

Annual Summary Report 2012



Oak Foundation commits its resources to address issues of global, social and environmental concern, particularly those that have a major impact on the lives of the disadvantaged.

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Disclaimer

The editors have tried to ensure the accuracy of this report but cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

INTRODUCTION

In 2006 Oak Foundation developed a ten-year strategic plan that guides its grant-making in Belize and the wider Mesoamerica region. The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed description of regional grant-making in 2012 and inform on the progress of active grants from previous years.

The report is divided into four sections: 1) Introduction, 2) Mesoamerican Reef Eco-region Programme grants 2012; 3) active grants from previous years; and 4) a glossary of abbreviations.

Who We Are

The Oak Belize Foundation is a part of a wider group of charitable and philanthropic organisations established in various countries worldwide. The resources of Oak Foundation originated from an interest in the Duty Free Shoppers business that Alan Parker helped to build. Since its establishment over a decade ago the Foundation has made over 2,700 grants to not-for-profit organisations across the globe.

Our office in Belize is not a grant-making organisation. Its staff provide technical support and expert advice that informs the grant-making of Oak Foundation in the Mesoamerican Reef region. Other philanthropic organisations which partner with Oak Foundation administer the grants described in this report.

What We Do in the Mesoamerican Reef Region

Programme Goals

Oak Foundation's Mesoamerican Reef Eco-region Programme Goal is:

To develop an ecologically representative network of marine reserves that maintain the health of the barrier reef ecosystem and its wildlife, and that support the food security and sustainable economic development of local coastal communities.

In the Mesoamerican Reef Ecosystem we support **capacity building, research, communications, policy, advocacy and market-based activities** that:

- improve marine reserve management effectiveness;
- promote sustainable coastal and marine resource management, including sustainable financing; and
- promote long term, non-extractive, diverse economic development opportunities for coastal communities.

Grant-Making Overview

In 2012 Oak Foundation awarded five new grants to various not-for-profit organisations in Belize to support the projects listed below. The work of these organisations was carried out nationally and was sometimes part of regional initiatives. Grants in 2012 ranged from between USD 300,000 and USD 1 million.

Multi-year grants that were made prior to 2012 and have not yet ended are listed under the category "Active Grants from Previous Years". Oak Foundation has also supported other smaller initiatives (under USD 25,000) in Belize through discretionary grants that are not reflected in this report.

Criteria for Funding

Oak Belize Foundation **does not** award grants to:

- political candidates seeking office;
- religious organisations for religious purposes;
- organisations seeking support for general fund-raising drives or events; or
- small grants, i.e. amounts under USD 25,000 (except for exceptional situations and discretionary grants).

Instead the Foundation seeks leadership projects which:

- target root causes;
- are replicable either within a sector or across geographical locations;
- include plans for long-term sustainability;
- have secured co-funding;
- strive to collaborate with like-minded organisations; and
- value the participation of people (including children) and communities.



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MESOAMERICA REEF ECO-REGION PROGRAMME GRANTS 2012

Belize Coalition to Save Our Natural Heritage: securing the Belize Barrier Reef from the impact of oil by advocating for Belize's offshore and upland protected areas and important watersheds as off-limits to oil exploration.

To build public awareness of the potential impact of oil exploration and advocate for legislation that protects Belize's offshore, protected areas and important watersheds against oil exploitation.

The Belize Coalition to Save Our Natural Heritage is a coalition of organisations that aims to protect people and their rights and to safeguard Belize's natural heritage for the benefit of all Belizeans – present and future. In working to achieve its goal, the Coalition employs various outreach strategies including: public presentations; lecture series; engaging relevant government agencies; and providing recommendations on addressing the issue of oil exploration in protected and sensitive areas.

Environmental Defense Inc (EDF) – Mesoamerican Sustainable Fisheries Initiative: an incentive-based approach for Belize.

To implement key reforms in Belize's fishery sector in an effort to reduce and eventually end the over-fishing of key marine species.

The EDF will work to create a permanent, irreversible policy and regulatory environment for a rights-based fishery management tool (managed access) by 2015. The Government, with EDF, will roll out managed access to the entire marine ecosystem of Belize by 2016, in partnership with a coalition of non-governmental organisations and fishermen.

