agricultural industry is thus a key player in the region.

Among the most powerful of these players is Soren Sorenson, with thousands of acres in a variety of agricultural and timber lands held through several sub-companies. While some NGO representatives distrust Sorenson, others feel that it would be impossible to do successful watershed management without his participation. A few even feel that his company could be a positive force in a watershed management body. In fact, a member of Sorenson's team even suggested the idea of creating such an organization: "Christian Beck . . . the environmental conscience of [Sorenson's] company . . . has approached Jake [Marlin] about forming a watershed association" (Esselman 2002). Although, Beck's "environmental conscience" is separate from his role with Sorenson's company, this enthusiasm from Beck has led Marlin to form a positive impression of Sorenson and his company and interest in collaborating with them. As Marlin suggests:

> They're the biggest landowners in this part of the country and we have to work with them . . . Yeah, Sorenson represents a company. The company is very large, world-wide. They have vast amounts in capital and investment. That company is a potential philanthropist, and people in his company are conservationists, and are trying to push some positive things, like Christian Beck. He's a dynamic individual. He manages the company's logging operations. He's also managed their farming. He's Sorenson's right-hand man. He's implemented composting of all the banana waste and he's pushing the watershed idea. He wants to do major riverine reforestation. I think Sorenson, everyone has negative things to say about him, but I feel differently . . . (2002)

What will collaboration look like?

Will collaborative watershed management require weekly meetings among all representatives? Monthly gatherings of a core working group? Annual weekend workshops and planning sessions? These issues remain to be resolved. TIDE's SCP consultant suggests an informal, social approach:

> Even just to have a huge party. Advertise free beer to get people to come and then educate them in the process. That's a joke, but the message is that people love to party. Bring these stakeholders together in a relaxed atmosphere. We need to start slow and recognize that it takes years to build substantive partnerships between stakeholder groups that for most hours of the week are not thinking about participating in an organization like this, but are willing to give one day a year to go to a watershed-wide conference and listen to presentations about different issues and be educated about things that interest them. (Esselman 2002)

Conclusions

An analysis of the case revealed many challenges and opportunities for collaboration among participants in SAGE/TWA, as described in the previous section. In addition, the case offers a number of lessons for collaboration more generally. The case suggests the following:

- When conservation efforts are relevant and responsive to community needs they are more likely to engage community interest and support.

- Early, meaningful community consultation is critical in planning efforts if broad support is necessary for success.

- Models of success inspire efforts to collaborate, which is especially evident with SWA and BACONGO's influence on the development of TWA.

- Strategic planning both at the protected area level and at the regional level may be necessary to prevent external domination of local NGOs by foreign NGOs.

- An opportunity exists for Government agencies and NGOs to work together to ensure accountability and transparency for both and to complement each other's efforts.

Chapter Seven: The Golden Stream Corridor

> Each organization could bring something to the table in terms of technical knowledge, community support and financial resources. (Pinelo 2002)

Introduction

While collaborative management appears to be possible for the six-watershed Maya Mountain Marine Corridor (MMMC) and the district-wide Toledo Watershed Association/SAGE, smaller-scale partnerships are already in place at the single watershed scale. In the Golden Stream watershed of the Toledo District, several conservation-oriented organizations manage a stretch of contiguous habitat between the Maya Mountains and Port Honduras as a result of an effort to secure the area from development threats and fragmentation through the purchase of various parcels of land along the Golden Stream River. Emerging inter-organizational collaborative efforts suggest a degree of interdependence and interest in managing the area collectively to ward off future threats to the watershed. Successful conservation initiatives and emerging partnerships in the Golden Stream watershed could serve as a stepping stone to multiple-watershed collaborative efforts in southern Belize.

Conservation efforts in the Golden Stream Corridor represent a microcosm of what occurs throughout the Toledo District to protect the region's cultural and natural resources. It is an area characterized by high biodiversity, a complex organizational landscape, and emerging collaborative efforts to manage protected areas. Meaningful cooperation and collaboration across institutional and political boundaries is limited between land owners. An analysis of the interactions among diverse land managers, organizations, and interests along the Golden Stream is helpful in understanding the challenges to collaborative management in the six-watershed MMMC where similar dynamics play out on a larger scale.

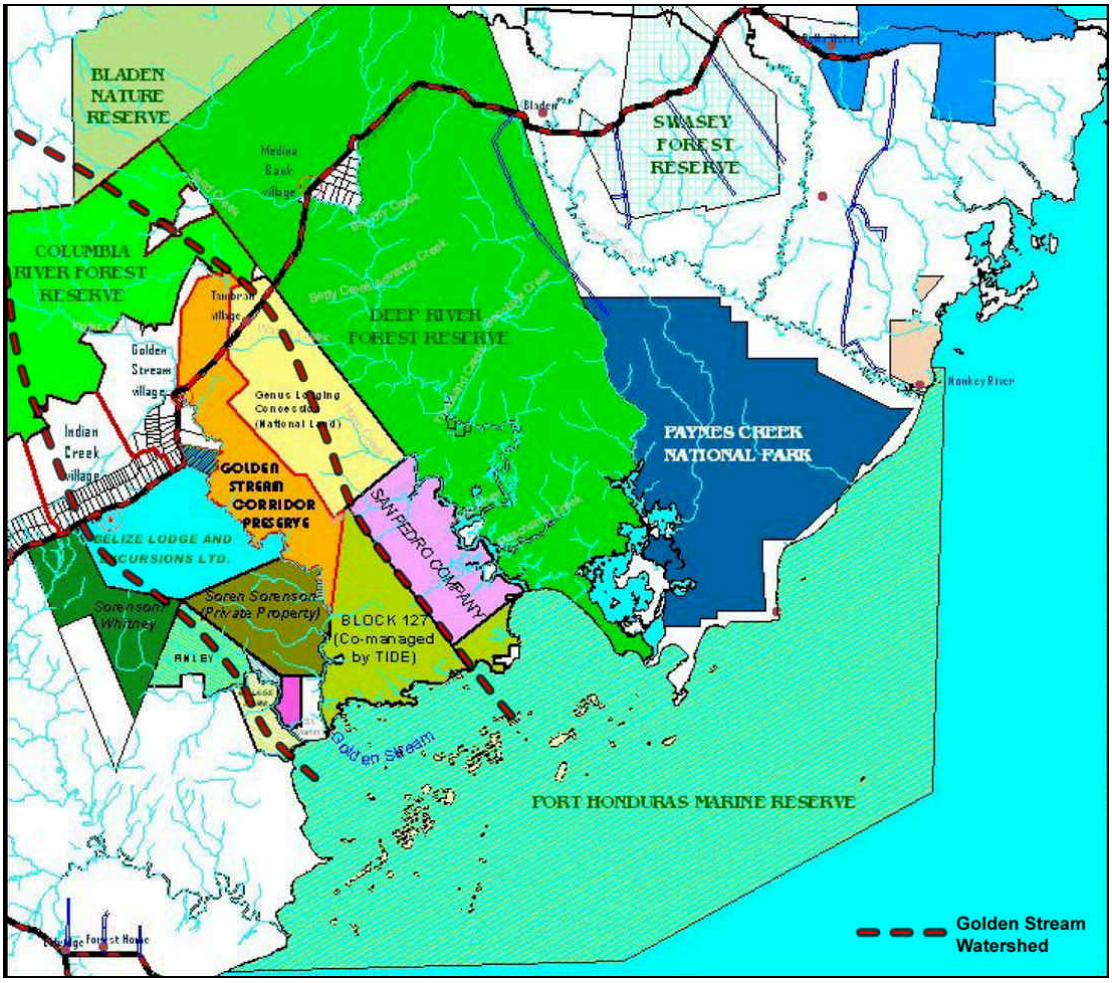
Background

Golden Stream as an ecosystem

The Golden Stream River as it winds its way through tropical forests on its way to the sea is one of the six watersheds that empty into Port Honduras. Labeled a "haven for biodiversity," the 200,000 acre Golden Stream watershed houses one of the last remaining lowland broadleaf forests in Central America that runs unbroken from the mountains to the coast (FFI 2003a). Rich in flora and fauna, ocelot, howler monkey, and other endangered species are found in the Golden Stream watershed. Where the Golden Stream empties into Port Honduras, productive mangroves line the coast, providing habitat for manatee and other marine life. It is a biological corridor existing within the larger Maya Mountain Marine Corridor; a term used by TIDE and The Nature Conservancy to describe a million acre land management unit in the Toledo District that encompasses the six watersheds draining into Port Honduras (TNC 2003). Of equal significance, the Golden Stream serves as an important link in the northern portion of the proposed Mesoamerican Biological Corridor by connecting the Peten of Guatemala with southeastern Belize.

Golden Stream as a concept: The story of the Five Core Parcels

The Golden Stream watershed as a conservation corridor is a relatively recent phenomena. Interviews reveal that the concept originated in the 1990s with Ken Karas, a former National Geographic filmmaker and Managing Director of Belize Lodge & Excursions Ltd. (BLE). He envisioned the land along the Golden Stream between the terrestrial protected areas and the marine reserve linked through a corridor preserve. The Columbia River Forest Reserve and Bladen Nature Reserve protect the headwaters while the Port Honduras Marine Reserve (PHMR), into which the Golden Stream and other waterways flow, is also under conservation status (see Map 9, p.151). A watershed scale preserve could prevent the fragmentation occurring in other parts of Central America by logging, agriculture, and shrimp farming as well as protect this expanse of tropical forest and coastal habitat.



Map 9: Land Parcels in the Golden Stream Watershed

Ken Karas describes why he chose to focus conservation efforts on the Golden Stream watershed:

> Because it's the only area in all of Central America that links the coastal regions of Port Honduras all the way through to the mountain divide. Nowhere else along the Caribbean coast is the land contiguous like it is here. [That's] why to me and to our people involved, it is such an important region. (2002)

As originally envisioned, the Corridor was to include five forested and biologically important parcels of land along the Golden Stream that were largely in private hands yet vulnerable to development. The purchase and subsequent protection of these "five core parcels" (see Map 9, p.151) would anchor a habitat corridor running from the mountains to the coast to form a conservation unit referred to as the Golden Stream Conservation Corridor or the Golden Stream Corridor. However, a feasibility assessment revealed that a single company was incapable of purchasing and maintaining such a large area so the project was divided into two components: a for-profit sector that would run a piece like a company and the other part run by a NGO that could find conservation finance to purchase the land (Karas 2002).

BLE's focus on the biological significance of the region, as well as its vulnerability, attracted the attention of Fauna & Flora International (FFI). Through their Arcadia Fund,[35] FFI purchased the first parcel of land in the Golden Stream for conservation in 1998 known as the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (GSCP). FFI carries out their conservation activities according to the belief "…that conservation should be achieved through the application of scientific understanding, a genuinely participatory approach, local capacity building and long-term commitment" (FFI 2003c). In the Golden Stream, they are concerned with saving the forest and its component biodiversity from destruction and fostering local environmental stewardship. Their website showcases the 9,554 acre GSCP property:

> Golden Stream's conservation value transcends its intrinsic importance as a haven of biodiversity. Our intervention not only saved the land from conversion to citrus plantations, but also safeguarded the core area of the Port Honduras marine reserve into which the Golden Stream flows. (FFI 2003a)

FFI co-manages the GSCP with their counterpart, Ya'axche' Conservation Trust (YCT), a local community non-governmental (NGO) created around the time of the purchase. As a "Maya organization", in the sense that YCT is predominantly run and managed by Maya individuals, YCT has cultivated a working relationship with Maya communities around the GSCP (B.Teul 2002). YCT's organizational goals are to 1) promote biodiversity conservation; 2) increase capacity for sustainable management of natural resources in the Golden Stream watershed; and 3) enhance the socio-economic development of the local Maya communities that border the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (YCT 2003).

They plan to increase local capacity and conservation awareness through education and training to ensure greater local involvement in and benefits from conservation initiatives. YCT Director Bartolo Teul believes:

> [When] this idea was conceptualized, it was always thought that communities should always be involved. This idea of conservation should not only be done from a biological point of view but rather it should be people centered. (2002)

YCT is willing to explore which activities can still be carried out within the GSCP – such as small scale gathering of thatch or medicinal plants – while protecting the resource. Following Hurricane Iris, YCT implemented a Sustainable Livelihood Initiative which offers training in woodworking and low impact timber extraction techniques (salvage logging) to "strengthen livelihoods and resource management capacity amongst indigenous communities of northeastern Toledo" (YCT n.d. [2003]). While YCT issued a moratorium on large scale extractive activities like hunting, fishing, and logging, they eventually plan to develop a management plan that will reconcile conservation with community needs.

> After we develop the management plan we will go back to the community and see if this is what they said. Based on a biological survey we will then see if it is possible to allow certain activities to happen in certain areas. So far there is no agreement with community telling them what they can and cannot do. (B. Teul 2002)

Following the procurement of the GSCP parcel, BLE purchased the adjacent 8,000 acres to create the 7,600 acre Boden Creek Ecological Reserve (BCER) which forms the foundation of their eco-enterprise consisting of eco-tourism, reforestation, and sustainable land use. BLE specializes in providing tourists with a "trans-habitat experience" including a marine and terrestrial component. The company's website touting itself as a "…unique ecotourism company and adventure travel operator…" beckons the upscale eco-tourist to "…journey through and experience one of the most diverse spectrum of ecosystems in the world from the Maya Mountains to the Barrier Reef and everything in between" (BLE 2002b). For Ken Karas, BLE Managing Director, conservation is a business investment:

> Sometimes we can do more than NGOs because we have resources that NGOs don't always have. That's why BLE agreed to help YCT get started. We looked at it as a business investment so that we could preserve the other side of that river. Our economic livelihood is the preservation of those five parcels. If we can't give our guest the ultimate jungle experience, it all falls apart. (2002)

He is concerned with preventing "islands of biodiversity" or habitat fragmentation that he fears will make the land unsuitable for eco-tourism. By protecting tropical ecosystems and generating local employment, BLE hopes to contribute to biodiversity conservation while providing alternatives to "destructive" land use activities in Toledo.

Acres under protection in the Golden Stream watershed expanded when Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment (TIDE) acquired Crown Lands Government Block 127 via a debt-for-nature swap signed by the Governments of the United States and Belize and assisted by TNC (Lazaroff 2001). This 11,000 acre parcel along the eastern bank of the Golden Stream completes the corridor link to the coast and comprises over seven miles of coastal mangrove habitat (Lazaroff 2001). TIDE manages the property "to be held in perpetuity for the people of Belize" because it cares about protecting the Toledo District's natural resources for Belizeans (TIDE 2003b). As TIDE Executive Director Wil Maheia (2002) puts it: "We have the right to take care of our resources." TIDE is also interested in maintaining their status as a conservation leader in the District. They have achieved local, regional, national, and international recognition for their work.[36]

While the original concept was to include all five parcels along the Golden Stream, two of the original five were not purchased. The St. Martin parcel at the mouth of the Golden Stream is owned by a couple based out of Guatemala who are amenable to conservation-friendly use of the land and any management plan for the area (Karas 2002). This is not the case with the Flick parcel, a strategic tract of land south of BCER owned by Soren Sorenson, a developer whose enterprise consists of various for-profit industries: primarily agro-industry, shrimp farming, and logging. The company, primarily concerned with profit maximization in large-scale agriculture and aquaculture projects, plans to develop land under its control and expand current activities. Their land in the South is currently undeveloped yet sited for shrimp farming: an activity perceived by conservation organizations to be a

significant threat to the ecological integrity of the watershed. According to a Sorenson employee:

> We [Sorenson's company] have land in the south and we want to do the same. We want to grow cacao and other crops down there and we will also do shrimp farming, cacao, and cattle. (Anonymous 2002)

Communities on the Golden Stream

The remaining mosaic of land use in the Golden Stream watershed is comprised of small-scale agriculture, grazing, and Maya and Creole villages. Kekchi and Mopan Maya communities, located on private, national and leased lands, have traditionally relied on the resources found within the watershed. While they are not recognized as "land owners," lacking a legal title to the land, they care about management decisions being made in the Golden Stream. Resource dependent communities understand the connection between a healthy environment and clean drinking water and abundant game. Maya occupy lands adjacent to the GSCP and BCER and have traditionally collected medicinal herbs, thatch, and timber from the forests and fished the rivers. The archeological site Nim Li Punit, located near the Mopan village of Golden Stream, represents an important Maya cultural resource. Before the GSCP and BCER were created, activities in the area were largely unregulated. Now, in some cases, hunting is equated with poaching and logging and collection of non-timber forest products is illegal. Villagers who feel they were only marginally consulted during the initial stages of the planning process do not necessarily recognize the legitimacy of the private reserves whose borders might overlap with contested land. As one Maya villager commented:

> They tried to get people involved and the people really want to have their input taken. But as time goes by they quit taking the input of the people. They [YCT] had a [Board of Directors] but it fell off. Now they have [a new Board] and they will let me sit on it again. When they come back they change the program in their own way. They don't ask the people. The first time it was Golden Stream and [now it's] Ya'axche'. (Anonymous 2002)

The Maya around Golden Stream care about livelihood issues such as access to resources and jobs. Lacking title to the lands they occupy, they are also concerned about land tenure issues. Some communities are also interested in pursuing small scale eco-tourism ventures on their own as a means to generate income:

> We want to cut down on slash and burn by planting [beans] between October and December. We are trying to protect some areas. We also want to do some income generating activities. (Anonymous 2002)

Analysis

An emerging landscape-level conservation initiative

Natural resource management decisions are unique with regards to scale. Rivers, forests and wildlife cross geo-political boundaries. Local forests and protected areas are part of larger ecosystems. Upstream activities and land use patterns in the Golden Stream watershed impact water and habitat quality in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve, while human activities on one parcel of land affects adjacent parcels. While the original vision for the Golden Stream Corridor – as approximately 49,000 acres of protected habitat running unbroken from the Maya Mountains to Port Honduras – has yet to be realized, the concept of a watershed-scale conservation unit catalyzed the purchase of the GSCP and subsequent parcels along the river. Conceptually, it also marked the creation of a place as an integrated landscape existing along ecological rather than socio-political borders. A diverse set of agencies, organizations, and institutions now control and manage an extensive area along the Golden Stream for conservation. While management decisions regarding individual parcels reside with the individual organization, a holistic approach to conservation will only be as successful as the ability of land owners and managers to coordinate activities across parcels and reconcile them with the larger landscape that lies outside of protected area borders.

Successful conservation initiatives in the small-scale Golden Stream watershed could serve as a stepping stone to larger and more complex landscape-scale initiatives. The Golden Stream watershed is an integral component of two landscape-scale conservation initiatives in the region; the MMMC and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC) program.

As discussed earlier, the Golden Stream is an integral part of the regional MMMC, a larger scale conservation unit embraced by TNC and TIDE. The Golden Stream Corridor, also referred to as the Southeastern Biological Corridor, has been identified as a potential component of the MBC National Biological Corridors Program in Belize[37] (CBM 2003). Golden Stream organizations, interests, and issues are replicated in the MMMC and the MBC. As posited by a TIDE/TNC consultant, successes and challenges at the Golden Stream watershed level could prove valuable to planning and implementation of these larger scale initiatives:

> I'll share my vision. I would say that the whole Golden Stream area will be one of the most active parts, because there's a critical mass. So between YCT and Golden Stream village, this will take off there if it gets funded. (Esselman 2002)

One approach to landscape-scale conservation is to start small and gradually connect existing synergies. A NGO representative suggested, "…the ideal approach would be to start small (e.g., Golden Stream Corridor area) and grow into a larger area (i.e., Port Honduras Watershed area)" (Anonymous 2002).

Challenges for collaboration

Interviewees identified various challenges to greater communication, coordination, and collaboration in the Golden Stream watershed.