Mesoamerican Reef Fund – Healthy Reefs for Healthy People: evaluation of ecosystem's health and management response.

To improve understanding of reef health and social wellbeing in the Mesoamerican Reef by producing credible, collaborative and comprehensive report cards that track the health of the reef, including recommendations for priority management actions.

In addition, the Healthy Reefs Initiative (HRI) will provide a standardised evaluation of management efforts through the biennial production and dissemination of eco-audits. HRI serves as a regional hub for information to support marine stewardship and reef management.

United Nations Development Programme – COMPACT: GEF SGP/COMPACT re-granting of Oak funds towards protecting and conserving the Belize Barrier Reef reserve system world heritage site.

To strengthen the conservation and sustainable use of the resources of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System by building the capacity of civil society organisations.

In partnership with Oak, the United Nations Development Programme through its Global Environmental Fund Small Grants/COMPACT Programme will fund projects that ensure environmental protection, sustainable livelihoods and coastal community empowerment in Belize.

Wildlife Conservation Society – Sustainable Fisheries and Effective Management of Marine Protected Areas in Belize: leveraging field success for national solutions.

To expand the fisheries replenishment zones in Belize.

This will be done by improving management effectiveness at Glover’s Reef Marine Reserve, South Water Caye Marine Reserve and in Belize’s territorial sea. These efforts will help provide sustainable and long-term protection of the reef through strengthened enforcement, monitoring and stakeholder engagement.



“Gigantic leap” made as Belize Cabinet declares Turneffe Atoll a Marine Reserve

On 22 November the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development Hon. Lisel Alamilla declared Turneffe Atoll a marine reserve. This long awaited declaration was received with much excitement by the marine conservation community in Belize and abroad.

Turneffe Atoll, located about 50 kilometres (km) from Belize City in the open sea, is the most biologically diverse atoll in the Caribbean, and an entirely intact coastal marine ecosystem. The importance of the area has long been recognised, and efforts to protect the approximately 48 km long and 16 km wide atoll have been on the conservation agenda for more than 30 years.



This is a major accomplishment of global relevance. It is a monumental decision that will preserve the atoll in its present untouched state by assuring its protection and enabling sustainable scientific research and environmental monitoring. It will also control future development by enforcing the sustainable management of commercial fishing and supporting and controlling tourism activities.

The atoll provides a nursery and feeding habitat for at least thirty species. It is recognised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the world’s oldest and largest global environmental organisation, as being of international concern. The wider Turneffe area, with its deep water passages, provides an important habitat for open sea species such as marlin, sailfish, kingfish and shark. It also has a complex interior lagoon matrix of interconnected mangroves and seagrass beds that support several breeding seabird colonies, as well as reefs that provide an important habitat for the critically endangered staghorn and elkhorn corals and the endemic white spotted toadfish.

Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve is now Belize’s largest marine reserve, covering a total area of 1,317 km². With the protection of this site, 20.3 per cent of the country’s territorial waters are under some form of protection, and the area under strict conservation is now at three per cent.*

**(Data source: Healthy Reefs Initiative)*

Article from Oak Foundation Annual Report 2012

ACTIVE GRANTS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO): supporting Belize's national protected areas system through advocacy, outreach and informing policy.

To shape public policies and programmes related to Belize's protected areas.

APAMO enables the participation of conservation stakeholders to strengthen the current protected areas system and ensure its sustainability through defining various national policies and frameworks. It participated in meetings of the National Protected Areas System (NPAS) technical committee and project board, ensuring that protected areas were considered in the NPAS plan. The organisation also lead technical reviews on the petroleum Zonation Plan and the US Capital Oil Exploration Environmental Impact Assessment.

In an effort to diversity its funding base, APAMO has developed a marketing strategy and strategic plan with priority objectives for the next three years. It subscribed to donor database "**fundsforngos**", upgraded its website and created a Facebook fan-page to share information and raise funding. Additionally, the organisation continued to support smaller community-based organisations in the area of financial management and organisational planning.

Belize Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI) – coastal planning and sports fishing conservation management: building capacity for the coastal zone management institute.

To complete the Belize National Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Plan and create conditions that will lead to the effective management and conservation of Belize's Sport Fishing Industry.

CZMAI has so far embarked on the development and implementation of the ICZM Plan – a draft has been completed and is now in its final round of consultations. The CZAMI anticipates that the Government of Belize will approve the plan in the last quarter of 2013. This national plan is mandated under the Coastal Zone Management Act, and determines the suitability of coastal resources for various developmental needs.

Working in partnership with the Fisheries Department to effectively manage and conserve Belize's Sport Fishing Industry, CZMAI has also designed and implemented a system for web-based application, on-line payment and approval for sport fishing licenses. It trained its staff to coordinate and administer the licenses monitoring and surveillance programme, and developed and distributed posters, signs and brochures to inform how a license for sport fishing activities can be obtained.

Comunidad y Biodiversidad A. C. (COBI): restoring the natural capital of coral reefs for sustainable fisheries in Mexican Caribbean waters.

To establish networks of community-based and state-supported fishery replenishment zones in Quintana Roo, Mexico, restoring the ecosystem and economic value provided by coral reefs.

So far, COBI has launched the Kanan Kay Alliance, a collaborative and inclusive assembly of key actors who have been the driving force working towards the establishment of fisheries replenishment zones at Puerto Morelos, in Sian Ka'an, Banco Chinchorro, and Xcalak National Parks.

The collaboration between six fishermen cooperatives, Kanan Kay Alliance and the Mexican Government has resulted in the establishment of twelve fisheries replenishment zones. COBI also provided training to fishermen in biodiversity monitoring, scuba diving, coral restoration and data collection on the abundance of fish and invertebrates.

Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) – Cordelia Banks: preserving and connecting a coral oasis.

To ensure the designation of Cordelia Banks, Honduras as an area of special interest within a marine protected area by 2015. In April 2012, in collaboration with a range of partners, CORAL obtained the protection of Cordelia Banks in Honduras through the declaration of the area as an area of wildlife importance. Cordelia Banks has a high level of live coral cover and possesses one of the largest remaining stands of the endangered staghorn coral in the Western Caribbean — identified as a critical source of coral spawn. This municipal decree provides protection to the reef and its approximately 800 endangered elkhorn corals.

Earth University Foundation: a strategic partnership for sustainable rural development in the Mesoamerican region.

To improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of targeted rural communities in Mesoamerica by educating a group of new professionals to become “agents of change” in their home countries.

This grant supported four Belizean students to pursue “Licenciatura” in Agricultural Science Degrees at Earth University, which has, since 1990, been preparing young people from Latin America, the Caribbean and other regions, including Africa and Asia, to contribute to the sustainable development of their countries and construct a prosperous and just society.

This level of education is generally recognised as being somewhere between a Bachelor's and Master's degree. So far, three students have graduated, and the fourth is on track to completing her degree by December 2013. There have also been discussions between Earth University and the University of Belize regarding possible areas of collaboration.

EcoLogic Development Fund (EcoLogic): better fishing, better lives, sustainable conservation - uniting local people in the trans-boundary fisheries of Amatique bay.

To ensure the health of both the human communities and marine ecosystems that straddles the border between Belize and Guatemala along the Sarstoon River.

By facilitating cross-boundary collaboration between key Belizean and Guatemalan stakeholders, EcoLogic aims to provide viable alternatives to continued unsustainable fisheries (overfishing) and agricultural (slash and burn) practices. EcoLogic also seeks to build trust and goodwill among communities along the border who presently mistrust and misunderstand one another, but are dependent on common resources that are in jeopardy.

So far, EcoLogic has conducted several sustainable fishing workshops and exchanges with more than 200 participants from communities within the Amatique Bay region. The themes of these workshops and exchanges included protected areas co-management, sustainable fishing techniques, threatened species protection and drivers of overfishing.

The organisation also engaged in offering alternative livelihood strategies linked to value-added fish processing methods to communities on both sides of the border. EcoLogic also produced a Sarstoon bi-national management plan and is currently working with stakeholder communities to implement the plan.

Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW): building the capacity of environmental law organisations to protect the Mesoamerican Reef.

To develop and enforce the rule of law to protect the environment in the countries that shares the Mesoamerican Reef.

ELAW intends to empower public interest environmental advocates to act as private attorney generals holding governments accountable and helping local people participate effectively in the sustainable development of their economies.

ELAW has so far assisted a number of its partners with solidifying their operational, financial management and reporting skills to build capacity. To support the participation of citizens in decision making regarding their natural resource, ELAW partners have conducted community workshops to teach citizens about the tools available to them in order to engage effectively in local conservation challenges.

In Belize, the Ambergris Caye Citizens for Sustainable Development and the Placencia Citizens for Sustainable Development have assisted with defining the boundaries for new marine reserves around Ambergris Caye and the Placencia Lagoon respectively, and are seeking their declaration. In Mexico and Guatemala they worked with national universities to educate law students about environmental law while promoting the practice of public interest environmental law.

Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza A. C. (FMCN): Mesoamerican Reef Leadership Programme.

To accelerate conservation in the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) eco-region by enabling early to mid-career professionals from the MAR countries to launch projects that will mitigate reef threats, while attaining valuable leadership skills.

The MAR Leadership Programme aims to build capacity within the region by training 12 to 14 fellows in project design, public speaking, fundraising and communications.

So far, it initiated a highly competitive selection process to choose the top 12 applicants from an original pool of 87 candidates. These individuals (four Belizeans, three Guatemalans, three Hondurans and two Mexicans) have since developed projects around the theme “Establishing a Network of Multifunctioning Marine Reserves”.

In the first year of the initiative, the fellows participated in five regional workshops facilitated by experts in project design, fundraising, communication, conflict resolution and negotiation.

Human Rights Commission of Belize (HRCB): “Without Distinction: Human Rights for All”.

To educate the Belizean populace on the Government's proposed amendments to sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 of Belize's Constitution, and the impact those amendments could have on their human rights. The Commission will also propose alternative plans to combat crime in Belize.

HRCB conducted a national campaign to inform the Belizean populace on their constitutional rights. The campaign included rallies, lectures, and public meetings and gave a large number of Belizeans the opportunity to express their views and concerns in regard to the proposed constitutional amendments. In the end, the Government of Belize withdrew the 8th amendment and the proposed the 9th amendment was passed with the deletion of some offending provisions.

Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MARFund): Core Cost Initiative.

To underwrite MARFund's short-term need for funding of its core costs to encourage and attract donors to contribute the necessary project funds.

MARFund awarded six grants in its annual grant-making through its collaboration with Overbrook Foundation and other partners. Three grants went to organisations in Mexico:

- 1) Secretaría de Ecología y Medio Ambiente de Quintana Roo received funds to strengthen inspection, surveillance and environmental education in the Santuario del Manatí State Reserve, Chetumal Bay;
- 2) Amigos de Sian Ka'an received funds for protecting the natural reef areas of the Xcalak National Park (PNAX); and
- 3) Comunidad y Biodiversidad A.C. (COBI) received funds to conduct a study that would evaluate the status of fishery resources in Quintana Roo: a socioeconomic approach to fishing activities.

The remaining three grants went to organisations in Belize, Guatemala and Honduras:

- 1) Belize Fisheries Department received funds for enhancing enforcement and compliance within the South Water Caye Marine Reserve;
- 2) Fundación Para El Ecodesarrollo Y La Conservación (FUNDAECO) received funds for the participatory design of fisheries recovery sites and fisheries co-management areas in Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area and adjacent zones; and
- 3) Cuerpos de Conservación de Omoa (CCO) received funds for Conserving fishery resources through its rational use in the marine area of the Cuyamel-Omoa National Park, Honduras.

Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MARFund): expanding the Healthy Reefs for Healthy People Initiative (HRI).

To expand the presence and collaboration of the HRI throughout Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala.

So far, HRI has launched its first eco-audit of the Mesoamerican Reef and the 2012 report card for the Mesoamerican Reef. The eco-audit evaluates efforts to protect and sustainably manage coral reefs and records the extent to which recommended management actions have been implemented in the region.