Lack of a shared vision

The involvement of multiple participants with different and sometimes conflicting perceptions and values poses real challenges to collaborative natural resource management. The watershed is divided into discrete parcels owned by the private sectors, NGOs, the Government of Belize, absentee landowners, and individuals. The area is home to culturally diverse ethnic groups. International, national, and regional organizations work here. This complex social landscape poses significant challenges to managing the area as a corridor in part reflected by the various ways groups conceptualize the region. The Golden Stream is defined as a biological corridor running from the Maya Mountains to Port Honduras, a collection of protected areas, an ecosystem, a component of the MMMC and a concept.

For others it is defined as the foundation of a livelihood or a source of revenue. One interviewee explains this phenomenon, "The Golden Stream Corridor is a vision from someone outside, not necessarily that of the individual land owners and managers" (Pinelo 2002).

While BLE, TIDE, YCT, and FFI have expressed an interest in managing the Golden Stream as an integrated watershed, individual objectives and agendas may impede effective collaboration. Meanwhile, an over-arching management plan or strategy is lacking. BLE's primary interests revolve around protection of the "five core parcels" starting with the company's property and moving out towards the Maya Mountain Forest Reserve and the MBC. They feel eco-tourism is the key to sustainable conservation in the watershed as it provides protection and economic benefits through local employment. Extractive activities such as hunting, logging and fishing are incompatible with their view of conservation. FFI and YCT couple conservation with community development. They take a more "people oriented" approach and are open to allowing certain activities on their land (such as salvage logging and collection of non-timber forest products) if practiced in a regulated and sustainable manner.

TIDE envisions management in the context of the ambitious MMMC as outlined in their Site Conservation Plan. The MMMC is a "landscape management unit … [that] covers nearly a million acres connecting the Maya Mountains to the Belize Barrier Reef" and encompasses five other watersheds in addition to the Golden Stream (TIDE 2000). TIDE practices an aggressive conservation strategy that encompasses buying back foreign held land, eco-tourism, education, and protected areas management. Chief Forest Officer Oswaldo Sabido differentiates the approach followed by YCT and TIDE:

> TIDE following its mentor, TNC, takes a much more corporate approach to conservation than say, YCT, which is trying to develop a more community-based management that involves several communities and a particular ethnic group in Toledo. (2002)

As long as organizations can successfully accomplish their objectives independent of each other it seems unlikely they will choose to engage in a more collaborative approach.

Resource constraints

While mentioned as an incentive for greater collaboration, limited resources are also cited as an inhibiting factor. Various individuals mentioned time and resource constraints. Government agencies and NGOs lack the human and financial resources to carry out roles and responsibilities. Small organizations like YCT are strapped financially. FFI and YCT have limited staff. While the lowland forests and coastline protected areas are in private hands, the headwaters of the Golden Stream emerge in GOB designated Forest Reserves. Management responsibility for the Columbia River Forest Reserve and the Bladen Nature Reserve is in the hands of the Forest Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment. Given limited financial and technical resources and information, the Department's activity in the Toledo District is constrained, as explained below:

> The Forest Department appears to be handicapped due to lack of resources. Over ten years, even though they have qualified people and generate revenue, GOB has not provided financial support. NGOs which have good experience have been helping the Forest Department to do its monitoring. (Bardalez 2002)

This view was echoed by Sabido:

> The Forest Department first of all does not have all the answers. Secondly, we are still technically weak in protected areas management, especially with community/participatory management even though an overstretched Forest Department staff is doing its best with the limited resources available. We are also weak in the area of knowing what is happening on-the-ground – in Toledo, for example. But yet we have the obligation and the responsibility of providing the leadership for protected areas management. (2002)

Interviewees also mentioned a lack of time, to build relationships and forge partnerships with other organizations with similar interests. The Director of YCT encapsulated the feelings of most of the interviewees in the Golden Stream Corridor: "Everybody has their own things to do and not much time to work together. When someone tries to call a meeting, no one has time for it" (B. Teul 2002).

Organizational challenges

Organizational turf. While groups of environmental organizations have embraced landscape scale or eco-regional conservation planning, contiguous parcels and protected areas remain divided along organizational rather than ecological lines. Various interviews hinted at turf issues. In response to a question about potential problems to collaborative management of protected areas one individual said: "I'm not sure how much the different NGOs are willing to share power or benefits" (Garbutt 2002). Strong institutional identities and personalities strengthen territoriality. It seems that individuals within the GSCP identify more with their institutions than with the geographic region. One individual remarked: "[NGOs] don't want to share recognition with others [and believe that] only they should benefit" (Anonymous 2002). The following quote highlights the tendency for organizations to define the watershed along institutional rather than ecological lines:

> We have staked out what we term the Golden Stream Corridor and it has a collection of stakeholders involved in various levels. Our focus is on the company's property first and next what we call the 'five core parcels' of the Golden Stream Corridor. (Karas 2002)

Leadership styles. Different leadership styles create conflict and fragmentation. Leading environmental organizations in the Golden Stream are characterized by strong and vocal leaders; each with their vision for current and future conservation management in the watershed. Outside the language hinting at a need for greater collaboration and coordination in the watershed, no one is really "stepping up to the plate" to consolidate the five core parcels into a functionally integrated corridor.

Conflict and competition among groups

Criticisms and comments by various interviewees hint at a history of interaction characterized by conflict and personality clashes. While BLE was instrumental in the creation of the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve NGO (now YCT) the relationship seems to have soured. BLE feels that when YCT changed their name they also changed their focus and are now ignoring their responsibility to the five core parcels by focusing on the broader

watershed. On the other hand, YCT questions how well BLE's management strategy as a for-profit organization incorporates local community needs and skills.

Environmental groups perceive Sorenson to be the enemy; using language such as "muscling his way in" or "a walking environmental disaster" to describe him. He is perceived by the environmentalists to be a "shrimper/logger who basically wants to trash the land." Meanwhile, an employee of Sorenson feels their company is doing things to protect the environment such as preserving riparian buffers and using natural filtration to remove effluents produced by shrimp farming: "We get blamed for polluting but we are doing things that will protect nature…it's in our best interest. The land must give people on earth a living" (Anonymous 2002). Popular perceptions paint TIDE as Toledo's environmental rock star unwilling to share the spotlight with anyone else: "they mopped up marine areas and now they are getting into the terrestrial" (Anonymous 2002). On the flip side, TIDE sees itself as a local success story and attributes the hostility and jealousy to human nature: "It is human nature to hate those that are doing well. I don't expect everyone to like me or TIDE" (Maheia 2002).

Lack of trust

Interactions between indigenous communities and NGOs and Government organizations are characterized by mistrust. Poorly implemented and managed projects have led some to believe that NGOs are "just like the Government." Despite numerous projects and millions of development dollars, quality of life for local community residents has improved little. Decision making authority is frequently in the hands of international and national organizations while the local populations affected by those decisions are not necessarily able to participate in decision making processes. As a result, Maya villagers are skeptical of the proclaimed benefits of various conservation and development initiatives in Toledo. Conservation organizations are seen as "locking away resources" while development projects seem to benefit only a minority.

Despite various attempts by NGOs such as YCT to integrate communities into conservation and sustainable livelihood initiatives in the Golden Stream, various interviewees questioned how well indigenous people are represented and integrated into management decisions.

Maya villagers from Golden Stream Village – located across the road from BLE's upscale tourist complex – feel the promise of local employment and benefits from conservation programs was used merely to "get them on board." As commented by Golden Stream villagers:

> At first they had meetings with us. But after that they did not involve us. They wanted support from the people but after they have it then things are over. (Anonymous 2002)
>
> He [Karas] is a very tricky guy. In each village he gets stones [to build his fence, and] he doesn't pay. He wants to damage our village and improve his own land. He needs to ask the village to approve it first. (Anonymous 2002)

Opportunities and facilitating factors

Interviews reveal various opportunities to increase collaboration among individuals and organizations. Interactions and partnerships between them suggest a degree of interdependence and interconnectedness.

Existing relationships

There is a richness of linkages among conservation oriented organizations in the Golden Stream largely brought about by the nature of natural resource management at the watershed scale which exceeds the resources, jurisdiction and expertise of any single organization. They range from informal to formal arrangements, involve combinations of local, national, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and bring together the public, private, and nonprofit sector.

YCT, BLE, and TIDE partner with INGOs. TIDE's on-going relationship with TNC denotes a secure source of funding while FFI provides critical technical assistance to YCT. BLE receives financing from Conservation International's Conservation Enterprise Fund (CEF) and EcoLogic Enterprise Ventures (EEV) for their eco-tourism component (BLE 2003c). These INGO/NGO partnerships elevate the visibility of the region beyond the local level and provide needed resources.

Partnerships and co-management agreements between GOB and NGOs are an important source of technical, human, and financial resources, given their inability to carry out management roles and responsibilities for protected areas on their own. GOB has devolved management responsibility for Crown Lands Block 127 to TIDE: recognizing TIDE's experience working to protect and manage conservation areas in Toledo. BLE, in conjunction with the Bladen Consortium, rotates some of their rangers in the Government controlled Bladen Nature Reserve.[38]

Linkages between environmental organizations are manifested in more formal arrangements as well; through Memorandums of Agreements (MOA) and conservation easements.[39] Eugenio Ah, the former director of BCER, explains the value of such agreements as a tool to facilitate conservation planning between YCT, BLE and TIDE:

> This process is beneficial to both BLE and the NGOs that manage the area. This shows that the efforts of the private sector and NGOs can work together. In terms of forming a common vision as well as a common strategy, to be able to pursue the common end of protecting this area. BLE is very adamant about this. Each stakeholder has their own niche to fill, but we'll be working together. (2002)

YCT signed a conservation easement with TIDE for one of their downstream properties. In essence YCT plays a "watch dog" role by visiting the property once a year to make sure the agency is managing the land in accordance with the easement: for example no new building, roads, logging, or farming. YCT cannot reciprocate because it does not yet have a management plan in place for the property (GSCP) which it manages. However, YCT's Director has expressed that they would sign an easement for their property with TIDE once the management plan for that property in place (B. Teul 2003).

The organizational landscape of the Golden Stream is not static, new partnerships, alliances, and initiatives continue to develop. BLE and TIDE recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement, renewable after ten years, "in which both sides agree to work together to promote conservation and development that will guarantee the long-term sustainable utilization and maintain the ecological integrity of the Golden Stream River and the Port Honduras Marine Reserve"[40] (BLE 2003a). The document outlines the purpose, scope, and termination of the agreement and the obligations of the participating organizations.

As part of this agreement, BLE will contribute a "daily user fee" to TIDE for each guest that participates in BLE's tourism operations. It is expected that this revenue will be used by TIDE for their marine patrols and conservation work in the PHMR (BLE 2003e). Furthermore, starting in November 2002, BLE, TIDE, and YCT rangers started to conduct joint patrols in the PHMR to reduce poaching and gill netting, with the patrol costs shared by the three parties (BLE 2003e). In 2002 FFI submitted a Global Environment Facility project proposal for integrated ecosystem management in the Golden Stream Watershed. The project seeks to coordinate and strengthen conservation initiatives by addressing local capacity, governance and local livelihoods as they relate to natural resource management in the Golden Stream watershed. If approved, the project will provide a tremendous source of technical and financial support for future collaboration in the watershed.

Potential for joint gains

Participants express an interest in working together and can imagine joint gains from shared resources, information, and management responsibilities. Others see the potential for more local employment, monetary benefits from user fees, access to carbon credits from carbon sequestration, and the ability to tap funds targeted at collaborative or ecosystem management.

The corridor encompasses a large area of land that individuals and organizations cannot manage alone. Parties identify gaps in baseline data, biodiversity and environmental impact assessments, and management plans. They mention the need for joint monitoring and patrolling. These problems could be better met through pooled knowledge and resources. Greater collaboration can merge the resources and skills of the private and non-profit sector. Ken Karas posits: "Collaboration is to bring together the strengths and resources of the non-profit and the private sector" (2002). John Pinelo, formerly of the Forest Department, puts forth a scenario where each organization could bring something to the table in terms of technical knowledge, community support, and financial resources:

> TIDE has a little bit of the technical knowledge and the money but lacks community support. FFI has the greatest technical knowledge of the land but not the money. BLE has the financial resources but not the knowledge and YCT has the community support. (2002)

Shared concerns and interests

While organizations respond to individual agendas and missions, various organizations in the Golden Stream share common interests. YCT, FFI, TIDE, and BLE support sustainable development initiatives, conservation awareness and capacity building. Both TIDE and BLE embrace eco-tourism as a means to generate revenue and jobs through conservation. BLE is in the process of developing three tourist lodges on their property and plans to include both TIDE and YCT's properties in their eco-tourist destinations:[41]

> BLE is developing three satellite stations on the property for tourism [Fig Tree, Jungle Camp and a marine site]. This is a collaborative effort where groups [YCT and TIDE] use development to help conserve the area in terms of user fees for Port Honduras. If they use the YCT land as well this will be another way of contributing. (Ah 2002)

Non-profits like YCT and TIDE stand to benefit from the revenue generated from BLE's guests while BLE requires access to a broad array of ecosystems if they are to provide their guests with the "trans-habitat experience."

The MOA signed by TIDE and BLE highlights their attempts to capture the benefits from greater collaboration in conjunction with strengthening conservation efforts in the region. The relationship between TIDE and BLE is increasingly interdependent given that each organization manages strategic components of the corridor: BLE holds a long term lease on Moho Cay situated within the PHMR where plans are underway to open the upscale Belize Island Lodge. TIDE manages PHMR and Block 127, both important components of the Golden Stream watershed. As neighbors in the Golden Stream watershed, it is *in their best interest* to coordinate ranger and tourism activity as well as share expertise, knowledge, and skills and monitor each other's activities. According to the MOA, both parties agree to cooperate on the following:

- BLE agrees and accepts to charge, collect and allocate funds generated vis-à-vis a daily and differentiated user fee charge from guests staying at Belize Island Lodge on Moho Cay and/or partaking in day excursions within the PHMR and/or other marine locations within the southern Toledo District, with a view to contribute to TIDE's conservation efforts in the PHMR…

- …share and coordinate their respective ranger activity in order to provide protection for the PHMR and the areas belonging to BLE and TIDE surrounding the Golden Stream River.

- BLE hereto agrees to utilize the expertise of TIDE for its Environmental Impact Assessment for the development of the ecotourism project… [on Moho Cay]. BLE also agrees to share with TIDE, for feedback and comments, its current management plan for BLE's Boden Creek Ecological Reserve as well as any future management plans….

- BLE and TIDE hereto agree to work out arrangements to use TIDE trained guides as part of BLE activities in the PHMR… [and vice versa for TIDE's tourism activities in BCER]. (BLE 2003a)

Interest in moving forward

Various interviewees indicate positive interactions and are cautiously optimistic about moving forward. New activities, initiatives, and partnerships continue to emerge between YCT, BLE, TIDE, and other organizations. Existing relationships continue to evolve. YCT's Director states:

> Now [YCT and BLE] are beginning to talk. We realize we are neighbors and we need to work together. [Karas] owns a block of land on the other side of the river that he is putting into protection…. (B. Teul 2002)

In a similar vein, Karas says:

> I would like to see the initiative of the Golden Stream Corridor go forward. No one can dominate; each one has its voice and the option to pull out if it's not working. (2002)

Recently, communities have also shown a renewed interest in participating in the corridor initiative:

> [In] the beginning there was good response [from the communities]. There was a time when there was a drop in people's interest in our work. But the interest is going back up especially after the hurricane; people are seeing that it's important that we protect our natural resources. We do see an increase in participation now. (B. Teul 2002)

Conclusions

An analysis of the constraints and opportunities for collaboration in the Golden Stream watershed leads to the following conclusions:

- While many parties express an interest in greater communication and cooperation, *all* the parties have never sat down face to face to discuss managing this area as a whole. Communication has been limited to clusters of NGO leaders while communities and industry have only marginally participated. Future decision making processes in the Golden Stream Corridor could be strengthened by the inclusion of a broader spectrum of participants and their interests, skills, and experience.

- The Golden Stream is defined as a biological corridor running from the Maya Mountains to Port Honduras, a collection of protected areas, an ecosystem, a component of the MMMC, and a concept. For others it is defined as the foundation of a livelihood or a source of revenue. Varied perceptions and values among participants pose serious challenges to managing the area as an integrated ecosystem. Building a shared objective could promote greater unity among potential collaborators.

- A change in the status quo could create the sense of urgency or 'window of opportunity' that could move organizations towards greater cooperation, communication and collaboration. While many interviewees share common concerns about the region's vulnerability perhaps it has not reached crisis level yet. The highway is *almost* completed and Sorenson is still *planning* to develop his land for shrimp farming.

Chapter Eight: The Bladen Management Consortium

Introduction

The Bladen Nature Reserve inspires passion among its many advocates and frustration among residents of the communities that it borders. Called "the jewel in the crown of Belize's protected area system," for its exceptional biodiversity, dramatic topography, and archeological treasures, the 97,000-acre reserve is afforded Belize's highest level of protection (Pinelo 2002). Only education and research are allowed in Bladen: hunting, fishing, logging, harvesting of plant materials for food, fiber, or medicine, removal of artifacts, tourism, and trespass of any sort without a permit are all prohibited. While these restrictions exist "on the books," until recently the under-resourced Government agencies and thinly stretched non-governmental organizations tasked with enforcing them have implemented little real on the ground management in the reserve. With growing population and mounting development pressure, illegal activities in the reserve have continued to increase in the last several years, threatening both the natural and archeological resources that have made the Bladen Nature Reserve famous.

The Bladen Management Consortium was born out of its founders' conviction that the Bladen Nature Reserve was a unique resource in dire need of management and their recognition that the management challenges were beyond the capacity of any one organization. As a case study in collaboration, it highlights the many difficulties associated with initiating and sustaining an multi-stakeholder management body, particularly with regard to funding, staffing, representation, and legitimacy. It also illustrates how a few committed individuals can drive a collaborative process forward despite such challenges. Significantly, several of the key individuals and organizations involved in the Bladen Management Consortium also interact in the broader landscape of the Toledo District. Understanding the difficulties and successes these groups have encountered in the

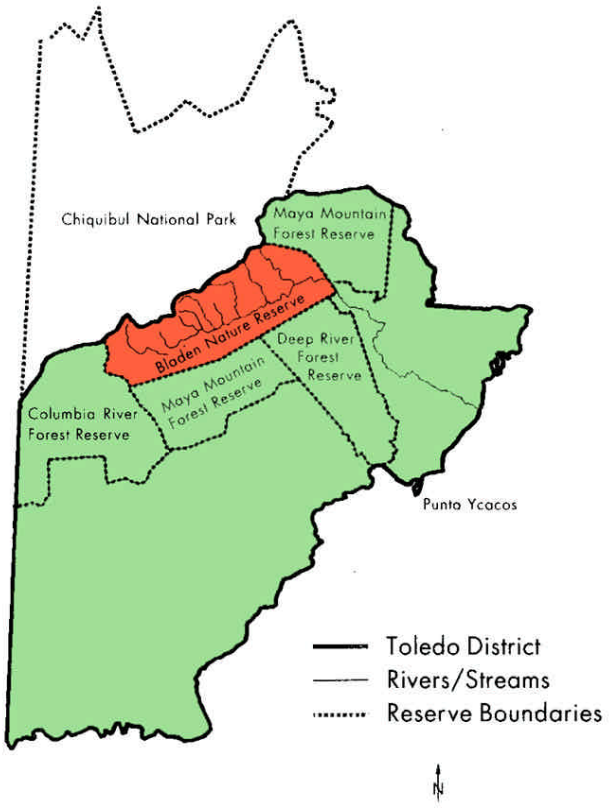
Consortium may therefore provide insights for incipient watershed management efforts in which they are involved at the district scale.