Its results are intended to instill a sense of urgency, accountability, and shared purpose among NGOs, governments and the private sector with a responsibility to maintain the health and biologic and economic vibrancy of the reef for generations to come.

The reef report card monitored 193 sites regionally and concluded that overall coral cover in the region had the highest grades, despite some declines in the Honduran sites. The 2012 reef report card also showed an encouraging decrease in the number of critical sites – from 34 per cent in 2010 to 20 per cent in 2012.

Oceana Inc: Campaign to Ban Offshore Drilling in Belize

To educate Belizeans about the threats of offshore oil drilling in the country and to strengthen the legislative framework for Belize's oil industry.

On February 29th, 2012 Oceana and the Belize Coalition to Save Our Natural Heritage spearheaded a "People's Referendum". This historic event saw the participation of approximately 29,500 Belizeans (almost a quarter of the voting population). Of that figure, an overwhelming majority – 96 per cent of referendum voters, voted "no" to the question "Do you think that there should be oil exploration and drilling in offshore areas?" (See the full story on page 17.)

Penobscot East Resource Center (PERC): Belize Federation of Fishers — Fish Forever Working Towards Sustainability.

To work with the Belize Federation of Fishers (BFF) in unifying the voice of fishers and communities which depend on marine resources.

PERC works to foster and support sustainable fisheries and fishing communities and to increase collaboration with the Fisheries Department and other stakeholder organisations.

To date, PERC has been developing the organisational capacity of the BFF to play a more significant role in issues affecting Belize's fisheries and decision making around fisheries management. The organisation conducted meetings in each fishing community in the country to explain the principles of sustainability and conservation within the ecosystems approach to managing fisheries.

Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT): building support for an effective national protected areas system.

To foster an effective, comprehensive and consolidated protected areas system by supporting implementation of the National Protected Areas Policy and Systems Plan.

PACT is working with relevant stakeholders to increase the effectiveness of the management of Belize's protected areas, ensuring greater transparency and the equitable allocation of resources across the network, thereby allowing for more cost-effective and simpler administration of the system.

In coordinating implementation of the National Protected Areas Systems Plan, PACT has to date partnered with the National Protected Areas Secretariat to hire a Communications Officer and conduct presentations. It assisted with the procurement and distribution of communication equipment and provided training on its use. In partnership with PACT, NPAS has commissioned the drafting of a National Protected Areas Systems Act, which in essence will be the governing legislation created to improve the sustainability of the National Protected Areas System.

Quebec Labrador Foundation (QLF): stewardship in the Gulf of Honduras — leadership for resource management.

To advance conservation and stewardship in Latin America, the Caribbean and the Atlantic Region.

This two-year project is focusing on the Gulf of Honduras and seeks to:

- 1) strengthen the capacity of local institutions to conserve natural and cultural heritage through stewardship;
- 2) contribute to management effectiveness of marine and coastal protected areas;
- 3) support the transfer of conservation innovations and methods among practitioners from the Gulf of Honduras and the Atlantic Region;
- 4) foster discussion among diverse stakeholders and cooperation across interest groups and sectors; and
- 5) foster regional and international cooperation and partnerships in the region.



To date, QLF has brought conservation leaders from the Gulf of Honduras region together to participate in a study tour which focused on “Leadership for a Change.” The work culminated in a strategy for improving communication among NGO managers and government authorities. Participants included Jose Perez (Association of Protected Areas Management Organisations), Victoria Cawich (Forest Department), Colin Gillett (Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute), and Arreini Palacio (Belize Audubon Society).

Additionally, QLF organised a workshop on governance of protected areas at the World Conservation Congress, billed as the “the world’s largest and most important conservation event.” Nellie Catzim, former Executive Director of the Southern Environmental Association, attended and delivered a presentation on shared governance (or co-management).

Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD): providing continuity - taking SACD to the next level.

To consolidate the SACD as an effective conservation and marine protected area management organisation.

This will be done by: creating a four-year strategic plan for the effective management of Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary; strengthening its community engagement efforts; and enhancing its fundraising and institutional capacity.

So far, SACD has managed to secure a parcel of land in Sarteneja for the construction of its office complex, and has purchased monitoring and administrative equipment. The organisation hired and trained patrol staff in surveillance and enforcement techniques to prepare them for assisting in the effective management of the Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary.

Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM): scaling-up grassroots mobilisation and activism to protect natural resources and secure indigenous human rights in Belize.

To safeguard natural resources, embrace sustainable development strategies and secure indigenous people’s rights to influence equitable and responsible public policies.

SATIIM’s mission is to safeguard the ecological integrity of the Sarstoon Temash National Park region and employ its resources in an environmentally sound manner for the economic, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of its indigenous people. Through this initiative SATIIM wishes to: 1) increase awareness and stimulate activism among communities in the Toledo district; 2) build a coalition of national and international civil society actors; and 3) establish an environmental and indigenous rights fund to support policy making.

So far, SATIIM has successfully conducted its fourth Environmental Fair which saw the participation of over 300 students from remote villages in the Sarstoon Temash National Park. The organisation also continued its joint monitoring work with the Belize Defence Force. It also partners with Ak’kutan radio

station to air a weekly radio show. SATIIM uses the show to keep the Mayan Communities of Toledo informed on the issue of land rights, oil development and other developmental issues in southern Belize and within the National Park.

Southern Environmental Association (SEA): charting a new course.

To build on the strengths of two co-management non-governmental organisations (Friends of Nature and Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and the Environment) to improve significantly the management of three critically important protected areas in the Southern Belize Reef Complex.

To date, SEA has increased its enforcement presence in the marine protected areas and the Southern Belize Reef Complex. Of a total of 179 patrols conducted, 59 arrests and 81 charges were made, with 72 convictions. There has been a 17 per cent decrease in fishing violations since 2010, and a 28 per cent decrease since 2009.

SEA continued to monitor wildlife and coral bleaching at Laughing Bird Caye National Park and Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve sites. It also conducted a six day summer camp with more than 200 participating students.

In addition to general marine education, SEA focused on increasing the awareness of the impacts of Climate Change on the Placencia and Hopkins lagoon. It also conducted its annual stakeholders meeting in Hopkins Village to present the work of the organisation to its stakeholder communities, as well as a fishermen exchange between Guatemala and Belize with a focus on alternative or supplemental income generating activities. Finally it hosted Earth Day clean-up campaigns in Placencia and Punta Gorda, in collaboration with local dive shops, prominent locals and partner agencies such as Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC): Belize Reefs for Life! — targeting the formalisation of the Marine Conservation and Climate Adaptation Initiative.

To consolidate a climate-adaptive, representative and sustainably funded marine protected areas system that sustains the Belize Barrier Reef as a unique world class natural resource which delivers long-term economic benefits to Belize's people.

TNC is working with the Government of Belize and other key stakeholders to design and implement an ambitious Marine Conservation and Climate Adaptation Initiative, including the creation of a marine trust fund.

To date, TNC, in collaboration with other partners, has finalised the conservation target document. They also drafted "Policy and Legislative Triggers for the Belize Marine Conservation and Climate Adaptation Debt Transaction" and secured a written commitment for the implementation of the programme from the relevant government agencies. In addition, TNC collaborated with partners and supported the advancement of several marine conservation projects, such as the initiative that led to the declaration of the Turneffe Atoll as a marine reserve and the development of the draft Integrated Coastal Zone Management plan.

Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE): Port Honduras Marine Reserve as a critical part of the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor Ridge to reef resource protection.

To ensure that TIDE continues to be an effective leader in ecosystems management by encouraging and promoting community participation in resource management and sustainable use of ecosystems and to implement the new Port Honduras Marine Reserve (PHMR) management plan (2010–2015).

Its main aim is to encourage community participation in TIDE activities and more structured education and outreach programmes to increase awareness of environmental issues.

To date, TIDE has expanded its water quality programme and has been monitoring sea cucumber and lion fish. It has also analysed fisheries data from 2009 – 2012 to inform the proposals for the extension of replenishment zones, possible introduction of total allowable catch and the implementation of managed access.