Background

Context

The Bladen Nature Reserve sits at the "top" of the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor (MMMC), where several of the rivers that flow into Port Honduras, including Golden Stream, have their origin. The Reserve is bisected along its major axis by the Bladen Branch of the Monkey River, forming the Bladen Valley at the core of the Reserve. Several other protected areas that act as buffers surround the Bladen Nature Reserve:

- Maya Mountain Forest Reserve to the northeast and southeast (two parts);
- Deep River Forest Reserve to the east;
- Columbia Forest Reserve to the southwest; Chiquibul National Park to the northwest;
- Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary to the northeast; and
- The privately-owned Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE) parcel to the northeast.



Map 10: Bladen Nature Reserve

Cockscomb Basin is managed by the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) under a co-management agreement with the Forest Department. The Forest Reserves are managed by the Forest Department. Bladen Nature Reserve and the Chiquibul National Park also fall officially under the auspices of the Forest Department. Of the surrounding parcels, the Forest Reserves are the least restricted and the most vulnerable to future de-reservation. Notably, all of these organizations are currently Consortium members.

Bladen is oriented along the axis of the Maya Mountains, which traverse Southern Belize from the southwest to the northeast. The Reserve's geologic diversity, with both limestone and granite bedrock, creates its unique and varied topography, including towering karst formations, extensive cave systems, and peaks, as well as lowlands. The varied topography in turn supports a rich diversity of flora and fauna. More than 600 species of trees are found in the Bladen with its intact lowland, tropical, seasonally moist forest. According to Jake Marlin the founder of BFREE, "It's probably one of two or three lowland rainforests left in the New World that has this level of diversity and structure". The area contains plants that are not found anywhere else in Belize or even in the world.

The diversity of wildlife is also rich in Bladen. All five species of native cats live here: jaguars, ocelots, jaguarundi, puma, and margay. Other mammals found here include spider monkey, tapir, agouti, and the gibnut. The Bladen Valley contains the richest herpetofaunal region in Belize, with a previously undescribed species of frog discovered in recent years. (Iremonger et al 1994)

The Bladen area was originally declared a Forest Reserve in May 1977. The area became the focus of scientific investigation in the late 1980's. National Geographic also filmed a movie on the Bladen called *Mountains of the Maya*. The findings from the investigations and the attention drawn to it by the National Geographic film drove the re-designation of the Bladen as a Nature Reserve in 1990. Simply changing the designation of the area did not guarantee its protection, however.

Organizations involved in the consortium

When the Consortium first met in 1995, thirty individuals representing ten organizations attended. As discussed later, these numbers quickly declined as the meetings of the Consortium continued. The core organizations in the first phase of the Consortium were the Belize Center for Environmental Education, BAS, the Toledo Alcaldes Association, the Forest Department, BFREE, the Department of Archaeology, and the Toledo Maya Cultural Council. In the second phase, the leaders have been BFREE, Toledo Institute for Development and Environment, Ya'axche' Conservation Trust, and the Forest Department. These four have recently been joined by BAS and Belize Lodge & Excursions (BLE). Each organization brings assets to the Consortium. YCT is recognized for its skill in community relations. TIDE excels in public, Government, and funder relations. BAS is experienced in protected areas management and is very connected with Government officials. Finally, BLE offers a well-trained staff of rangers and connections to international funders. While each of these organizations plays a role in Bladen, the Forest Department and BFREE, introduced below, have been the lead participants in the consortium to date through key staff.

Forest Department

The Forest Department is one of the three divisions of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE). The Forest Department is responsible for managing the forestry resources of Belize, which include all national forests, protected areas, wildlife and biological diversity of terrestrial zones. The mission of the MNRE is to improve the quality of life for all Belizeans by effectively managing and conserving the natural and environmental resources in order to improve the sustainable economic development of Belize. The Forest Department oversees the management of terrestrial protected areas.

The Forest Department gets most of its funding from the MNRE's annual budgetary allocations. Recently, it has been able to receive medium-sized grants from the Protected Areas Conservation Trust. These grants are small, however, and still do not adequately address their funding needs, which are substantial. A UNDP/GEF Project Report (Ravndal 2002) states:

> The Protected Areas Programme [of the Forest Department] receives less than ½ of 1% of the already very restrictive budget assigned to the Ministry to which it belongs, the MNREI… With an annual budget of only US $116,629, (Estimate of Revenue and Expenditures for 2002-2003, Government of Belize), and with none of this amount allocated for on-the-ground management of PAs, the Protected Areas Programme cannot possibly adequately co-manage (or manage) PAs, even with backstopping from the entire Forest Department. According to the new institutional structure, the entire Forest Department (as opposed to the Protected Areas Programme alone) should be more involved in PA management. Nevertheless, it seems highly unlikely that the overall situation regarding management of PAs will significantly improve. After all, the Forest Department is, itself, stretched to the very limit. The entire Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, Trade and Industry (to which the Forest Department belongs) receives a mere 1.6% of the national budget (Estimate of Revenue and Expenditures for 2002-2003, Government of Belize). Given these extreme resource constraints, it is highly unrealistic to assume that the Forest Department can adequately manage the nation's PAs, or even monitor the management of these PAs by others.

The Department also receives some revenue from protected area entrance fees, but at insignificant levels. Due to poor financial resources, the Department has very little technical resources deployed there in the Toledo District, and this has been the case for a number of years. Wayne Bardalez, the District Forest Officer at Toledo's Machaca Forest Station stated:

> The Forest Department appears to be handicapped due to lack of resources. Over ten years, even though they have qualified people and generate revenue, the Government of Belize has not provided financial support. NGOs, which have good experience, have been helping the Forest Department to do its monitoring. (2002)

Nonetheless, Forest Department staff – first Rafael Manzanero and then John Pinelo – have been leaders in establishing and maintaining the Bladen Management Consortium, offering expertise in protected areas management, time, space, and resources for coordination, commitment, and legitimacy because of their official jurisdiction over the Bladen. Legitimacy, as discussed further, proved especially important in convening group members. Significantly, John Pinelo left the Forest Department this year and joined the Belize Audubon Society as a senior staff member, from where he has continued to lead the Consortium.

Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education

In 1995 a young American herpetologist named Jake Marlin and his partner Kelly Marlin established BFREE, an environmental non-profit organization. The Marlins had spent time in the Bladen and sought to locate a research and environmental education center next to it. BFREE secured a lease for a 1,153 acre parcel of land abutting the Reserve and began to establish their facility. The land also abuts the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary and the Maya Mountain Forest Reserve.

The parcel is strategically located at one of the major access points to the Reserve. From this vantage point and through subsequent research trips in the Bladen, the Marlins observed that the natural and archeological heritage of the site was being eroded through persistent and damaging activities, including looting, fishing with poisons, logging, and hunting. Furthermore, they learned that the Reserve was not actively managed on site by Forest Department personnel. Jake Marlin approached Rafael Manzanero at the Forest Department and together they initiated the first meeting of the group that would become the Bladen Management Consortium in late 1995.

The goals of BFREE are to promote education and research of the Belizean rainforest, as well as to protect the Bladen Nature Reserve. BFREE is financed by private donations, mostly from funders from the United States. BFREE, in the person of Jake Marlin, is the prime organizing force behind the Bladen Consortium today, along with John Pinelo.

Management challenges

The biodiversity of the Bladen Nature Reserve is unparalleled in Belize. The majority of the forest cover in the area has never been cut, due to the remoteness of the valley, the rugged karst topography, and the thick tangle of jungle vegetation. These same factors also make management and monitoring of the Reserve challenging, especially for a budget-constrained Government agency or a cash-strapped NGO.

Main issues surrounding the management of the Bladen Nature Reserve are unmonitored and illegal extractive activities occurring within the reserve. These include poaching, fishing, illegal logging, looting of Maya archaeological sites, and bio-prospecting. According to John

Pinelo, of the Forest Department, these activities are undertaken by opportunists, because they are "the ones that can get out the most stuff in the fastest amount of time" (2002). Surrounding communities also impact the Reserve through their customary subsistence practices.

Traditional activities

Neighboring Maya people, many from the adjacent community of Medina Bank, have traditionally used the Bladen Reserve for hunting, resource extraction, and other traditional activities. IN 1989, one year prior to the declaration of the Bladen as a Nature Reserve, Joseph Cal and his family founded the village of Medina Bank (TMCC and TAA 1997). This Kekchi and Mopan village is particularly dependent on the Reserve, as it is surrounded by private and Government protected areas, and they have few places where they can go to fulfill their subsistence needs. This predicament often pits the local community against managers of the Reserve. Pinelo explains:

> Medina Bank is an island located within the protected areas. They have nowhere to go and the soil they have is not very good, so they have to go into the park to hunt. Basically, this is why they are against the management of the park and against the implementation of the plan. (2002)

Many of these activities, such as collecting palm fronds to make the traditional thatch roofs, incur relatively few impacts when conducted on a small scale. Villagers also collect fruit from the Reserve and market it as a "Genuine Mayan Product." (Pinelo 2002)

Other traditional practices place greater pressure on the Reserve. Uncontrolled fishing and hunting within the reserve can destabilize certain ecosystems. Sometimes toxic chemicals are poured into streams and rivers to catch fish. Also, local hunters occasionally light fires to keep savannah areas open for better hunting. As elsewhere in Central America (Nietschmann 1973:88), this practice helps maintain pine-savannah ecosystems although frequent fires inhibit patches of pine regeneration. While fire occurs naturally in the savannahs surrounding the Reserve, it also can spread into the protected area. Last year, an uncontrolled fire burned down a ranger station near the Bladen.

Extraction of natural resources

The illegal extraction of other natural resources also damages the Reserve. These activities include bio-prospecting and logging. Illegal bio-prospecting is the systematic search and unsolicited removal of biological sources of new compounds for economic gains that are not shared with the people or place from which the material was extracted (INBio 2003). According to a GOB official, a previously-unknown species of cacao was discovered in the Nature Reserve and was clandestinely collected and smuggled to Trinidad (Anonymous 2002).

The difficulty of accessing the reserve has not stopped illegal logging completely. Much of the logging in the Toledo district uses chainsaw mills. These are small, basically a chainsaw and a metal frame, and can be carried into the reserve. Trees are cut down and quickly cut up into boards. Illegal chainsaw mills waste timber as well as damage the forest. John Pinelo of the Forest Department commented, "The blades are really thick, you lose a lot just in sawdust" (2002).

Extraction of archeological resources

The Maya Mountains, including the Bladen Valley, contain an abundance of understudied and unexcavated Maya ruins (Prufer and Wanyerka 2001). In addition to the research of professional archaeologists, this cultural wealth in South Belize draws the attention of occasional and professional looters. Looting, or treasure hunting, is often conducted by methods that destroy the site's context which prohibits the interpretation of the significance of the find. Jake Marlin described one site in the Bladen, "I found clay idols with thousands of little saucer cups, jaguar skulls at the base of these cliffs, stuff you just wouldn't believe" (2003). On a subsequent trip, Marlin discovered that the site had been plundered and largely destroyed. Highly organized looters have operated in the area for decades. Explosives are sometimes used to crack open uninvestigated Maya structures. Artifacts commonly surface on the black market. According to an official from the Department of Archaeology:

> Looting is a huge problem. We [the Department of Archaeology] have one staff member dedicated to deal with the issue of looting and we have 1,400 sites all over the country not counting the [unexcavated] mounds. (Anonymous 2002)

While archaeological research recovers important data for understanding regional history, such projects direct looters to previously undisturbed areas. Long term research projects like the Maya Mountains Archaeological Project (MMAP) create additional debate through the training of local field crews. The MMAP began in 1992 under the direction of Cleveland State University archaeologist Peter Dunham, one of the contributors to the National Geographic film project. On one hand, Maya organizations argue that local people have rights to their cultural heritage and demand inclusion in research projects. One Maya leader explains, "The Mayan community needs to be involved in al the expeditions. We want to make sure that the community can manage the archaeological reserves" (Anonymous 2002). On the other hand, conservationists argue that many research projects damage the natural heritage of the Reserve. The MMAP employed local people to cut trails and a helicopter pad and a camp within the reserve. After the field season, many of the ruins were looted and poachers started using the trails and camp. Jake Marlin blames Dunham for this destruction because "he showed the way, he paid them to cut the trails" (2002).

Another interviewee corroborated that training local people in excavation techniques may increase looting in the absence of alternative income generating opportunities:

> Skilled labor equals skilled looters. When these [archaeology] operations are not here, you end up with trained looters for the off-season. The guys doing milpa end up going and doing some pilfering of a site. The country and the issue are so large that the best we can do is raise public awareness. One example is a 5" x 8" engraved zoomorphic limestone artifact that sold for US$270,000 at Sotheby's Auction. (Anonymous 2002)

Scientific research projects

Authorized research expeditions also pose challenges for the management of the Reserve. Officially, the Bladen Nature Reserve is open only to scientific studies, but even these activities can bring about damaging effects on the environment of the reserve. For example, Jake Marlin described a project on mammals that a student was undertaking within the reserve:

> [A young researcher] needed a 500 meter transect. So Peter [Dunham] had his Mayan guys cut a line for it. I got up there two weeks later and walked that transect. So this girl had walked the transect several times, and it was all useless information. We estimated that several thousand trees had been cut down. (2002)

Although the 1987 National Geographic film, *Mountains of the Maya*, did create the momentum to establish the Reserve, it also attracted the attention of many individuals interested in profiting from the natural and cultural wealth of the area. Marlin argues that the activity surrounding the making of the movie and the increased exposure it brought contributed to more rapid degradation of the area, due especially to the cutting of trails and the uncovering of archeological sites, both of which enhanced illegal access to game and artifacts.

La Sierra Multidisciplinary Field Station

La Sierra Multidisciplinary Field Station is a comprehensive research initiative located three kilometers south of the Bladen Nature Reserve. To complement a similar research station in northern Belize, the GOB and the London Natural History Museum planned La Sierra with support from Cleveland State University. Work on it began in 1998. The University intends to sponsor programs at the Field Station in geology, biology, archaeology, and medicine. It is expected to be a US$10 million project by the estimated date of completion in 2004 (CSU 2003).

Dubious circumstances surrounding the creation of La Sierra have led to controversy in the Bladen Nature Reserve and the village of Medina Bank. In the mid-1990s, project initiators acquired 600 acres of land claimed by the village of Medina Bank to build the Field Station. Dunham, a principal organizer of the station, suggested to officials in Medina Bank that the Government would compensate for the land taken by de-reserving land in the Deep River Forest Reserve (Anonymous 2002). While some of the villagers were discontented, Dunham placated the local leaders and gained their agreement by promising benefits for them and for the village. As the Department of Archeology does not have powers related to de-reservation of forest reserves, however, the takings caused several years of bureaucratic hassle for numerous Government agencies. Furthermore, the reduction in land available to the villagers

resulted in greater pressure on the Bladen Forest Reserve. In addition, the creation of a new road for the research station has created a new access point for illegal entry into the Reserve.

Land speculation

The improvement and expansion of the Southern Highway increases pressure on the Bladen Forest Reserve by facilitating the de-reservation of suitable agricultural lands along the highway that are currently protected in forest reserves. These reserves serve as critical buffers for the Bladen and their conversion to banana or citrus farms would both reduce the buffer and place additional pressures on the reserve as plantation workers move in (Marlin 2002; Pinelo 2002). Additional land pressures stem from fragmentation of surrounding communities. On one occasion, the Consortium was forced to remove a new settlement that emerged within the Bladen with the help of a "renegade" U.S.-based religious NGO (Marlin 2002).

History of the Bladen Management Consortium

In the late 1980s, the Belize Audubon Society agreed to manage national parks at the request of the Government of Belize. The Government of Belize and others assumed that BAS was also responsible for the management of the Bladen Nature Reserve, but none of the agreements that BAS signed with GOB explicitly included Bladen. The assumption of BAS management was likely based on the following facts:

- Up to 1989/90, BAS was the only NGO managing public protected areas. In fact, at that time, BAS was responsible for the management of all the national parks, with the exception of Bladen.
- In 1992-1994, BAS worked along with a regional TNC/USAID project that carried out a Rapid Ecological Assessment of the Bladen.
- In the late 1980s, BAS secured an endowment fund to support its protected area work. This fund stipulated that BAS provide support to the management of the Bladen.

Given limited staff and budget and faced with a broad mandate to manage protected areas across Belize, however, BAS was unable to take on the difficult task of managing Bladen on their own. At the time, Rafael Manzanero was the Protected Areas Officer at the Forest Department. As a member of the Protected Areas Technical Committee which was responsible for coordinating the formulation of management plans for national parks, Manzanero became aware of limitations of BAS managing the reserve, and determined that Bladen needed greater attention. Given Bladen's size and challenges, he realized that no one organization would be able to effectively manage it on its own. The only thing protecting the area at the time was a single sign. Having also recognized the need for greater management in Bladen, Jake Marlin of BFREE had contacted Manzanero. Together, Marlin and Manzanero came up with the proposal for the Bladen Management Consortium.

The beginnings

The Consortium started out with ten organizations, out of fifteen that had been invited. Marlin tells the story of the inception of the Bladen Management Consortium:

> The Bladen Consortium had its first meeting at the Pelican Resort in the fall of '95 or early '96 . . . It came out of meetings to get stakeholders together, whether they be local Mayans, scientists, NGO's, to talk about the Bladen and discuss the issues . . . There were a lot of people interested in Bladen – individuals, communities, NGO's, Government – [but] there was no one managing it. Some people thought BAS was supposed to be managing it, but they didn't have capacity at the time. It [officially] falls under [the auspices of] the Ministry of Natural Resources, but they didn't have the capacity to manage it [either] . . . [So] someone put up some money and we had our first meeting with about 30 people . . . What came out of it was that we should form a committee to create a permanent forum, and it would be called the Bladen Consortium. So we started having meetings regularly. (2002)

Toward a management plan

Despite broad interest at the start, many groups and individuals lacked the time, resources, or interest for continued participation in the Consortium and its regular meetings. According to John Pinelo (2002), the group met "upwards of 30 times" in its first phase as they laid the foundation for a management plan. Marlin recounts:

> The group got smaller, and we drafted these terms of reference, what our goals were. There were six: review opportunities for developing the Bladen Nature Preserve, develop mechanism to draft a management plan, things like that. The main players were BAS, the Belize Center for Environmental Studies (the predecessor of TIDE), which became defunct about that same time, the Forest Department, BFREE, the Department of Archaeology, Toledo Alcaldes Association, and TMCC. We even invited the loggers on, the New River Enterprises, people who have logging concessions. The meetings kept taking place, and we would draft minutes and memorandums, gaining information about the reserve.
>
> We came up with a threats analysis, 'What are the threats to Bladen and how can they be resolved?' We contacted TNC and they sent down their protected areas specialist, Hernan Torres. He came down and sat in on some Consortium meetings; we picked his brains on coming up with a management plan. We wanted to get a management plan drafted, but we didn't have the money and weren't sure who would write it. Eventually, what started happening was that the protected areas specialist for the [Forest Department], Rafael Manzanero, and myself wrote it. We got a lot of people to help . . . It took about two years, and it didn't cost anything. It's a damn good document, it outlines everything that should be done. It was finished in '98, and *it's been sitting on a shelf ever since.* (2002; emphasis added)

Pinelo similarly relates that the management plan is currently in limbo, and adds that with the management plan complete, the Consortium lost steam:

> The group's first goal was to write a management plan for the area, which was completed and submitted to the department [in 1998] and *is still awaiting approval*. With the first task complete, the group stopped meeting, as our primary goal was accomplished. (2002; emphasis added)

The management plan for the Bladen addresses four key issues: fire prevention, environmental education, monitoring, and research.