In 2012 TIDE conducted 930 patrols that resulted in the confiscation of 14 gillnets in the reserve and 6 outside of it. Night patrols in the conservation zones of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve increased by 75 per cent. Community outreach and environmental education, which included training in bird identification, ecology and mangrove ecology, took place via the Junior Community Stewards Programme in Punta Gorda and Monkey River. In addition, TIDE's Freshwater Cup programme saw the addition of females—a huge accomplishment that allowed young girls to participate for the first time in a sporting competition. A total of 22 teams participated, of which 8 were female.

Turneffe Atoll Trust (TAT): protecting and sustainably managing Belize's Turneffe Atoll.

To secure protection of Turneffe Atoll through the declaration of a Marine Reserve and subsequently a Biosphere Reserve.

The Turneffe Atoll Trust works with stakeholders and government officials to garner support and shepherd a process for legislative protection of the Atoll.

In August 2012 the Turneffe Atoll Trust successfully led a process for the declaration of the Turneffe Atoll as a marine reserve, by Hon. Lisel Allamilla, Minister of Forest, Fisheries and Sustainable Development. (See the full story on page 7.)

University of Belize (UB): creating a world-class marine science research centre in Turneffe.

To develop a world-class marine research field station that supports marine conservation efforts for the Turneffe Atoll.

The UB is rebuilding and retrofitting the facilities at its Calabash Field Station so that they can withstand a category three hurricane and become a facility for research and the training of marine scientists. To date, UB has been able to raise a portion of the matching funds required to commence the rebuilding and refurbishment of the facilities at Calabash, which were lost as a result of Hurricane Richard, a storm that hit Belize causing a lot of damage to its Calabash Caye Field Station. Funds will be used to rebuild the

main pier.

University of Belize (UB): developing national research and monitoring capacity for the management of Belize's protected areas and natural resources.

To develop a research and capacity-building mechanism within the University to enable a sustainable programme of scientific research in Belize.

To date, the UB's Environmental Research Institute has continued to build national scientific, research and technical capacity for natural resources management in Belize through the active implementation of its memorandum of understanding with Oceanic Society.

Partnerships have also been forged with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – which brought about a Coral Reef Early Warning System station. In responding to data needs and the resolution of resource management questions, the UB has also been actively promoting its five-year National Environmental and NRM Research Agenda.

In collaboration with WWF and Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and The Caribbean, the UB completed a study of the mangrove habitat of Belize, which resulted in a validated and accurate map showing the extent and cover of Belize's mangroves.

With the assistance of marine research fellows, a socioeconomic and population assessment of the sea cucumber fishery in Belize was also completed. This information will be used to determine the fishery's catch quota for 2013 and will provide recommendations to improve fishery management.

Finally, the UB also hired a Monitoring Officer to work towards the development of a national biodiversity monitoring programme, as identified under the National Protected Areas Systems Plan.

University of New Hampshire: SeagrassNet and the Belize/Mesoamerican Reef eco-region.

To establish at least two new SeagrassNet monitoring sites per year within Belize and in each MAR country, expanding the programme's knowledge base and educational outreach and help to increase the overall awareness of seagrasses as a key resource for the Mesoamerica Barrier Reef System.

To date, the SeagrassNet Mesoamerican Reef Eco-Region monitoring programme established eight new monitoring sites between January 2009 and December 2012. The sites include: Northern Marine Reserves (including sites at Hol Chan, Bacalar Chico, and Caye Caulker); Laughing Bird Caye National Park, Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserves and the Sapodilla Caye Marine Reserve in partnership with the Southern Environmental Association; Bird Caye with TIDE; and, in Mexico, the Puerto Morelos, National Park of Puerto Morelos and Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico.

In addition, SeagrassNet provided training in new and improved research methods and equipment upgrades. It reviewed the improved SeagrassNet website and database with new and pre-existing monitoring teams. It also increased public, governmental and scientific awareness of seagrasses and coastal habitat impacts and trends by distributing SeagrassNet flyers, outreaching to high school students and the Fisheries Department and producing and distributing a grade-school SeagrassNet colouring book on seagrass habitat and ecology.