Changing participants

The Consortium relied heavily on the efforts of Marlin and Manzanero. Through his position in Government, Manzanero gave the Consortium legitimacy that Marlin, as a non-Belizean and director of a small start-up NGO in the middle of the jungle, could not give to the Consortium. Manzanero's departure from the Government was thus a major setback for the Consortium. As Marlin describes,

> In about '98 the [Protected Areas Officer of the Forest Department], Rafael Manzanero, left his post and took a job in the private sector. At that time, no one stepped forward in the [Forest Department] to take his place, that was active and had the background and understanding that he did. So I tried to keep the Consortium running as best I could. Because BFREE and the Forest Department were the primary players, we kept the ball rolling.
>
> I kept calling meetings and no one would show up. It's because BFREE, four years ago we weren't as well respected as we are now. *Being a white guy and calling meetings for all these Belizeans, it didn't work so well.* The Department of Archaeology, out of about 30 meetings, came to one. That wasn't unusual. BAS was represented by their Cockscomb manager; they were regulars, that was great. [But] most people weren't involved. So very little happened, while things were [still] going on in Bladen. (2002; emphasis added)

Revitalizing the Consortium

Several years passed and management plan for Reserve still was not being implemented. Marlin wanted to get things started again, and tried to decide who to get involved in the next stage of the development of the Consortium. In assessing which groups to involve in the revived Consortium, Marlin considered where various groups operate, their jurisdiction, the level of each group's interest in Bladen, and the resources they could bring to bear to either enhance the Consortium if they were involved or to frustrate the Consortium's efforts if they were not involved. At the same time, he hoped to keep the Consortium small and efficient. As he recounted, he asked,

> Who do we need to get involved to get things rolling [again]? Of course, the Forest Department, it's their jurisdiction. BFREE is involved, and we weren't sure from there. BAS, it's out of their range, maybe they don't need to get involved. TIDE, they didn't exist when we started the Consortium, [but] they're very active now in promoting themselves. Politically, we need the Maya involved. The [Toledo] Alcaldes Association (TAA) always shows up, but they change every two years and they never have anything to say. TMCC [the Toledo Maya Cultural Council], well we know what their interests are. The Consortium isn't going to provide much income for the local people, because there's no tourism.
>
> YCT and Golden Stream has popped up in the last couple years. They're our neighbors. They're close to here and they've got wardens, representing the Maya pretty well. Bartolo Teul is someone we've been working with before with the Forest Service and BFREE directly for a while now, a very solid relationship, let's get YCT involved.

> Then I was like, if we don't get TIDE involved, there's going to be all sorts of hoopla, I know there is . . . That's why I got TIDE involved in the Consortium.
>
> [So we decided to] have our first [revived] Consortium meeting. It [was] Forest Department, TIDE, BFREE, YCT. All local but the Forest Department. [Pinelo and I thought] let's limit it to that right now and see what happens. If you have too many organizations and people involved, then nothing ever gets done. Things hardly get done down here anyway. (2002)

Marlin thus assembled a team for the Consortium that brought local contacts (YCT), legitimacy and technical expertise (Forest Department), proximity, ecological knowledge, and enthusiasm (BFREE), and powerful external relations (TIDE). La Sierra Multidisciplinary Field Station was also invited to join due to its location and potential role in blocking illegal access to the Bladen, but Dunham was not available, as he is based in the United States.

Recent problems with the pine beetle outbreak and fire provided additional incentive for the revived Consortium to continue meeting, and, as noted earlier, two more organizations – BAS and BLE – have since joined. According to Pinelo (2002), the group has started taking "a more proactive stance," and is actively implementing education, fire protection and awareness, boundary demarcation, and patrols. While they have not formally asked the Government for management status, they have already fought fires in Bladen, and last summer they hired rangers to patrol the Reserve. This winter, BLE offered additional assistance with monthly patrols.

Active management is part of the Consortium's overall plan to gain co-management of the Reserve. According to Pinelo:

> We want to show the Government that we can get the work done even if we are not official managers. Hopefully, after that, we will approach the Government and request co-management of Bladen . . . We [the Consortium] are putting our money on the line to get it done. We haven't asked them [Government] for anything. We've hired three people and we're paying them with funds we found somewhere else. We've done educational work in the communities and have done firefighting. Now we're doing boundary demarcation, all this with little funds that we've identified. Hopefully, this will give them more confidence in the group. We hope to do more of this, and then later go to the Government and say, "we've been doing this for a while

> now, we'd like to get co-management." They'll have a track record of our performance. That's our strategy. (2002)

The Bladen Management Consortium has gained momentum as of late. Continuing forward will require the Consortium to address the many challenges to collaboration that the group still faces and that it takes advantage of the opportunities for enhancing joint management presented by increased interest and shared goals among member and non-member organizations.

Analysis

Challenges for collaboration

The Bladen Management Consortium has faced, and continues to face, many challenges. The Consortium must contend with: 1) organizational challenges; 2) continued funding limitations; 3) varying levels of input and involvement among Consortium members; 4) potential political obstacles to co-management; and 5) difficult relations with local communities.

Organizational challenges

The organizational composition of the Bladen Consortium has a tendency to remain in flux. Changing personnel, such as Manzanero's and Pinelo's departure from the Forest Department, limits the stability of the Consortium. Recent changes within the Forest Department make it unclear at this point who will have the responsibility for the Bladen Consortium.

While the Forest Department's representative in the Bladen Consortium remains unfilled, leadership will fall to Marlin. Unfortunately, due to his status as a U.S. national, his legitimacy to lead may not be recognized by Belizeans in the local villages and the Toledo NGO community.

Difficulties posed by bureaucratic hurdles may limit the effectiveness of the Consortium in the near future. The delay in the adoption of the management plan has stymied efforts to bring the Consortium to full operational capacity. Jurisdictional concerns are also an issue, given that the Consortium is not a registered NGO and has not yet been delegated authority to manage the preserve.

Resource constraints

Funding. One major challenge for the Bladen Consortium is keeping people involved when little funding exists to support the process. When attending meetings, participants incur costs, and many seek to have these expenses covered. Time is also a factor, given limited human resources. As Pinelo laments:

> Many people advocate for the park but then when asked to act they don't show up or they want their expenses paid for, their food and hotel room. But we are in the same situation they are in, we don't have funding for this.
>
> This is the 'project syndrome.' So many projects have taken place in Punta Gorda and so much money [has been provided] that people expect to be paid, fed and housed. But this is for their own benefit, why should we have to pay them for something that's going to benefit them. So a lot of people say they can't afford the bus, can't miss work, don't have the money to go, and then when you start doing stuff they criticize. That's the biggest problem. (2002)

In addition, the Forest Department has little available funding to support Bladen Consortium. The Department lacks the funds to purchase vehicles for its staff, let alone to support projects.

Sharing the burden. Involvement in the Consortium is costly, both in terms of time and money. Current Consortium members disagree as to whether all members are "pulling their weight." According to Pinelo, all of the current members of the Consortium are contributing to its functioning:

> Those that are currently involved with the Consortium now – YCT, BFREE, Forest Department, TIDE – are genuinely interested. They donate time and money to the meetings, they work above and beyond what they do normally, to get the Consortium to operate. (2002)

In contrast, Marlin suggests that work is not evenly shared among the groups.

> To be honest, in the last few months, BFREE has put in about ten grand and a lot of effort. [The Forest Department] has put in quite a bit of work. YCT has been invaluable in the interview process, finding information. TIDE hasn't done [much] . . . (2002)

Feelings of unequal input may frustrate attempts to work together over the long term. Discussing expectations about levels of involvement among Consortium members may ease brewing frustrations, especially given the varied levels and types of expertise, resources, and interest among organizations.

Power and politics

Political obstacles could prevent the establishment of co-management, depending on the interests of key decision makers. As noted, the management plan has been awaiting approval since 1998. It is not clear to the participants in the Consortium whether this delay is the result of neglect or active resistance. However, it is clear that support from local stakeholders and politicians may be necessary to secure co-management. As Pinelo describes:

> [Getting co-management] depends on who is supporting you, whether the [Forest] Department supports what you are doing or not. That makes it fast or slow. I have seen co-management agreements signed by other ministers. Our minister has the mandate or responsibility to sign the co-management agreements. I have seen some drag on and on, because they didn't have the contacts or support behind them, community-wise or politically. There is no one strategy for getting co-management. We want to show the Government that we are being proactive. (2002)

Community issues

Given the possibility that local resistance to the Consortium's plans could lead to opposition at the ministerial level, a major challenge faced by the Consortium is managing its relationship with the local communities. Given that the land in the Reserve has traditionally been used by local communities to meet subsistence needs, its closure to these activities is a source of friction with these villages. Pinelo (2002) states that, "Mayan communities are not opposed to Bladen itself rather they are opposed to not being able to go into Bladen and log

and hunt and fish." Due to Bladen's strict protection status, it offers fewer benefits to local communities through alternative income generating strategies or tourism. As Marlin confides,

> That's the catch with Bladen, it's the strictest level of protection, one of the most diverse areas in the country, but research and education are pretty limiting. We'll need some guys to pack stuff around for the students or researchers, but let's face it, it's not going to generate a lot of money or employ a lot of people. That's why an endowment fund is going to be the best way to sustain it.

It may not only be the restrictions on traditional use that cause community opposition. It appears that local community leaders may not be satisfied with their current level of participation in the process of planning for the Bladen. While the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA) once had a seat on the Consortium, no local leaders currently take part in it. When invited to past meetings, they would rarely participate. It appears that leaders from Medina Bank were upset by the approach taken by the Consortium. Marlin describes a recent incident:

> So I sent these wardens up to Medina Bank a week ago to do a patrol going through La Sierra [Research Station] to see if anyone was using that access point to enter Bladen to commit illegal activities. When they got there, the alcalde said they had no right to go into La Sierra or the Bladen. He wouldn't authorize them to go in there. He had no right to stop them. So they came back and said that the alcalde wouldn't let them go in there. (2002)

A few days earlier, an interview with the Medina Bank leaders revealed their frustration over this very incident. They took the visit of the rangers as an insult, it appears. Joseph Cal, a leader in Medina Bank, expressed his dissatisfaction as follows:

> To contact people here, *they just send rangers.* They have three. People hear about things by word of mouth! (2002; emphasis added)

An official from the Department of Archeology suggests that dealing directly with village leaders is key for local buy-in and understanding:

> We always have dealt with the alcalde and chairman in the villages. If you want to get anything done, you have to talk to alcalde first: hire some men, cut the grass, or put up a sign. We have had some bad experiences in the past, from not communicating, when we didn't talk to alcalde. But we found out that we can do just about anything if we first talk with the alcalde. It is simple. You need to talk with these people. (Anonymous 2002)

Community involvement was not a major part of the Consortium or the development of the management plan, although according to Marlin it was attempted and TAA did have a seat at the table. John Pinelo said that he feels that "communities are often the main threat to protected areas, and giving too much power to communities might undermine the resource." He continued by saying:

> Mayan communities are 'temperamental.' They can agree with you at the table in the morning and in the evening they're at the minister's desk telling him they don't want you in the area. They have different agendas. We can't change our operations to suit them in the morning and the evening. They didn't participate in the writing of the management plan, even though they were invited. (2002)

Given the potential of the communities to prevent the Consortium from gaining co-management, however, engaging local leaders may further Consortium goals, despite the many difficulties associated with involvement efforts.

The immediate costs of strict protection for neighboring communities may, in the absence of viable alternative income generating strategies, far outweigh the benefits. Communities may therefore choose to ignore restrictions. The reserve has little to offer in terms of employment or benefits. Getting community buy-in may be possible by creating economic opportunities outside of the reserve. Developing an organic shade-grown cacao initiative within the Toledo district, for example, would create the kind of opportunity for a more cash-crop based economy in the villages. Tying the protection of the Bladen Nature Reserve to sustainable agroforestry development in the area would foster the kind of collaboration needed to protect this important resource.

Opportunities and facilitating factors

Despite so many obstacles to success, the Bladen Management Consortium has survived for more than seven years and has continued to move forward. In the last year it has been as active as ever. Continued motivation for involvement appears to be derived from a fundamental commitment to the protection of the stunningly beautiful and diverse Bladen Nature Reserve that is shared by conservation professionals, funders, and other supporters throughout Belize and beyond.

Potential for joint gains

To date, the Consortium has relied on small infusions of money from member groups, especially BFREE, whose mission is most closely associated with the protection of Bladen. Consortium members have been working on securing more permanent funding for managing the Reserve, however, and current signs point to success in this endeavor. Fortunately, the high profile of Bladen attracts international donor interest. So while it cannot generate revenue through tourism, the Consortium may be able to generate grants to protect its remarkable biodiversity.

Political support

In addition to demonstrating their management readiness by implementing patrols, conducting education, and fighting fires, as discussed above, the Consortium has made efforts to ensure a high level of interest in Bladen among politicians and other influential Belizeans. In addition to keeping these individuals informed, they seek to keep them excited. The Consortium works with the NGO Lighthawk, which provides free airplane trips to conservation organizations, to show politicians and others the Bladen from the air. Marlin also invites key contacts to the BFREE facility to see the Reserve first-hand on-the-ground.

Interest in moving forward

Committed individuals. Marlin and Pinelo are the driving forces behind the Consortium, and have overcome bureaucratic and organizational inertia to move management forward. Pinelo left the Forest Department for the BAS in the Fall of 2002. In his interview during the Summer of 2002, Pinelo suggested that he would continue to work on the Consortium in his new post, which indeed he has, though he does so as a BAS staff member, not just an individual as he suggests below:

> I myself participate out of interest; while I currently represent the [Forest Department] with the Consortium I will continue to do so once I move to BAS. Then I will participate as myself not as an organization. Whomever replaces me may or may not continue to support the Bladen Consortium. This isn't a problem for the Consortium: They know how to move independently and find their own support. (2002)

The Forest Department by no means required that Pinelo participate in the Consortium. It seems that, like Marlin, he is driven by a passion for Bladen. When asked why he participates in the Consortium, Pinelo replied:

> I'm trained in park management and there's only one other person in the country trained in park management . . . I have some skills to help. I'm [also] impressed by Bladen. It's really wild . . . I've been with the Consortium from the beginning, when we started from scratch. It's part of me, like a child raised from the time it's born. It's also a park with lots of potential, if not for recreation then for research. Bladen has the potential to become the first self-sustaining park in the country if given proper management. I want to be part of that if it ever occurs. (2002)

Renewed interest in the Consortium. Pinelo noted that now that the difficult work of creating the plan and having it accepted by the Government is near completion and new funding is imminent, several more groups are now expressing interest in becoming involved in the Consortium. Managing a possible growing membership and setting equitable criteria for who may join may prove challenging. Nonetheless, the groups that have recently become involved have brought helpful resources to the Consortium.

Belize Lodge & Excursions (BLE), for example, has begun assisting with management of the Bladen. BLE rangers have conducted patrols of the Bladen Nature Reserve along with other Consortium members. As reported on BLE's website:

> BLE Rangers began participating this December in patrols held once a month in the Bladen Nature Reserve. The joint patrols include the Forest Department, BFREE, TIDE, the Belize Audubon Society and YCT. This unprecedented effort by the NGO, private, and government sectors working together is helping to protect one of Belize's most valuable protected areas. (BLE 2003e)

Ken Karas, Managing Director of BLE, was an assistant producer for *Mountains of the Maya*, and is a passionate advocate for the Bladen. Furthermore, the integrity of the Golden Stream corridor, with Bladen at the headwaters of the watershed, is "essential to the trans-habitat experience" for BLE customers (Karas 2002). BLE's significant resources may prove to be a helpful addition to the Consortium, despite BLE's potential interest in using the Bladen for purposes of tourism, which is currently not permitted.

Other opportunities

- Through his contacts with Peter Dunham, Ken Karas may be able to persuade La Sierra Multidisciplinary Field Station to participate in the Consortium, which Marlin believes could help in addressing problems of illegal access to the reserve through the La Sierra property (Marlin 2002).

- Interest among Archaeology staff in the prevention of looting and strong relationships between Archaeology and the Forest Department may present possibilities for partnering to protect important Maya sites.

- With his move to BAS, Pinelo may now bring to the table the resources of one of Belize's oldest and most well-respected conservation organizations, potentially more than offsetting the loss of legitimacy incurred by no longer wearing the mantle of the Forest Department.

Conclusions

The story of the Bladen Management Consortium not only highlights constraints and opportunities specific to one context; it also offers broader lessons that may apply to other collaborative efforts. These lessons include the following:

- The Bladen Management Consortium did not simply arise out of a general interest in the area, but rather out of a shared perception that several critical management issues threatened the area's integrity. Interest was later rekindled by new threats, namely an insect infestation and fire, underscoring the motivating power of perceived threats to valued resources.

- Individuals passionate about protecting the resource played a central role in overcoming the many barriers to collaboration that the Consortium faced over the years of its existence, highlighting the role of committed individuals. Additionally, having more than one leader of the Consortium allowed it to continue despite the loss of a key individual, demonstrating the value of shared leadership.

- Community support for management efforts has proven difficult to garner in the absence of real incentives for such support. In general, meaningful local involvement may reduce conflict even if it does not eliminate opposition altogether.

- Striking the optimal balance between involving too many and too few individuals and organizations in the Consortium has been a challenge for group members. Multiple organizations and individuals with varying skills and resources, however, have strengthened the group by bringing these diverse and complementary assets to the table.

Chapter Nine: Conclusions

Southern Belize, with its dense organizational landscape, rich cultural and ecological diversity, and shifting conservation and development priorities and strategies, provides a unique opportunity to explore factors that constrain and facilitate extant and emerging collaboration, as well as opportunities for new and innovative approaches to collaborative natural resource management. Examples of existing and emerging partnerships among NGOs, Government agencies, and local communities are described in the four case studies presented in this document.

Drawing from the case studies as well as the core issues affecting natural resource management in Belize (discussed in Chapters Two and Three), in this chapter we review our findings under three broad themes: 1) constraints and challenges to greater collaboration; 2) factors facilitating collaboration in Toledo; and 3) opportunities for expanding and improving collaborative management of natural resources. By distilling the salient points from our research and experiences in Belize, this section seeks to draw out insights and lessons that will assist a broad array of stakeholders engaged in or interested in greater collaboration in the Toledo District and beyond.

Constraints and Challenges to Greater Collaboration

Emerging and extant collaborative initiatives in Southern Belize occur within a broader political, social, institutional, and economic context adding layers of complexity and challenge to collaboration. Drawing from the four case studies as well as from broader conservation and development issues in Belize, the following section examines factors that constrain or impede greater and more effective collaboration. Political constraints include the lack of enabling legislation; lack of implementation of legislation; lack of political will;

divestment of protected areas management responsibility; and the difficulty of integrating the local, district and central Government levels. Social and cultural constraints include the land tenure dispute; mistrust; cultural diversity; participation and representation; and lack of ownership of objectives and plans. Institutional level constraints include organizational norms and culture; lack of a champion; and lack of capacity. Finally, economic constraints include limited resources; national development priorities; and donor funding.

Political context

Lack of enabling legislation

Effective collaborative management of natural resources rests on sound legislation and policy that strengthens and supports long-term conservation planning. Belize lacks a comprehensive national conservation policy despite the percentage of land set aside for conservation purposes. For the most part; "…policy is expressed by individual ministers or departments, as specific statement and/or explicit legislation, to address statutory duties" (PFB 1996:29). The designation and de-reservation (i.e. removal from protected status) of protected areas (PAs) and Forest Reserves is highly politicized; sections can be de-reserved by Ministerial fiat in response to internal or external pressures. It is therefore clear that, despite the legal designation of PAs by various Acts (such as the National Parks System Act, the Forest Act, the Fisheries Act, and the Ancient Monuments and Antiquities Act), the current legal framework does not guarantee their long-term security. This insecure status is an impediment to conservation planning, because it creates a climate of uncertainty. Donor agencies and organizations may have little incentive to commit substantial resources or take part in a collaborative process when the long-term "protected" status of a protected area is in doubt. This uncertainty also has major ramifications for collaborative management of protected areas.

Lack of implementation of policy and legislation

Where legislation and plans to protect cultural and ecological resources do exist, enforcement and implementation may be lacking. While the *de facto* management of most PAs is based on principles and practices specified in the *National Protected Areas Systems Plan for Belize*

(PFB 1996) this document has not been signed into law or endorsed by the Cabinet. Additionally, laws that protect "66-foot Reserves" along waterways, outlaw hunting and looting in PAs, and guide land use planning and management are rarely enforced and frequently ignored. Many PAs, therefore, are effectively "paper parks," as evidenced by the hunting, logging, *milpa* farming, and looting of Maya archeological sites that continues to occur within protected area borders. Unregulated and illegal activities threaten the ecological and archeological resources of Southern Belize. Protected area management organizations would have little incentive to collaborate given this inconsistent implementation of protected area legislation.

Political will

The largely "hands-off" approach taken by the Government of Belize (GOB) in the realm of natural resource management calls into question its commitment to greater cooperation and collaboration. Despite the expanse of Belize's territory set aside for conservation, the small GOB budgetary allocations to natural resource management suggests this may not be an overriding priority. Furthermore, according to a Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) report *Community Involvement in Establishment, Planning, and Management of GEF Priority Protected Areas in the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System*: "None of the various laws that are relevant to the management of protected natural areas in Belize makes specific mention of public participation, collaborative management, or the creation and function of any type of advisory committees for protected natural areas" (Barborak et al., 2002:7). Greater Government involvement in natural resource management could bring legal authority, legitimacy, skills, and institutional-level authority "to the table." As one non-governmental organization (NGO) representative stated: "In terms of management of a national park, they [Government] have weight, they could speak up, they can make things happen…" (Caddy-Foster 2002).

Divestment of responsibility

In response to budgetary constraints, numerous development and conservation activities have been delegated to various NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). Private NGOs such as Belize Audubon Society (BAS), Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment (TASTE) and community-based organizations (CBOs)[42] such as Friend of Five Blues, manage Government PAs through co-management agreements. In the Belizean context, "co-management" refers to legally binding agreements between NGOs or CBOs and a government agency to share protected area management roles and responsibilities. However, given that the devolution of roles and responsibilities is not accompanied by necessary financial resources and institutional support, in this context it can be interpreted as divestment of responsibility rather than a true sharing or roles and responsibilities. This situation conflates the process of *democratic decentralization* with that of *privatization.*[43] Insufficient resources have been especially detrimental to CBOs that are signatories of co-management agreements.

Integrating the local, district, and central levels

Natural resource decisions are unique with regards to questions of scale. Watersheds, rivers, and ecosystems cross geopolitical boundaries. Local forests and environs are part of larger ecosystems. Downstream users are affected by the actions and activities of upstream users. Integrated management decisions made at the watershed or landscape level require a combination of the local, district, and central level government. However, the majority of regulatory and planning decisions about the South are made 160 miles north of the District in the capital city of Belmopan while "no coordinating units are presently in place at the district level, despite district level officers and NGOs stressing the need to have such bodies to avoid disorganization" (GOB 2000c:171). The nascent Toledo Development Corporation (TDC) is an attempt to address the lack or coordination but its impact has not yet registered. An interviewee describes the political and geographic isolation of the South:

> Look at Belize as a whole. The majority of the Cabinet is from the Belize District [the northern and western part of the country]. We only have two ministers from the South which is almost half the country. The power of the country is directed that way [meaning North]. (Anonymous 2002)

Social and cultural context

Land tenure disputes

A long-standing, unresolved conflict concerning legal title to traditional lands presents a substantial barrier to collaboration. Land security – and by default access to life-sustaining resources - is tenuous for many residents of the Toledo District. Indigenous people such as the Kekchi, Mopan, and Garifuna are disproportionately affected. Where PAs and Forest Reserves overlap contested land, collaboration has the potential to compromise rights and access to natural resources. Pending litigation over the status of Maya Reservation lands and logging concessions exacerbate tensions between Maya leadership and the Government of Belize.[44] Despite efforts to present a united front, local cultural organizations remain fragmented along ethnic, geographic, and political lines. Southern Belize lacks culturally appropriate, formalized alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for parties to resolve their differences.

Mistrust

Mistrust between NGOs and Government, and people and NGOs – stemming from long-standing conflicts, failed development projects, and negative perceptions – has the potential to limit communication and understanding. As mentioned in the SAGE/TWA case, NGO–Government relations appear to be marked by mistrust. An NGO official describes this perception: "The Government of Belize is notoriously ambivalent about NGOs. They see NGOs are interfering, [but some agencies] are happy to offload responsibilities on them…If the Government is going to rely on NGOs, they have to inject transparency" (McGill 2002). Despite numerous projects and the investment of millions of development dollars down south, the quality of life for many rural inhabitants remains the same. Poorly implemented and managed NGO projects have led some community members to believe NGOs are "just like the Government." Conservation organizations are seen to "lock away resources" while the private sector "only cares about money." According to ESTAP's *Regional Development Plan:* "the absence of proper guidelines and legislation to regulate (and regularize) their [organizations working in the south] activity has meant that many NGOs and CBOs still operate in a climate of suspicion" (GOB 2000c:183).

Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity adds another layer of complexity to collaboration in Southern Belize. The population of Southern Belize "reflects the country's greatest ethnic diversity" which includes Kekchi and Mopan Maya, Mestizo, Garifuna, Creole and East Indian people: characterized by variations in language, lifestyles, and governance structures (GOB 2000c:19). While all groups are ultimately concerned about the future of Toledo's natural resources, they differ in how they value them as well as their proposed strategies to protect and manage them. Conservation organizations might define "over-hunting" or "sustainable use" in a way that differs from other groups' understanding of the issues. Cultural diversity also implies differences in the understandings of relationship between people and nature. For many indigenous people rivers, forests, and wildlife provide the foundation of their livelihood and in many cases, their identity. Collaboration and joint decision making amidst such rich cultural diversity needs to accommodate differing values and traditions.

Representation and participation

Decision making authority in the region is largely in the hands of international, national, and regional organizations and "experts" while communities and other local actors affected by those decisions are largely shut out of decision making processes. Rural farmers, women and indigenous communities exhibit different levels of organization, education, and ability to participate in decision making processes. From a single protected area to the six-watershed conservation unit – the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor (MMMC) – many individuals expressed the need to involve a broader array of interests and organizations in conservation planning and projects. As one interviewee framed it: "A collaborative body should have a variety of interests… an integrated approach must be wide enough to meet all the interests, both community and individual interests" (Anonymous 2002).

Despite various attempts by NGOs such as Ya'axche' Conservation Trust, the Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management, and the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment to integrate communities into conservation and sustainable livelihood initiatives, various interviewees questioned their success. Marginalized groups such as indigenous people and women were frequently cited as being excluded from decision making

fora. Traditional roles for women can limit educational opportunities and access to communication channels placing them at a disadvantage to be heard. Successful collaboration will depend on the ability of leading organizations to include a broader spectrum of participants and their interests, skills, and experience.

Lack of ownership of objectives and plans

Early involvement in defining the problem and participation in the process is key to fostering a sense of ownership. Recognition of TIDE and The Nature Conservancy (TNC)'s "Ridges to Reef" conservation unit (dubbed the MMMC in Toledo) has been problematic since the outset caused by failure to consult adequately with stakeholders and organizations within the region during the formulation of the Site Conservation Plan.[45] Villagers in the Golden Stream watershed, who feel they were only marginally consulted during the initial stages of the planning process, do not necessarily recognize the legitimacy of the Golden Stream Conservation Corridor. As one Maya villager commented, "They tried to get people involved and the people really want to have their input taken but as time goes by they quit taking the input of the people . . . They don't ask the people" (Anonymous 2002).

Projects and initiatives that fail to adequately engage communities and local organizations with site-specific knowledge frequently result in a lack of acceptance and understandably, create resistance during the implementation phase. Toledo is littered with the remains of unsuccessful development projects driven in part by "…a tendency for the project ideas to be conceived outside of Toledo with project implementers that are hardly in tune with or connected to the unique dynamics of the area. They [individuals and implementers] tend to work in the district with an agenda already externally packaged for how things should be done" (Enriquez 2002).

Institutional context

Organizational norms and culture

Where interests overlap, organizational norms and culture may impede collaboration across institutional boundaries. While groups of environmental organizations have embraced landscape scale or eco-regional conservation planning, contiguous parcels and PAs remain

divided along organizational rather than ecological lines. Jurisdiction over PAs is divided between local, regional, and international NGOs, the private sector and the GOB. Management of Government PAs falls under the umbrella of three Government departments each located within a separate Ministry. The need for cross-sectoral coordination at the Government level has already been recognized for the coastal zone, leading to the creation of the interdepartmental Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA) however, this arrangement only addresses the coastal/marine component of the protected area system.

Southern Belize's dense organizational landscape creates challenges for organizational collaboration. All the case studies introduced in the previous chapter, cite turf as a constraining factor. Collaboration can offset the expansion or maintenance of organizational turf, power, and interests. The following quote by a NGO representative refers to organizational territory as "fiefdoms":

> The coastal zone is demarcated into little fiefdoms. We extended our influence up to the mouth of the Moho River, thinking that north of there is approaching TIDE territory. TIDE goes up to Monkey River, and then you are into maybe the Friends of Nature area. (McGill 2002)

Government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations adhere to formal goals for conservation and development which sometimes conflict. Some organizations practice a more "science driven approach," others, a more "people driven" approach. Interests might revolve around management or protection of a protected area like the Bladen Nature Reserve, a watershed like the Golden Stream, or multiple watersheds like the MMMC. The challenge will be to reconcile diverse goals and agendas within a regional strategy for Toledo. Jerry Enriquez suggested: "Organizations should collaborate their strategic visions and plans, and should decide together how their goals fit with each other" (2002).

NGOs in Toledo wield varying levels of power – from large well-funded international NGOs like TNC to small single-staffed organizations like the Toledo Maya Women's Council. Power imbalances can produce fears when entering into a collaborative process: *Who will dominate the process? Who will control the agenda?*

Lack of a local champion

Experience with collaborative management of natural resources shows that "[s]uccessful collaborative efforts usually have one or two individuals who have a 'we're in this together' stance that sharply contrasts with previous adversarial interactions" (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2001). While various individuals and organizations have expressed interest in a regional approach to conservation in Southern Belize, integrated conservation initiatives such as the MMMC and Toledo Watershed Association (TWA) remain in the concept or planning stage. The MMMC concept continues to face challenges as a multi-stakeholder forum to promote collaboration. Participants in TWA, now the purview of the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment, continue to debate its organizational direction and mandate: *How will industry and communities be included? Will the organization form along the lines of the Sibun Watershed Association (SWA) or shift towards a single sector model? Will SAGE take an advocacy role or develop into a multi-stakeholder forum?* A truly collaborative effort will require a dedicated leader willing to merge existing synergies and champion the move towards a new inclusive organizational model built on trust and joint decision making.

Capacity

While collaboration presents opportunities for a broader spectrum of stakeholders to participate in decisions about and the implementation of conservation and development initiatives in Toledo, it does not guarantee that all have the capacity to do so. Indigenous organizations, local elites, industry representatives, and NGOs exhibit different levels of organization, financial resources, and influence at the local and regional level. Capacity building and education will be necessary to enable effective problem-solving and implementation.

Inadequate communication and information sharing

Natural resource managers in Southern Belize are faced with the growing need to share information, expertise, and data in order to understand let alone manage large scale ecosystems such as the Golden Stream Corridor and the MMMC. Despite the proliferation of civil society organizations there has been limited coordination and dialogue between them.

Conservation planning and development activities in Southern Belize are characterized by inadequate communication and feedback mechanisms. Given the already limited available information (ecological, demographic, and topographic) on and about Southern Belize, shared information and expertise is crucial. Fragmentation makes communication, collaboration, and streamlining of management activities across the landscape difficult. NGOs may be reluctant to share ideas and information with each other if this sharing correlates to recognition and access to funding sources. As stated by the FFI Programme Director: "[NGOs] are not honest with one another. Ideas are sources for funding, so people aren't always willing to share" (Caddy-Foster 2002).

As demonstrated by the establishment of SATIIM and the Port Honduras Marine Reserve (PHMR), the breakdown in communication between Government, and NGOs and communities led to misunderstanding and uncertainty. Local communities living in and around the Sarstoon and Temash Rivers did not learn about the existence of the Sarstoon-Temash National Park until three years after its establishment (Caddy et al., 2000). At a meeting in Hopkins village, fishermen expressed concern about being denied access to resources in the PHMR stemming from lack of information about "no-take" versus "multiple-use" zones. Experience with communities led a Government official to conclude: "We have had some bad experiences in the past from not communicating. It is simple. You need to talk with these people" (Anonymous 2002).

Economic context

Resource limitations

Involvement in collaborative processes requires significant human and financial resources: for example, travel costs to attend meetings, technical expertise, and time. When asked about challenges to greater collaboration, various NGO representatives mentioned a lack of time and money. Additionally, organizations participating in a collaborative arrangement vary in size, types of expertise, and access to resources. For example, grassroots organizations like the Kekchi Council of Belize and the Toledo Maya Cultural Council operate with fewer staff members and on a much smaller budget than TIDE and TNC.

If collaborative partners feel that costs are not distributed proportionally, it can be a source of friction and frustrate attempts to work together over the long term. This was the case with Bladen Consortium where participants disagreed as to whether or not participants were sharing work and costs related to the function of the Consortium.

National development priorities

In an effort to close the gap between Southern Belize and the more developed Northern Districts, the GOB has instituted new approaches to accelerate the pace of development in a region that has always been regarded as the most economically depressed in the country (GOB 1998). In the mid-1990s, the GOB granted at least seventeen logging concessions on lands totaling 480,000 acres in the Toledo District (see Map 6, p.46). In 1997, the Government granted a permit to a foreign oil and gas exploration company to explore for oil reserves on almost 750,000 acres of land in the Toledo District (TMCC 1998). Current and new development initiatives can conflict with parallel efforts to expand the protected area system in the south. One individual stated: "I think protected area management and sustainable development initiatives are not an integral part of the development philosophy of the country even though it's rhetorically said so" (Anonymous 2002). Another concern is how large-scale economic development initiatives will integrate the needs, skills, and capabilities of local communities so that they can capture the benefits of local development efforts.

Donor funding

The Toledo District has captured the attention of a large contingency of donor agencies, natural resource managers, and INGOs. While this thickening of civil society provides new opportunities for partnerships between Government agencies, international donors, NGOs and CBOs, even locally based "…grassroots groups and NGOs may also not be accountable to or representative of local people…. [They] are constituted to represent the interests of their members or donors" (Ribot 2002).

Given the proliferation of INGOs working under the rubric of sustainable development and the environment, INGOs provide an attractive funding mechanism for under-resourced Government agencies, NGOs, and CBOs. INGOs and international donor organizations have been forthcoming with technical and financial support for under-resourced Government agencies and NGOs in Toledo. TNC partners with TIDE, FFI partners with YCT, EcoLogic Enterprise Ventures (EEV) supports Belize Lodge & Excursions (BLE), and the EcoLogic Fund supports SATIIM. Maya organizations receive external assistance from the Canadian International Development Agency, the Indian Law Resource Center, and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, among others.

Funding sources influence conservation strategies and allegiances. Tight relationships between donor agencies and NGOs have led to skepticism about who sets the agenda. One must consider: *Who sets the agenda? Who benefits from NGO participation and partnerships?* Chief Forest Officer Sabido (2002) commented:

> While a lot of the NGOs are locally based down there, there is also a very strong undercurrent of policies and objectives that follow the agendas set by the external NGOs or organizations that assist the local NGOs. This is very clear when you look at, say, the approach of TIDE versus the approach of YCT, for example. It's two different types of approaches and outlooks.

Concluding remarks

While the challenges mentioned in this section cast shadows on collaborative resource management in Toledo, organizations with similar concerns and interests continue to seek out innovative ways to work together. It is important to note that what can be a constraint in one context or for one group may act as an opportunity or enabling factor under different circumstances. The following section describes the forces that facilitate collaboration in Toledo.

Forces Facilitating Collaboration in Toledo

Despite the many challenges and obstacles to collaborative management of natural resources in Toledo identified in the preceding section, collaborative management is already taking place in the district at a number of geographic scales. Scales of collaboration include: 1) individual protected areas, such as the Bladen Nature Reserve; 2) single watersheds, like the Golden Stream Corridor; and 3) multiple watersheds, namely the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor (MMMC) and now all Toledo watersheds that flow into the Gulf of Honduras, as coordinated through the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment (SAGE).

Each case study on collaboration in Toledo reveals that context, specific organizational dynamics, and history all influence the outcomes of these efforts. Nonetheless, the cases share many common traits. The cases, framed by an understanding of core issues in the district, suggest that when individuals and organizations have joined together to collectively manage protected areas in Toledo, they have done so for several major reasons: a shared sense of place; common perceptions of threats; legitimate conveners; a perceived need to act collectively; tight social and professional networks; specific shared interests; committed individuals; and governmental support.

Shared sense of place

Research on collaborative efforts in areas outside of Belize suggest that a shared sense of place among people in a region helps to foster a cooperative atmosphere that sets the stage for joint management. As articulated by the literature, "sense of place" refers to the subtleties in the relationship of local groups with a particular locale and its resources. An understanding of a "place" is not merely the conceptualization of a specific area as a distinct geographic unit in which a "shared sense of place" is agreement about the boundaries and contents of the unit in question. This interpretation is inadequate to capture the many different ways people identify, create meaning, and interact with their surroundings and each other.

A sense of place is shaped by collective action. The phrase connotes a bond with and care for a particular geographic area, based on the histories, experiences, practices, and cultures that hold a connection to the location.

In several of the case studies in Belize, a shared sense of place played a central role in motivating collaboration. "Place" figured prominently in the formation of the Bladen Management Consortium, for example. Several key members of the Consortium cared deeply about the Bladen Nature Reserve, not only because of its biological significance, but also because of its personal and symbolic importance to them. A passion for the Reserve helped Consortium participants to maintain energy for the planning process through years of meetings, discussions, and delays. A National Geographic movie and articles about the Bladen Nature Reserve, as well as fly-overs of the Reserve organized by the Consortium, helped to build understanding of and connection to Bladen beyond the immediate Consortium members. This outside support for the Reserve from both Belizean and non-Belizean funders and decision-makers has further strengthened the Consortium.

Significantly, Bladen's many distinct characteristics, including incredible biodiversity, rich archeological resources, and dramatic topography give the reserve even greater mystique and elevate its perceived importance at a national and global level. Furthermore, the Bladen Nature Reserve is a named and defined geographical unit with a recognized administrative boundary under a single legal jurisdiction, which reinforces its status as a place in the minds of managers and supporters. In contrast, building a shared sense of place among potential collaborators proved more challenging in other cases described in this document, especially when the area in question is defined by ecological rather than political boundaries. Nonetheless, it appears that efforts to foster a sense of place have been successful in promoting collaboration. The Sibun Watershed, for instance, was not originally understood as a tangible place by inhabitants of the watershed or related decision makers. Giving meaning to the idea of the "Sibun Watershed" required a multi-year education and outreach effort, including the creation of a watershed atlas and, as with the Bladen, over-flights of the area, in this case with community members. These efforts created popular recognition of the watershed as a "place" and culminated in the creation of the Sibun Watershed Association.