Ya'axche Conservation Trust (YCT): advocating for the enforcement of laws in protected areas.

To secure the Government of Belize's commitment to protected area legislation and enforcement of protected area law; and to combat illegal activities within the Bladen Nature Reserve by mobilising widespread support for the country's protected areas.

To date, YCT has retained legal-council to appeal the Belize Supreme Court decision regarding the legality of undertaking feasibility studies for a dam construction in the Bladen Nature Reserve and Columbia Forest Reserve.

The organisation undertook an average of 50 patrols per month in the Maya Golden Landscape, which encompasses six protected areas. It conducted training in self-defence and the handling and safety of firearms for its ranger staff. In addition, YCT continued its educational awareness and advocacy efforts with communities and shared information on issues facing the Bladen Nature Reserve via an annual report, online and newspaper articles and its website and social network sites.



Fighting to ban offshore drilling in Belize

Belize is one of the most beautiful and untouched regions of the world. Its environment, a source of national pride, includes jungles, rainforests and reefs in pristine condition. The country's waters include the longest barrier reef and three of the four coral atolls in the Western Hemisphere. Belize is also biologically diverse, with the Belize Barrier Reef offering habitat to sixty-five species of coral, five hundred species of fish and many endemic and endangered species.

However, these are not the only national treasures in the country, as it was recently discovered that Belize also boasts oil and gas reserves. The recent catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has made plain the risks associated with offshore oil exploration. The incident also moved the people of Belize to act in response to the Government of Belize's plans for offshore oil drilling – the entire country had been segmented into petroleum concession blocks to allow oil exploration to be conducted, without specifically excluding areas with sensitive ecosystems.



In February 2012 just before a national election and on the heels of the rejection of signatures collected to trigger a national referendum, the non-governmental environmental organisations Coalition to Save Our Natural Heritage and Oceana decided to spearhead their own national referendum to find out the views of the Belizeans on this matter.

The "people's referendum" took place on 29 February and close to 29,500 Belizeans (almost a quarter of the voting population) came out to register their views on this issue of national importance. Over five hundred volunteers helped facilitate the process. The question asked was: "Do you think that there should be oil exploration and drilling in offshore areas?" The overwhelming majority –96 per cent – voted "no".

"I don't believe that there should be offshore oil drilling. We may not have an accident for 100 years, but all it takes is one accident to mess up our barrier reef," said Albert Mendez, a voter in the People's Referendum.

Oceana and the Belize Coalition continues to mobilise grassroots support to ban drilling in sensitive locations and offshore drilling and will support government efforts to improve accountability and benefit sharing in the development of this sector.

Excerpts of Article from Oak Foundation Annual Report 2012

Glossary of Abbreviations

A.C.	Central America
APAMO	Association of Protected Areas Management Organisation
BFF	Belize Federation of Fishers
COBI	Comunidad y Biodiversidad A.C
CORAL	Coral Reef Alliance
COMPACT	Community Management of Protected Areas for Conservation Programme
CZMAI	Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute
EcoLogic	Ecologic Development Fund
EDF	Environmental Defense Fund
ELAW	Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide
ERI	Environmental Research Institute
FMCN	Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza A.C.
GEF	Global Environment Fund
HRCB	Human Rights Commission of Belize
HRI	Healthy Reefs Initiative
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MAR	Mesoamerican Reef
MARFund	Mesoamerican Reef Fund
TNC	Nature Conservancy, The
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPAS	National Protected Areas System
PACT	Protected Areas Conservation Trust
PERC	Penobscot East Resource Center
PHMR	Port Honduras Marine Reserve
QLF	Quebec Labrador Foundation
SACD	Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development
SATIIM	Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management
SEA	Southern Environmental Association
SGP	Small Grants Programme
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TIDE	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment
UB	University of Belize
USD	United States Dollars
YCT	Ya'axche Conservation Trust

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Oak Foundation Belize
P.O. Box 1161
1216 Blue Marlin Boulevard
Belize City, Belize

Tel: (501) 223-5814
Fax: (501) 223-5808
<http://www.oakfnd.org>