The Maya Mountain Marine Corridor (MMMC) is also coming to be understood as a distinct unit, though its acceptance may not be as widespread as that of the Sibun Watershed. Fewer years of effort have been invested in popularizing the notion of the MMMC, with less community outreach undertaken. While community members may not conceptualize the MMMC as a region, though, some NGO leaders certainly do, with the Site Conservation Plan providing additional support to the idea and the value of a unified vision of the region. According to Jake Marlin of BFREE, "I'm not sure what the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor is, except a concept. It's not recognized by the Government, but *if we talk about it, it's real*" (Marlin 2002, emphasis added). Marlin's statement supports the idea that places may be defined and imbued with meaning through discourse.

In the cases of the Sibun Watershed and the MMMC, the growing currency of the concept of watersheds helps to support understanding of watersheds as tangible geographic units. By helping to define watersheds, watershed education may build a case for watersheds as places, thus facilitating more successful collaborative watershed management.

Finally, the Toledo Watershed Association, now under SAGE, benefits in terms of popular understanding from the already well-established and well-understood political boundary of the district. While a few of the watersheds in the district included under the umbrella of the association extend beyond the district boundaries, most fall within. Thus, TWA overlays a political concept—the district—and an ecological concept—the watershed. In this case, the boundaries established by these concepts may fit closely enough to strengthen rather than confuse the geographic definition of the management area among potential collaborators.

Common perceptions of threats

Chief among reasons for the individuals and organizations in the Belize case studies to join together to manage resources across boundaries was the common perception of threats to those resources. This finding is consistent with case studies throughout the world; a sense of crisis or compelling need can be one of the most powerful factors supporting collaboration. In the case of TWA/SAGE, commonly perceived threats driving the formation of the consortium were the Southern Highway Rehabilitation Project, the Pan-American Highway, and their associated environmental and social impacts. The highway and land development

tied to the highway have already begun to cause increased habitat fragmentation, threatening the viability of the region for supporting key species of wildlife. Participants recognized that collectively they might better be able to address the threat of the highway and target conservation efforts to support viable ecosystems. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, the key land managers in the Golden Stream Corridor began working together when they recognized threats to the viability of the corridor and perceived that joint action would better address these threats than individual action alone.

The Government's surreptitious formation of the Sarstoon-Temash National Park raised alarm bells among communities who depend on areas of the park for sustenance and claimed rights to the land that was designated as park. The threat was powerful enough to help differing ethnic communities, who had often been at odds, to agree to jointly manage the park through a new organization, namely SATIIM. SATIIM provides a framework for local participation and control of resources through which to counter the threat of outside domination. In the case of TASTE, threats to the Sapodilla Cayes included lack of management and overuse. Degradation of the resource prompted Government agencies and NGOs to act to protect the cayes through the establishment, ultimately, of TASTE, based on a model of co-management with corresponding capacity building.

Resource threats were also motivating factors in the formation of the Bladen Management Consortium. Looting, poaching, and illegal logging, among other threats to the Bladen Nature Reserve, prompted Jake Marlin and Rafael Manzanero to invite interested parties to discuss the future of the reserve. Several participants in the original discussion group ultimately created the Consortium to enable formalized joint management of the reserve. New and re-emerging threats, such as fire and the pine bark beetle epidemic, also helped to reinvigorate the Consortium when it was flagging.

Importantly, in many cases the communities surrounding protected areas did not necessarily share NGO perceptions of "threats." Often, as with Bladen, they seemed to view NGO intervention as at least as great a threat to their immediate livelihood as the broader, and to them less salient, regional issues affecting the district. NGOs like YCT that are active in educating local communities about these regional issues may be helping to bridge the NGO-

community perception gap, so that community members see conservation efforts as more consistent with their own self-interest. In turn, a better understanding of community interests and community perceptions of "threats" may also help NGOs to frame and implement programs in ways that are more consistent with community needs and thus more successful.

Legitimate conveners

In the case of the Bladen Consortium, Manzanero's legitimacy as an official in the Forest Department, which has official jurisdiction over the Reserve, strengthened his hand in convening a broad spectrum of key stakeholders. "Legitimacy of the convener" was also important in the MMMC and TWA/SAGE case studies. In these cases, TIDE sent invitations to potential participants and hosted meetings at their offices. As the oldest and most well-funded local conservation NGO in Toledo, TIDE had a strong position with which to assemble key stakeholders. The presence of Government officials at the early MMMC meetings also encouraged broader participation.

Perceived need to act collectively

Even if many organizations perceive common threats, they are unlikely to work together unless joint action helps them to achieve organizational goals, and unless they believe that coordinated planning will better achieve management objectives than individual action alone. Building on a sense of place and the perception of growing pressures on resources, organizations and individuals in Toledo have built bridges when they have seen the value of collective action. In some cases the motivation to work together was based on a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of properties and protected areas. In the Golden Stream Corridor, for example, Ken Karas understood that neighboring parcels impact each other and that the coordinated management of these parcels together is key to the long-term viability of each. In other cases, organizations joined forces because they realized, "We can't do it alone." This perspective was certainly true of Bladen, where no one agency or NGO could muster the necessary resources to manage the valuable but inaccessible area by itself. SAGE/TWA arose based on the recognition among various groups of their overlapping jurisdictions and complementary strengths, as illustrated by the following quote from a TWA concept paper:

> A review of the many actors, interests, conservation programmes and development initiatives present in the Port Honduras watershed by the participants revealed *many complementary and often overlapping activities and concerns*. The participants therefore identified the need for a process to enable the different institutions active in watershed management to streamline the diverse initiatives, and ensure that shared goals could be more readily met through a pooling of resources and effort. (TWA 2002b, emphasis added)

TIDE's operations manager, Alan Genus, agrees:

> The impetus to realize this institutional development coalesced at a workshop held by the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) in late January 2002 to discuss watershed management issues in the Port Honduras area. Collaboration with organizations of Toledo to recognize their strengths so as to better manage the Toledo watersheds is also needed. Recognizing strengths and divisions of responsibility will have the different organizations working more productively in watershed management. Outreach and education, capacity building at the community level, funding and fundraising are some of the areas that organizations can work individually or in collaboration. TIDE, SAGE, and YCT have begun working in these areas. (Genus 2002)

Finally, organizations understand that joint action brings new opportunities for funding. Maheia and Caddy-Foster both suggest that collaboration not only *is* effective but also that it *looks* good to potential funders. Funders may perceive that, as argued in the previous quotes, well-fashioned collaborative initiatives leverage the skills and capacity of participating organizations. Furthermore, in a climate of otherwise shrinking support from foundations and multi-lateral donors, innovative collaborative initiatives such as TWA/SAGE raise the profile of the Toledo District and suggest that Toledo organizations are working together, ensuring maximum return on donor investment. Maintaining interest in and funding for collaboration will require that the organizations involved in these efforts continue to demonstrate that the benefits of collective action outweigh the costs over time.

Tight social and professional networks

Toledo is a small district with about 35,000 residents. Punta Gorda, the regional center of governance and NGO activity, is even smaller, with just a few dozen resident leaders and decision makers in the fields of conservation and development who interact frequently both professionally and socially. Regular interaction and relationships form a firm foundation on

which to build collaborative management bodies. Beyond Punta Gorda, frequent interaction often takes place in Belmopan, and so includes national conservation leaders who also play a role in Toledo. Furthermore, formal umbrella organizations and existing partnerships are already in place among many of these same groups. Cross-membership on boards of directors of conservation and other civil society organizations creates a high level of social capital and integration, through personal networks and improved information flows. Existing relationships have enabled collaborative arrangements to date and promise to allow increased interaction in the future. Since individuals have worked together through umbrella organizations such as SAGE, and on smaller scales, like at the level of the Golden Stream Corridor, they may be better able to work together at the scale of the district. Finally, tight networks may serve as an enforcement mechanism to limit free-riding on collaborative initiatives. In a tightly integrated environment, group sanctions against individuals and organizations that do not do their fair share of work may be sufficiently powerful to enforce meaningful involvement.

Specific shared interests

Beyond broader shared concerns about resource degradation, organizations have also engaged in collaboration in the Toledo District in order to meet more specific organizational interests. Organizations have been most effective in joining forces when they understand their own goals and interests and can articulate how these interests overlap with those of other organizations. TIDE and BLE, for example, are both able to help the other to meet its interests through cooperative arrangements. TIDE's mission includes the protection of marine and terrestrial resources and BLE depends on a high quality natural environment for the best possible experiences for its eco-tourism customers. By paying a user fee for access to TIDE-managed preserves, BLE helps ensure that habitat is protected and TIDE is better able to finance patrols and management. BLE also volunteers its rangers for joint patrols with TIDE to further strengthen protection. Similarly, they assist with patrols of Bladen Nature Reserve, helping to protect the headwaters of the Golden Stream Corridor.

Committed individuals

Behind each of the collaborative processes highlighted in the case studies stand committed individuals. They move planning and management forward and overcome challenges with their energy and skill. They care about and wish to protect resources in the district and to practice a more people-centered approach to conservation. They recognize that many opportunities are best pursued in constructive partnerships with other organizations. These individuals are key drivers of collaboration in the Toledo District.

Governmental support

Finally, governmental support for co-management agreements has created new and expanding niches for NGO involvement in protected areas management. This support is based in large part on the lack of Government resources to address land and watershed management issues in the district and the emergence of NGOs to fill the void. The Bladen Management Consortium was a response to insufficient management capacity of Government for the Bladen Nature Reserve nurtured by Government agency staff members along with NGO counterparts, though it awaits official co-management status. TIDE rose in the district through management of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve under agreement with GOB. Finally, TASTE has grown with support from the Department of Fisheries. Government support for co-management, especially through the instrument of MOUs, has created space for NGO growth and expanding collaborative management in Toledo.

Existing facilitating factors are also opportunities

The factors facilitating collaboration at present also suggest opportunities for increasing and improving collaboration in the district in the future. The additional opportunities discussed in the following section, therefore, build upon the supporting factors identified above.

Opportunities for Expanding and Improving Collaboration in Toledo

As discussed in the previous section, forces that facilitate collaboration in Southern Belize (such as a shared sense of place and tight social networks provide a rich foundation for expanding and improving collaboration in Toledo. Likewise, landscape scale conservation initiatives, innovative funding mechanisms, and a change in the status quo, among other factors, provide incentives and opportunities for greater collaboration. Drawing on lessons learned from the preceding two sections, but also looking beyond the case studies themselves, this section focuses on future opportunities, or "windows of opportunity," for improved collaboration. Opportunities are grouped thematically under ecological, economic, political, organizational, and social and cultural context.

Ecological context

Emerging support for landscape-level ecosystem management

Landscape-scale conservation efforts in Southern Belize follow a distinct trend towards a more holistic approach to natural resource management.[46] This shift in conservation strategies coincides with a shift in conservation planning and funding practiced by several major international NGOs (INGOs) and multi-lateral funding agencies over the past decade. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) now focuses its conservation efforts on 200 marine and terrestrial ecoregions.[47] The global efforts of The Nature Conservancy (TNC),[48] and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF)[49] and its implementing agencies follow a similar vein. TNC launched a landscape-level Marine Initiative "to link land and sea conservation in an effort to protect the rich array of plant and animal life and safeguard the tremendous benefits the oceans provide" (TNC 2003a). In Belize, TNC focuses its conservation initiatives across two biological regions – the MMMC and the Mesoamerican Reef System – in a "Ridges to Reef" approach, where the million-acre landscape of protected areas (the MMMC) links the crest of the Maya Mountains to the Belize Barrier Reef.

The GEF also invests in regional conservation initiatives, with a particular emphasis on the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System (MBRS) and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridors Project (MBC).[50] The MBRS spans the entire connected barrier reef systems of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. GEF allocated US$11 million toward a US$24 million five-year project entitled *The Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System*.[51] The WWF, Oak Foundation, University of Miami and the Governments of Canada, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico have committed the remaining project funds over the five-year period (2002-2006).

These regional projects indicate rapid transformation of the funding environment. It has become increasingly challenging for protected area management agencies to secure financial support from INGOs and multi-laterals for conservation projects that focus on individual species and habitats. Protected area managers therefore need to think beyond their individual subregions and develop plans and projects at the landscape scale. As indicated elsewhere in this report, occurrences at one property impact adjacent properties, given the interchange among terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. This contiguity provides opportunities and incentives for land managers and policy makers to join forces to secure financial support to improve management of the protected areas of the Toledo District at the landscape and trans-boundary scales.

Designation of biological corridors

The designation of biological corridors, and the multi-lateral funding allocated for its implementation, provide tremendous encouragement and incentives for protected area management agencies and other land managers to collaborate in the assessments of needs and development of projects to conserve and manage protected areas along ecological rather than political boundaries. The GEF allocated another US$11 million toward a US$24 million project titled Establishment of a Programme for the Consolidation of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.[52] The MBC is a regional initiative that covers the entire Central American isthmus and is an attempt by the region's countries to develop a series of interconnected protected area systems from Panama to the southern states of Mexico.

According to the GEF, this project "builds upon all regional and in-country initiatives to collaboratively form conservation and sustainable use programmes and harmonization of regional policies" (2000b:252). All Ministers of Environment of Central America, including Belize, signed on to the project. As a result, several corridor initiatives have started to develop in Belize. For example, the Golden Stream Corridor (GSC) initiative, also referred to as the "Southeastern Biological Corridor," is being marketed as an essential component of the MBC.

Economic context

Funding structures and financing mechanisms

While funding for conservation initiatives seems to be taking more of a regional and landscape-level focus, other innovative financing mechanisms have been developed that may support more collaborative approaches to country-level and unit-level projects. The Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT)[53] is the only in-country trust fund dedicated to supporting the management and development of protected areas in Belize. PACT has become increasingly wary about funding protected areas projects in the absence of a national policy and plan for the Belize protected area system. The need for such a policy and plan creates an opportunity for PACT to collaborate with protected area management organizations and other stakeholders to conduct a multi-disciplinary project that will seek to formulate a comprehensive National Protected Areas System Plan and Policy for Belize. Future PACT grants could then be strategically invested in collaborative projects that fit within the priority areas of this national plan. According to PACT's Executive Director, PACT could support collaborative initiatives in the Toledo District:

> "We could support [collaborative initiatives] and we would want to see something like that happen. …we would want [protected area management organizations] to get together because it is in our interest. Once you get people together and get a focus, it makes what we do a lot more clear. And it makes it so when we go to [Southern Belize]..." (Woods 2002).

The debt-for-nature swap initiative is another innovative way of securing and providing much-needed funding to support existing terrestrial and marine conservation projects. One of the five core parcels of the Golden Stream Corridor (Block 127, now owned by TIDE) was protected via the first debt-for-nature swap in Belize.[54] As part of the agreement, the GOB will issue US$7.2 million in local currency obligations payable to three NGOs – TIDE, Programme for Belize, and BAS – and PACT over a 26-year period for the management of protected areas. On October 16, 2001, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Coral Reef and Coastal Marine Conservation Act to initiate a debt-for-nature swap with developing countries to protect coral reefs. This may represent another opportunity to secure funding for the Belize Barrier Reef System, within which the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve is located (Oceans Daily 2001).

Another opportunity worth noting is the involvement of INGOs in the acquisition, via outright purchase, of strategically located forest blocks. Without these land acquisitions, these forested land areas would have been at risk of conversion into farmland or shrimp farms. TNC has purchased several such blocks in the Toledo District, and has transferred title of these blocks to TIDE. Similarly, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) purchased the area now known as the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (GSCP), which is now owned and managed by YCT and is an integral part of the Golden Stream Corridor. There may be other such forest blocks, or even cayes within existing marine reserves, that have not yet been acquired but are essential for the consolidation of fledgling corridor systems. These gaps in protection therefore create an opportunity for protected area management organizations to work together to attract and secure the necessary funding from INGOs, such as TNC and FFI, to acquire these at-risk areas.[55]

Tourism and social entrepreneurship

Expanding ecotourism in protected areas could be a boon both to NGOs and local communities. If practiced responsibly, ecotourism could form the foundation of increased collaboration between NGOs and communities. Tourism may present the best opportunity for generating revenue to support management of protected areas across watersheds and landscapes. TIDE, for example, is well-positioned to capitalize on this opportunity, given its

ownership and protection of several private properties in Toledo, its management of Port Honduras Marine Reserve and its involvement at Payne's Creek National Park. TIDE has started a tourism enterprise, called TIDE Tours, which employs mostly local people as field naturalists and fly-fishing guides. TIDE Tours provides tours of the marine protected areas as well as kayak and boat rentals.

As discussed elsewhere in this report, BLE recognizes the potential for what it calls "trans-habitat" tourism. BLE's property, much of which has been set aside as the Boden Creek Ecological Reserve, is an integral part of the Golden Stream Corridor, and is therefore connected to a wide swath of protected forest land, including YCT's GSCP and TIDE's Block 127. This contiguity has favored BLE greatly, as it has been able to market and promote its tourism business as "a multifaceted eco-enterprise company located in an environmentally sensitive and biologically rich area [that] provides a select offering of ecotourism excursions within the Boden Creek Ecological Reserve (BCER), Golden Stream Conservation Corridor (GSCC), Port Honduras Marine Zone, Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve, [and] the surrounding Toledo District" (BLE 2003d).

The proximity of BLE's and TIDE's properties and the complementary endeavors of the two companies, suggest that TIDE and BLE could work together in developing and making full use of the tourism product which their areas represent. BLE could contract out boat rentals to TIDE Tours, thereby lessening their management costs, and provide a marine ecotourism experience from their lodges or jungle camps, while at the same time direct much-needed revenue to TIDE for its conservation programs.

Cultural-based tourism is another area that has great promise, and one in which Maya communities have shown interest. Maya communities may have the best opportunity to participate in this type of tourism, not only as employees but as tourism operators themselves. In an effort to attract cruise ship passengers to the Toledo District, the GOB has announced plans for the development of a "tourism village" and marine terminal at the southern end of Punta Gorda in an area of land previously occupied by the Voice of America Radio Relay Station. Cruise ship tourism has often been referred to as "9 to 5 tourism" because of its reliance on one-day trips to sites at the various tourist destinations.

Given that over the long-term this type of tourism tends to negatively impact local cultures and natural attractions due to the associated onslaught of visitors, it must be practiced responsibly. A tourism-focused outcome that showcases Maya contemporary life and archaeology could be developed with Maya communities in control of these operations. Such a product should only be developed if the Maya community leaders are in support and involved in the development of the product. The Maya-led Toledo Ecotourism Association (TEA) set a precedent by establishing a "Village Guesthouse and Eco-trail Program" in villages throughout the Maya Mountain foothills.[56] Either something similar or an expanded TEA could be developed in the villages within the MMMC, with the full support of the GOB through the Belize Tourism Board.

Political and policy context

Existing governmental and quasi-governmental initiatives

Community development projects have created new opportunities for grassroots and community participation in collaborative arrangements. Although much development and other project funding have been invested in Toledo over the past fifteen years, many interviewees felt that there is very little to show for it. Recently, however, there has been an evolution in the types of community development programs that have been implemented in the district. The projects of "the old days" were rarely, if at all, developed and implemented with input from the local people. Recent projects and enterprises – such as the Community-initiated Agriculture and Resource Development project (CARD) and the Toledo Development Corporation (TDC) – demonstrate greater involvement of local people, although additional improvements could further strengthen these programs.

TDC, a quasi-governmental organization, works with the Ministry of Economic Development to oversee the planning and implementation of economic development programs for the Toledo District. TDC's Board is comprised of nine members – three appointed (the two Toledo area representatives and one representing the town council) and six elected community members (representing various zones in Southern Belize).

The Board was structured to enhance the capabilities of the community representatives, and to delay decision-making in order to give communities more time to engage in their traditional yet time-consuming decision-making processes. Under this structure, the community representatives present issues and concerns at Board meetings, are given time to carry the matter to their communities and engage in community consultation, and then bring back to the table community feedback on the issue in question. A high Government official sees this as "Government …bending over backwards to get local representation [on board] this time around" (Anonymous 2002).

Other projects that are currently underway can potentially create the enabling environment to improve the capability of communities to participate in conservation and development programs for Toledo. CARD's mandate is to accelerate rural development in Southern Belize by building capacity, providing credit, and improving marketing and infrastructure for communities.[57] In 2001, with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Government of Belize commenced the implementation of a Land Management Program intended to improve the enabling environment for private and public sector development through enhanced land security, effective land markets, and the promotion of a coherent land policy framework contributing to sustainable development and efficient use of land resources. These governmental and quasi-governmental initiatives thereby create an opportunity for an even greater level of integration of community needs and aspirations into conservation and development programs for Toledo.

Increasing national and international recognition

Association with one or more protected areas via co-management agreements give NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) a higher degree of credibility, and therefore make them more marketable to funding agencies. The bulk of Belize's public protected areas are located within the Toledo District. GOB has signed agreements (or is negotiating agreements) with NGOs and CBOs – such as TIDE, TASTE, SATIIM, and the Rio Blanco Mayan Association – for the management of several protected areas.

Many of Belize's national parks and marine reserves were declared after extensive lobbying on the part of NGOs and CBOs. Given GOB's resource constraints, the onus is now on the NGOs and CBOs to step in to manage or assist in the management of these protected areas.

External funding can be accessed to support protected areas management, again creating another incentive for protected area management organizations to work together in the development of project workplans and strategies. The Belize Barrier Reef System has been recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. This reef system furthermore comprises about three-quarters of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System. This international and regional recognition has been highly marketed by NGOs and INGOs resulting in the securing of significant multi-year funding from INGOs and multi-laterals.

Trans-boundary concerns

A tri-national focus on the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources of the Gulf of Honduras raises the stakes for collaboration at the Toledo District level. The Toledo District shares the waters of the Gulf of Honduras with Guatemala and Honduras. Due to resource limitations, Belizean enforcement agencies have been unable to patrol this vast expanse of sea in order to deter over-fishing and illegal fishing by Guatemalan and Honduran nationals. Illicit activities are likely to increase given that the Atlantic Coast of Guatemala alone has 130,000 inhabitants and 5,000 coastal fishers compared to the 4,500 coastal inhabitants and 125 fishers of Southern Belize. This pressure on the fishery resources has opened a tremendous window of opportunity for regional cooperation. The Gulf region has been getting increased attention from INGOs and multi-lateral organizations, such as TNC, GEF and the IADB. The latter institution (IADB) funded a regional project to develop mechanisms of cooperation among the three Gulf countries (TIDE 2000:54). Several conservation NGOs working in the Gulf of Honduras watershed banded together in 1996 to form the Tri-National Alliance for the Gulf of Honduras (TRIGOH), which serves as the coordinating body for the IADB-funded project. TRIGOH's mission is "to preserve the biological diversity of the Gulf of Honduras and improve the quality of life of the local communities" (TIDE 2003a). The umbrella organization has a Secretariat that rotates among member organizations in the three countries. The Belize members of TRIGOH include TIDE,

the Toledo District chapter of BTIA, the Toledo District chapter of the National Garifuna Council, Friends of Nature, and TASTE. TIDE holds the Secretariat for 2002–2003. Improved working relationships among the Belize TRIGOH members will facilitate more effective regional cooperation. The Toledo NGOs therefore have a real incentive to improve multi-NGO collaboration.

Institutional context

Partnership agreements

Cognizant of the plethora of pressures faced by Belizean conservation NGOs, but also due in part to its global organizational restructuring, TNC has started to establish a permanent role for itself in Belize in partnership with local NGOs. At the same time that TNC has been setting up its Belize country office, complete with expatriate technical staff, it has offered to enter into Conservation Partnership Agreements (CPAs) with four protected areas management organizations – Programme for Belize, BAS, TIDE, and Friends of Nature – which manage a combined total of 14 protected areas across the length and breadth of Belize. Through the CPAs, TNC is seeking to establish "channels of communication that permit the creation and exchange of information as well as scientific, technical, financial, and institutional collaboration in the area of biodiversity conservation" (TNC 2002b). Specifically, TNC proposes to work with these NGOs in the following areas – institutional development, ecotourism and enterprise development, fundraising, protected areas planning and management, land purchases, and stewardship of properties. Other INGOs – such as Conservation International, WWF, and the Wildlife Conservation Society – either have official representatives in Belize or are in the process of setting up country offices themselves.

Some Belizean NGO officials worry about potential competition for project funding that may arise between INGOs and local NGOs. However, the presence of these INGOs may be a blessing in disguise for the local NGOs. While the local NGOs are usually strapped for funds, the INGOs have contacts beyond Belize as well as technical expertise that may be accessed for joint conservation initiatives as we saw in the examples of TNC's efforts with the debt-for-nature swap and FFI's and TNC's actions to secure funds for land acquisition.

Local conservation capacity

INGOs now recognize that if they want their conservation investments to be effective in Belize, they must form partnerships with local NGOs and align themselves with local conservation objectives. While the local NGOs have been heavily dependent on their working relationships with INGOs in order to secure funding, the situation is starting to change. The numerous conservation programs that have been set up over the years in Southern Belize have created a myriad of new career opportunities for Belizean nationals who otherwise would have had to migrate to Belize City or Belmopan in search of gainful employment. These budding professionals have benefited from on-the-job training as well as from intensive training programs, and are now a force to be reckoned with, as individuals, as staff members of local NGOs, and as NGO representatives on national and regional alliances and networks. TNC's efforts to sign CPAs with Belizean NGOs speak to the rise in local conservation capacity.

Emerging educational opportunities

During the last decade, most Belizean natural resource management and tourism professionals had to pursue their formal studies in foreign countries, particularly in the United States, Great Britain, Mexico and the Caribbean. Even now, Belizean conservation practitioners have to study abroad in order to advance their education beyond an Associate's degree, which is the highest degree conferred by the University of Belize. Courses offered at the university's Toledo Campus include: People and Parks, Hospitality and Tourism, Coastal Zone Management, and Protected Areas. As this project has shown, a critical need exists in Southern Belize to develop leadership capacity and to conduct training in areas such as conflict management and dispute resolution. The University of Belize could jump to the challenge by developing expanded and advanced educational programs in partnership with national and international natural resource management organizations and educational institutions.

Social and cultural context

Integrated conservation and development

While tourism creates job opportunities and other associated economic benefits for surrounding and neighboring communities, private companies and investors are frequently better positioned to capture the benefits of nature and cultural tourism than rural communities. Conservation initiatives and protected areas that integrate local needs and skills as well as provide tangible long-term benefits to surrounding communities are more likely to foster enthusiasm and support. YCT and FFI have been at the forefront in the creation of innovative alternatives by boldly experimenting with managed natural resources extraction and value-added processing at the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (GSCP). YCT is currently implementing two projects that seek to address Maya livelihoods. The first project trains community members from Medina Bank, Golden Stream, Indian Creek, and Tambran to make basic furniture and to appreciate the value of timber. Community members are also taught to properly carry out low impact timber extraction with chainsaws. All the timber extraction (only salvage logging is done) is taking place within GSCP lands (YCT's property). YCT's premise is that "if people learn the basics of furniture-making, how to add value to the wood, how to extract timber more sustainably, and how to make an income at the same time, this will add tremendous value to the timber, and therefore to the forest" (B. Teul 2003).

YCT is also assisting in the establishment of ten one-acre gardens in the buffer zone communities to promote and demonstrate backyard gardening at these communities. Vegetables will be planted both for subsistence and for sale. Support will be included to secure a local market for the surplus produce. A training coordinator, funded by YCT, comes in two times per week to train the participants in vegetable farming techniques and practices.

With support from Counterpart International and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, YCT will also develop shade-grown, organic cacao in the four villages. The cacao project is being conducted in partnership with the Toledo Cacao Growers Association, which provides a secure market for the cacao produced via the project. SATIIM is also working on a similar cacao project at Maya and Garifuna villages near the Sarstoon-Temash National Park.

Given the existence of a secure market, these cacao projects could be promoted and expanded throughout the Toledo District as a means of providing economic benefits to the communities.

The Forest Department envisions the promotion of what its Chief Forest Officer calls "community forestry." Following the massive impacts from Hurricane Iris in 2001, community members are directly involved in salvaging timber in order to rebuild their homes. Salvage logging is therefore a main source of income for communities at present, and the main source of direct monetary benefit from the forest. If conducted in an ecologically sound manner, limited salvage logging represents an opportunity to get the communities involved in forest management via a system of community forestry. This system would include "the whole gamut of protected areas management to extraction of timber or non-timber forest products" (Sabido 2002). Reforestation, plantation development, and sustainable timber extraction could play a key role in being an economic prime mover for other activities, such as ecotourism. By being involved in community forestry, communities would realize the importance of the forest resource. Due to its constrained human and financial resources, the GOB may not be able to take the lead in such a development. It may again fall on the NGOs to take the lead.

Communities could also benefit through sustainable fisheries management. The marine reserves of the MMMC – Port Honduras and the Sapodilla Cayes – are in effect multiple-use protected areas that are set up to allow for sustainable extraction of the fishery resource. The fishers of the Toledo District – most of whom reside in the coastal communities of Barranco, Punta Gorda, Punta Negra and Monkey River – could work closely along with marine reserve managers to conserve the resources of these protected areas. For example, fishers and NGO staff could engage in joint patrols to deter poaching by fishers from across the border. TIDE has already approached a local fishers cooperative – Rio Grande Cooperative – and offered to organize a fisheries management field seminar in Maine, USA, for four Rio Grande executive officers. Such initiatives indicate that there is a good chance to expand working relationships between resource users and managers.

Galvanizing enthusiasm for collaboration (superordinate goals)

The future of conservation in Southern Belize will to a great extent be influenced by the way in which the pressing development issues are addressed. As discussed previously, these issues include the pending completion of the Southern Highway, the plans for a Belize connection to the Pan-American Highway, the rapid proliferation and expansion of shrimp and tilapia farms, and the seemingly intractable Maya land claim. These issues affect the entire organizational landscape of Toledo and create opportunities to explore alternative ways of resolving disputes.

The power of existing relationships

It can safely be said that, when compared to just a few years ago, there is an increased awareness in Southern Belize about the benefits of collaboration. As previously noted, the Maya NGOs have organized themselves into an umbrella organization – the Maya Leaders Alliance – as an effort to pool their resources in order to have greater influence and political power. The Maya have made some significant achievements, having signed a milestone agreement – the Ten Points of Agreement – with the Government of Belize to work together "to achieve an expeditious and amicable settlement of [land tenure] issues in a way that is mutually satisfactory to both parties" (GOB 2000b). Just last year, several protected area management organizations and land owners decided to form an association in an effort to effect a multi-agency approach to addressing watershed issues in Toledo. The functions of this association – the Toledo Watershed Association – were recently absorbed by the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment, an even broader alliance of local and national NGOs and CBOs. This interest in multi-organizational communication and collaboration has extended beyond Belize's boundaries, as can be seen with the existence of TRIGOH. Several Toledo-based NGOs are members of this regional body. Some of these same Toledo-based NGOs are founding members of a new coalition – the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations – which seeks to provide a national forum for discussion and prioritization of protected area management issues, and to create a networked voice for protected area managers.

These existing and burgeoning relationships provide evidence that there is an increased recognition about the value of expanded and improved collaboration among organizations. Although it is mostly NGO-led at present, a distinct trend toward multi-stakeholder working arrangements has been initiated. The challenge now will be to expand these existing relationships so as to include the needs, concerns and proposals of local communities, indigenous groups, industry, and Government.

Final Thoughts

Toledo is no longer "the forgotten district" of Belize. The social and ecological fabrics of the District—its communities and its ecosystems—are changing rapidly in the face of new development pressures led by the impending completion of the Southern Highway Rehabilitation Project. The perception that these changes threaten not only to alter, but to unravel these fabrics has galvanized local and international action in the Toledo, including the formation of new governmental projects and NGOs and greater attention from existing funders and organizations. Against a backdrop of decreasing Government resources, the role of the non-profit and private sectors may be more important than ever.

The Project Team's case study research and interviews reveal that interested individuals and organizations, from both within and outside Toledo, increasingly recognize that managing change in the District so as to protect its unique cultural and ecological resources will require a coordinated response to planning across sectors. Government agencies; community leaders; local, regional, and international non-governmental organizations; funding organizations; and private sector representatives will all need to play a role in shaping and implementing a shared vision for Toledo's future. To the extent that individuals and organizations hold competing visions and represent potentially opposing interests, mechanisms for resolving and managing conflict in Toledo will be required. Collaboration is one promising approach to conflict management. Groups with an interest in conservation and development in Toledo are already joining together to facilitate more integrated management of natural resources.

The challenge and the potential to build on existing collaborative efforts lie with these groups. Ultimately, more integrated natural resource management for conservation and development may serve to benefit *all* of Toledo's residents.

Appendices

Appendix I – List of Interviewees

Person	Organization	Position	Location
Juan Ack	Toledo Alcaldes Association	Chair	Santa Elena
Pablo Ack	Toledo Ecotourism Association	Chair	Punta Gorda
Eugenio Ah	Belize Lodge & Excursions	Boden Creek Ecological Reserve Director	Indian Creek
Lisel Alamilla	Protected Areas Conservation Trust	Project Manager	Belize City
Valdemar Andrade	Belize Audubon Society	Executive Director	Belize City
Santiago Ash	Rio Blanco Mayan Association	Chairman	Santa Cruz Village
James Azueta	Fisheries Department	Marine PA Administrator	Belize City
Wayne Bardalez	Forest Department	District Forest Officer	Machaca Forest
Christian Beck	Riversdale Limited	Manager	Monkey River
Rigoberto Blanco	Sibun Watershed Association	Project Coordinator	Belmopan
John Briceño	Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment	Deputy Prime Minister	Belmopan
Emma Caddy-Foster	Fauna & Flora International	Belize Programme Manager	Punta Gorda
Alfonso Cal	Golden Stream Village	Village Chair	Golden Stream
Joseph Cal	Medina Bank Village	Village Council	Medina Bank
Rafael Cal	Medina Bank Village	Secretary of the Alcalde	Medina Bank
Victor Cal	Belize Indigenous Training Institute	Program Director	Punta Gorda
Anselmo Castaneda	Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project	Project Manager	Belize City
Roy Cayetano	Ministry of Rural Development	Chief Executive Officer	Belmopan
Mario Chavarria	Community-initiated Agriculture and Resource Development	Community Development Coordinator	Punta Gorda
Maggie Cho	Community-initiated Agriculture and Resource Development	Volunteer	Punta Gorda
Gregorio Ch'oc	Kekchi Council of Belize/ Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management	President/Director	Punta Gorda
Mateo Chub	Indian Creek Village	Village Chairman	Indian Creek
Mark Cohen	Belize Agroforestry Research Center	Director	Columbia Village
David Craig	Belize Audubon Society	President	Belize City
CREP Forum	Caribbean Regional Environment Programme		Belize City
Bridget Cullerton	Citrus Growers' Association	Chief Executive Officer	Pomona Valley
Jeremy Enriquez	School for International Training	Director	Belmopan
Peter Esselman	The Nature Conservancy	Consultant	BFREE
Shaun Finnetty	United Nations Development Program	Liaison Officer	Belize City
Zaid Flores	Banana Growers Association	Chief Executive Officer	Independence
Lindsay Garbutt	Friends of Nature	Director	Belize City
Sergio Garcia	Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries	Chief Executive Officer	Belmopan
Janet Gibson	Coastal Zone Management Authority	Director	Belize City
Earl Green	Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment	Policy Coordinator	Belmopan

Person	Organization	Position	Location
Allen 'Doc' Genus	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment	Science & Stewardship Coordinator	Punta Gorda
Knud Hansen	Monkey River Estates	Operations Manager	Monkey River
Wil Heyman	The Nature Conservancy	Marine Scientist	Punta Gorda
Noel Jacobs	Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System	Regional Director	Belize City
Victor Jacobs	Rio Grande Cooperative	Chairman	Punta Gorda
Ken Karas	Belize Lodge & Excursions	Managing Director	BLE/Indian Creek
Judy Lumb	Belize Audubon Society	Secretary of the Board	Belize City
Wil Maheia	Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment	Executive Director	Punta Gorda
Jake Marlin	Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education	Director	BFREE
Pablo Maquin	Indian Creek Village	Alcalde	Indian Creek
Melanie McField	World Wildlife Federation	Belize Project Officer	Belize City
John McGill	EcoLogic Fund	Country Representative	Punta Gorda
Bruce & Carolyn Miller	Wildlife Conservation Society	Zoologists	Belize City
Pablo Mis	Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary	Director	Punta Gorda
Carlos Montero	Ministry of Economic Development	Economist	Belize City
Imani Morrison	Toledo Development Corporation	Technical Coordinator	Punta Gorda
Mario Muschamp	Payne's Creek National Park	Head Ranger	Punta Gorda
National Park Workshop	Forest Department		Belmopan
Jack Nightingale	Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment	Program Director	Punta Gorda
Ludwig Palacio	Toledo Development Corporation	General Manager	Belize City
John Pinelo	Forest Department	Protected Areas Officer	Belmopan
Luis Pop	Golden Stream Village	Alcalde	Golden Stream
Placida Requena	Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment	President of Board	Punta Gorda
Edilberto Romero	Programme for Belize	Executive Director	Belize City
Oswaldo Sabido	Ministry of Natural Resources & the Environment	Chief Forest Officer	Belmopan
Eleanor Sandlin	Monkey River Village Council	Chair	Monkey River
Ernesto Saqui	Belize Audubon Society	Cockscomb Director	Cockscomb Basin
William "Chet" Schmidt	Toledo Ecotourism Association	Consultant	Punta Gorda
Valentino Shal	Toledo Maya Cultural Council / Ya'axche Conservation Trust	President/Chair	Punta Gorda
Staff Meeting	Belize Audubon Society		Belize City
Tracy Taegar	Belize Tourism Board	Director	Belize City
Bartolo Teul	Ya'axche' Conservation Trust	Director	Punta Gorda
Pulcheria Teul	Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment / Toledo Maya Women's Council	Director/Coordinator	Punta Gorda
George Thompson	Department of Archaeology	Commissioner	Belmopan
TWA members	Toledo Watershed Association		Punta Gorda
UDP Officials			Belize City
J. Villafranco	Lands Office		Punta Gorda
Valerie Woods-Smith	Protected Areas Conservation Trust	Executive Director	Belmopan

Appendix II -- Belize Protected Areas

Source for all tables: Forest Department (2003)

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
Wildlife Sanctuaries				
Agua Caliente Luha	1998	5,492	NPSA	Forest Department
Cockscomb Basin	1986/1990/1997	128,000	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society
Corozal Bay	1998	180,500	NPSA	Forest Department
Crooked Tree	1984	41,297	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society
Gales Point	1998	9,095	NPSA	Forest Department
Spanish Creek	2002	5,985	NPSA	Forest Department
Swallow Caye	2002	8,970	NPSA	Forest Department

NPSA – National Parks System Act

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
National Parks				
Billy Barquedier	2001	1,500	NPSA	Forest Department
Aguas Turbias	1994	8,760	NPSA	Forest Department
Bacalar Chico	1996	12,810	NPSA	Forest Department
Blue Hole	1986	665	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society
Chiquibul	1995	265,262	NPSA	Forest Department
Five Blues Lake	1994	4,061	NPSA	Association of Friends of Five Blues Lake
Gra Gra Lagoon	2002	1,197	NPSA	Forest Department*
Guanacaste	1994	58	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society
Laughing Bird Caye	1996	10,119	NPSA	Friends of Nature
Mayflower Bocawina	2001	7,107	NPSA	Friends of Mayflower
Monkey Bay	1994	1,799	NPSA	Forest Department
Payne's Creek	1994	31,676	NPSA	Forest Department**
Rio Blanco	1994	100	NPSA	Rio Blanco Mayan Association
Sarstoon-Temash	1994	41,898	NPSA	Forest Department***
Noj Kaax Meem Eligio Panti	2001	12,936	NPSA	Itzamna Society
Honey Camp	2000	7,772	NPSA	Forest Department****

* As of 16/4/03, Forest Department negotiating co-management agreement with Friends of Gra Gra.

** Management Committee in place, but Forest Department still responsible for management.

*** As of 16/4/03, Forest Department negotiating co-management agreement with SATIIM.

**** As of 16/4/03, Forest Department negotiating co-management agreement with Association of Friends of Freshwater Creek.

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
Natural Monument				
Blue Hole	1996	1,023	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society
Half Moon Caye	1982	9,771	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society
Victoria Peak	1998	4,847	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
Nature Reserves				
Bladen	1990	99,670	NPSA	Forest Department
Burdon Creek	1992	5,255	NPSA	Forest Department
Tapir Mountain	1994	6,744	NPSA	Belize Audubon Society
Bird Cayes (Crown Reserves)	1977	13		Belize Audubon Society and Green Reef

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
Forest Reserves				
Caye Caulker	1998	94	Forest Act	Forest and Marine Reserve Association of Caye Caulker
Chiquibul	1995	147,899	Forest Act	Forest Department
Columbia River	1997	102,940	Forest Act	Forest Department
Commerce Bight	1997	5,451	Forest Act	Forest Department
Deep River	1990	78,574	Forest Act	Forest Department
Freshwater Creek	1997	60,177	Forest Act	Forest Department
Grants Work	1989	7,906	Forest Act	Forest Department
Machaca Creek	1998	3,756	Forest Act	Forest Department
Manatee	1959	103,878	Forest Act	Forest Department
Mango Creek	1989	35,549	Forest Act	Forest Department
Maya Mountain	1979	128,111	Forest Act	Forest Department
Monkey Caye	1996	1,460	Forest Act	Forest Department
Mountain Pine Ridge	1977	126,825*	Forest Act	Forest Department
Sibun	1977	106,392	Forest Act	Forest Department
Silk Grass	1997	4,806*	Forest Act	Forest Department
Sittee River	1977	94,156*	Forest Act	Forest Department
Swasey-Bladen	1989	14,779	Forest Act	Forest Department
Vaca	1991	52,352	Forest Act	Forest Department

* These acreages are under review, as of 16/4/03.

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
Marine Reserves				
Bacalar Chico	1996	15,575	Fisheries Act	Fisheries Department*
Hol Chan	1987	4,048	Fisheries Act	Fisheries Department
Caye Caulker	1998	9,669	Fisheries Act	Forest and Marine Reserve Association of Caye Caulker
Glover's Reef	1996	81,237	Fisheries Act	Fisheries Department
South Water Caye	1996	118,121	Fisheries Act	Fisheries Department
Gladden Spit/Silk Cayes	2000	25,600	Fisheries Act	Friends of Nature
Port Honduras	2001	100,378	Fisheries Act	Toledo Institute of Development & Environment
Sapodilla Cayes	1996	33,401	Fisheries Act	Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment
Grouper Spawning Areas	2002	13,462	Fisheries Act	Fisheries Department

* As of 16/4/03, Fisheries Department negotiating co-management agreement with Green Reef.

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
Archaeological Sites & Reserves				
Cerro Maya	1976	43	AMAA	Archaeology Department
Santa Rita	1995	4	AMAA	Archaeology Department
Lamanai	1985	959	AMAA	Archaeology Department
Altun Ha	1995	44	AMAA	Archaeology Department
Cahal Pech	1995	22	AMAA	Archaeology Department
Xunantunich	1995	52	AMAA	Archaeology Department
El Pilar	1998	1,997	AMAA	Archaeology Department
Caracol	1995	25,000	AMAA	Archaeology Department
Nim Li Punit	1995	121	AMAA	Archaeology Department
Lubaantun	1995	40	AMAA	Archaeology Department

AMAA – Ancient Monuments & Antiquities Act

Protected Area	Year Established	Acreage (acres)	Legislation	Management Agency
Private Reserves				
Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary	No data	1,070		Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
Rio Bravo Conservation & Management Area	1988	245,822	MOU	Programme for Belize
Community Baboon Sanctuary	1985	12,980		Community Baboon Sanctuary
Shipstern Nature Reserve	No data	18,841		International Tropical Conservation Foundation
Golden Stream Corridor Preserve	1998	9,554		Ya'axche' Conservation Trust
Boden Creek Ecological Reserve	No data	7,600		Belize Lodge and Excursions

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Endnotes

[1] This project follows Grimble and Chan's (1995:114) inclusive definition of key actors or stakeholders: "By 'stakeholders' is meant all those who affect, and/or are affected by, the policies, decisions and actions of [a program]; they can be individuals, communities, social groups or institutions of any size, aggregation or level in society." Fowkes (1999) refines the term by focusing on the actions of stakeholders. Stakeholders are "[those] who will directly **influence** the outcome [of a program] because of their mandate or close interest...and those who are directly **influenced by** the outcome because of their close interest; [those] who will **interact** with the developing program, and maintain close contact as it develops…; those who will give **input**, …and who can in turn provide information and perspective; and the general public, which may need to be kept **informed**, but may not be directly affected" (in van der Linde et. al 2001:19-20; emphasis added).

[2] *Alcaldes* are traditional Maya chieftains or lawmen. The alcalde system dates back to 1871, when the colonial government granted to local indigenous community elders the right to decide minor civil and criminal cases and gave them the responsibility to administer the local census. The alcaldes, after deliberation with their local council of elders, were initially allowed to settle village conflicts over land and forest resources. The first alcalde was elected in a village in western Belize in 1885, and the alcalde system was brought within the official national judicial system in 1913 via the passage of the Alcalde Ordinance. This law expressly prohibited the village alcaldes from exerting power over land disputes. The alcaldes, however, retained distributive authority over "abandoned and unclaimed land" until 1964, when the GOB instituted the land leasehold system. The state thereby became the sole authority over land in Belize (Clark 2000b).

[3] *Chicle* is the sap of the Sapodilla tree, and was used as the base ingredient in the production of chewing gum.

[4] Earnings and revenues are quoted in Belize dollars. The exchange rate is fixed at BZ$2 to US$1.

[5] The Central American Ecosystems Mapping Project is part of a larger project commissioned by the World Bank and the Government of the Netherlands to undertake a series of regional activities throughout Central America. The primary objective of the project was to create an ecosystems map on the scale of 1:250,000 for the region, using a uniform methodology and nomenclature. The objective of the Belizean component of the project was to update and correct the 1995 vegetation map of Belize.

[6] The CZMA is an autonomous public statutory body charged with the responsibility of implementing and monitoring policies that govern the use and development of the coastal zone in Belize.

[7] This 2002 World Bank/Wildlife Conservation Society survey was entitled "*Community Involvement in*

Establishment, Planning, and Management of GEF Priority Protected Areas in the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System."

[8] Southern Belize refers to the southern half of the Stann Creek District and the entire Toledo District.

[9] ECOFOR is one of several closely-help companies with "responsibility for the management of over 300,000 acres of timberlands", jointly referred to as Woodward Companies that are owned and operated by the Woodward family of the United States of America.

[10] Mayas in Southern Belize commonly self-identify as "Toledo Maya" to distinguish themselves from the Yucatec Mayas of northern Belize and the "Belizean Mayas," Mopan and Kekchi Maya who reside outside of the District (Wainwright 1998:35n).

[11] Descendent from early Spanish codes of governance in the Americas, the Belizean *alcalde* system was codified in 1871, when the colonial government granted local indigenous community elders the right to preside over minor civil and criminal cases and gave them the responsibility to administer the local census. Alcaldes, after deliberation with their local council of elders, were initially allowed to settle village conflicts over land and forest resources. The alcalde system was co-opted by the national judicial system in 1913 via the passage of the Alcalde Ordinance. This law expressly prohibited the village alcaldes from exercising power in land disputes. Alcaldes retained distributive authority over "abandoned and unclaimed land" until 1964 when the GOB instituted the "leasehold system." The state thereby became the sole authority over land in Belize (Clark 2000b).

[12] The *Maya Atlas* (1997) is the product of an extensive mapping project undertaken by the TMCC and TAA between 1995 and 1997. The Atlas provides a cartographic foundation for the recognition of Maya land claims.

[13] The Inuit Circumpolar Conference formed in 1977 as a multi-national indigenous NGO representing Inuit people of Alaska, Canada, Russia, and Greenland. The ICC is active to the level of the United Nations in order to protect its homeland, defend Inuit rights, and foster sustainable development. Transfer of skills and experience to other indigenous organizations like the MLA and SATIIM is part of the International Development and Trade mission of the ICC. The project with the MLA is primarily based on the experience of Inuit from Nunavik, Canada (ICC 2003).

[14] Nearly all of the Maya organizations (and most other southern NGOs) are based in the coastal town of Punta Gorda, the largest town in the Toledo District.

[15] SAGE, a coalition of local and national NGOs, was formed in 1998 to address the negative impacts of the Southern Highway expansion. SAGE now addresses logging issues and regional watershed management (See Chapter Six).

[16] The combination of governmental antagonism and community resistance is not unique to the story of SATIIM. A similar scenario unfolded when the establishment of Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary usurped existing Creole communities' control over their traditional fishing grounds (Johnson 1998).

[17] *Land of the Free*. Lyrics: Samuel Alfred Haynes, 1963; music: Selwyn Walford Young, 1963; National Anthem of Belize adopted, 1981.

[18] The EcoLogic Development Fund (EDF) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) helped support SATIIM. EDF, a US-based environmental NGO, started in 1993 to foster conservation in Latin America through sustainable development and community based management of natural resources. IFAD, a specialized agency of the United Nations, was created in 1977 to address issues of food insecurity by financing agricultural development projects in rural areas of developing countries. Pertinent to Southern Belize, IFAD's target groups include indigenous people and the rural landless.

[19] This area is also referred to as the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor (MMMC) and the Port Honduras Watershed Area (PHWA).

[20] TNC started investing in Belize in early 1993 via a regional project, the Proyecto Ambiental para Centro America (PACA). At the time, the Belize Center for Environmental Studies (BCES), an environmental research NGO based in Belize City, was its main partner in Belize. TNC looked at the results of a Critical Habitat Study conducted by BCES, which determined that it was critical to protect the Deep River-Port Honduras corridor.

[21] Approximately 77,000 acres of the Toledo District is officially classified as "Indian Reservation." There are disputed accounts of the status of the Maya Reservations. The only statutory rules governing the reservations were adopted in 1924 and these have never been revised (GOB 2000c). The National Lands Act, "makes no mention of Indian Reservations as such, only referring to 'reserves' which may or may not be applicable" (GOB 2000c). However, the Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC), a non-governmental organization (NGO) which represents the Mopan and Kekchi of the Toledo District, claims that these reservations continue to exist under the laws of Belize, but that they only include roughly half of the Maya villages that currently exist (IACHR Report No. 78/00 2000). Currently, authority to distribute lands within the reservations (for residential and farming purposes) is unofficially exercised by village *alcaldes* (traditional Maya chieftains or lawmen) and/or Village Council Chairmen (GOB 2000c). The ten existing reservations now encompass 16 communities with an approximate population of 6,500 Maya (IADB 2001). There are at least 21 Maya communities that have been

established outside the reservation boundaries. In total, the Toledo District is home to approximately 15,000 Mopan and Kekchi Mayas (Shal 2002a).

[22] At the time, with TNC support, Heyman was conducting a multidisciplinary study aimed at determining how to maximize ecological and socioeconomic benefits of corridors.

[23] According to the SCP Consultant, the "SCP is an analysis of ecological systems in need of conservation, priority threats to these systems, and priority strategies needed to abate these threats. [The SCP is also] described as a process focused on the conservation of biodiversity, which brings in human considerations in the discussion of threats to biodiversity and conservation strategies. Because there is no explicit assessment of human needs, the MMMAT SCP should not be considered a *management* or *development* plan for the area, but rather an appraisal of threats to ecological processes and biodiversity at the site" (TIDE 2002a).

[24] The SAGE/TWA story provides more details about these recent collaborative efforts at the multi-watershed scale.

[25] PACT is a statutory trust fund, based in the capital city of Belmopan, which provides financial assistance for activities that foster conservation, sustainable development, and management of protected areas.

[26] Several conservation NGOs working in the Gulf of Honduras watershed banded together in 1996 to form TRIGOH, whose mission is "to preserve the biological diversity of the Gulf of Honduras and improve the quality of life of the local communities" (TIDE 2003a).

[27] BTIA is a national, non-profit, private-sector membership organization that "promotes the development of sustainable, eco-cultural tourism." Its over 400 members are represented on many tourism and environmental-related government, legislative, advisory, consultative and licensing committees. BTIA's main purpose is to "serve and promote the interests of its members, to develop and promote the Belize tourism product and to influence and secure the improvement of the [tourism] industry" (BTIA 2003).

[28] The factors that enable these two alliances to be more effective are discussed in Chapters Three and Six, respectively.

[29] This meeting was co-sponsored by the Belize Audubon Society and UNDP-Belize.

[30] CARD was established in 1999 and initiated in March 2000 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The project was designed to, among other functions, invest in the institutional capacity of community-based organizations and institute a microfinance program that aims to make credit available to even the poorest households in Southern Belize (Wainwright 2002).

[31] See the Bladen Consortium story for more details.

[32] Given that these arrangements are rarely accompanied by financial resources, it can be argued that this represents a devolution of roles and responsibilities from GOB to NGOs and CBOs, rather than actual "co-management."

[33] BACONGO is a national alliance of Belizean conservation NGOs that seeks to support the efforts of its members and to advocate for natural resource conservation and sustainable development in Belize.

[34] As previously stated, ECOFOR is one of several closely-help companies with "responsibility for the management of over 300,000 acres of timberlands", jointly referred to as Woodward Companies, which are owned and operated by the Woodward family of the USA.

[35] The Arcadia Fund **"**works to secure the future of land with globally significant biodiversity by establishing protected areas through direct land purchase." (FFI 2003b)

[36] The inception of TIDE is described in Chapter Five.

[37] "The National Biological Corridors Program (NBCP) under the guidance of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridors Project (MBC) is in the process of establishing itself for the continuity and sustainability of all activities implemented by the MBC towards the establishment of biological corridors locally" (CBM 2003).

[38] See Toledo Watershed Association and SAGE Case Study

[39] According to Belize Audubon Society an easement is not permissible under Belize's real estate laws. For an easement to exist there must be a dominant and servient tenement in essence, two land owners with adjacent tracts. To achieve the same concept of a conservation easement, restrictive covenants and positive covenants may be put in place at the time of the acquisition of the title. Additionally the two landowners may execute contracts that bind each other which may be recorded as an encumbrance on the title (Marin 2003).

[40] The purpose of the agreement (signed October 25, 2002) is as follows: "Whereas [BLE] a corporation, and known as the eco-tourism operator and [TIDE] a non-profit organization, and known as the local conservation partner have expressed their mutual intention to enhance cooperation between them and to promote the conservation and development that will guarantee long term sustainable utilization and maintain the ecological integrity of the Golden Stream River and the Port Honduras Marine Reserve while providing economic benefits to BLE, TIDE, and local residents" (BLE 2003a)

[41] In October 2002, EcoLogic Enterprise Ventures, made a US$150,000 loan over five years to BLE. The loan represents a co-investment with Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy for the construction of low-impact lodges. (EEV 2003)

[42] Various CBOs manage Caye Caulker Forest Reserve, Five Blues Lake National Park, Laughing Bird Caye National Park, Mayflower Bocawina National Park, Noj Kaax Meen Eligio Panti National Park, and Rio Blanco National Park.

[43] Democratic decentralization occurs when powers and resources are transferred "to authorities representative of and downwardly accountable to local populations". This is "considered to be the 'strong' form of decentralization" that "theoretically provides the greatest benefits." Privatization transfers power to non-state entities, including individuals and corporations that may not be representative or accountable to local populations. (Ribot 2002)

[44] In 1996 Maya Organizations brought a case to the Supreme Court of Belize to assert their rights over lands and resources included in logging concessions. In 1998 Maya leadership filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in an effort to compel the Belizean Government to recognize Maya indigenous land rights and to challenge the legality of logging and oil concessions in Toledo.

[45] The main purpose of the MMMC concept, as originally envisioned, was to guide economic development in the transect so that long-term ecological and socioeconomic benefits would be maximized at the ridge to reef scale (Heyman 2/27/03). The Site Conservation Plan for the region contains an overview of conservation targets and goals for the MMMC, described the stresses and sources of stresses on the five ecosystem types, critical threats and strategies, as well as monitoring and capacity building action plans.

[46] Landscape scale conservation efforts are also referred to as ecoregional or ecosystem management in the literature. The principles of ecosystem management include " …systems thinking, deeper understanding of the complexity and dynamism of ecological and social systems, more extensive consideration of different spatial and temporal scales, ecologically derived boundaries, adaptive management to deal with uncertainty, and collaborative decision making" (Yaffee 1999).

[47] According to WWF, ecoregions are "relatively large units of land containing a distinct assemblage of natural communities and species, with boundaries that approximate the original extent of natural communities prior to major land-use change." WWF's interest in ecoregion-based conservation arises, in part, "from a recognition of the need to find ways to operate at a scale larger than that for most projects. To achieve conservation results that are ecologically viable, it is necessary to conserve networks of key sites, migration corridors, and the ecological processes that maintain healthy ecosystems" (WWF 2003).

[48] TNC is a US-based NGO that supports and implements conservation initiatives worldwide. The NGO owns and manages about 1,400 preserves in the US, where it has approximately one million members.

[49] GEF assists developing countries to protect the global environment in four areas: global warming, pollution of international waters, destruction of biodiversity, and depletion of the ozone layer. The GEF is jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Bank.

[50] The MBC initiative is discussed in the next section below as well as in Chapter Two.

[51] This project seeks to manage the MBRS as a "shared, regional ecosystem; safeguard its biodiversity values and functional integrity; and create a framework for its sustainable use" (GEF 2001).

[52] The MBC project is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

[53] PACT gets its income from a conservation fee of US$3.75 per visitor paid upon departure from the country, and a 20 percent commission from cruise ship passenger fees. These constitute the primary source of funding for the trust fund. Since 1997, PACT has awarded over 35 small and medium-sized grants totaling approximately US$500 thousand to NGOs, CBOs and Government agencies.

[54] Enabled by the U.S. Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA), this landmark swap agreement was signed in August 2001 by the U.S. Government, with the assistance of TNC, to reduce approximately one-half of the debt obligations of the GOB to the United States in exchange for the protection of 23,000 acres of forest land in the MMMC (TNC 2001).

[55] These land acquisitions could also be seen as unilateral actions to increase organizational turf.

[56] TEA guesthouses were completed in 1992 and the first tourists started to arrive in 1993. Each village established a protected area for an "eco-trail" and for organic and traditional crops. An average of seven to nine families participated in each village; other food and service providers (non-TEA members) also participated.

[57]The CARD project was established in 1999 and is expected to run for seven years with funding of US$7 million provided through loans and grants from the Caribbean Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the Government of Belize.