

Final Report and Training Program

Consultancy to develop a National Training Program for Protected Areas Management in Belize

Environmental Research Institute, University of Belize

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1. Introduction

The National Protected Areas Secretariat (NPAS) within the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is implementing a project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) entitled: *“Strengthening National Capacities for the Operationalization, Consolidation and Sustainability of Belize’s Protected Areas System”*. Under this project (SNC.PAS), the MNRE advertised a consultancy to develop a National Training Program for Protected Areas Management in Belize.

The Environmental Research Institute (ERI) of the University of Belize (UB) decided to place a bid for this consultancy, which it subsequently won, and engage key partners from Belize and abroad in this endeavor. The ERI’s participation in the development of the training program was part of the University’s commitment to fulfill the responsibilities envisioned of it within the Operational Framework for the Implementation of the National Protected Areas System Plan (NPASP). Under this framework, as the national university, UB is seen as the key implementing partner for training related to protected areas (PAs) management and the development of a national training program, the development of a National Biodiversity Monitoring Program, the identification of research gaps and implementation of relevant research, the housing and management of natural history collections, and the development of a Biodiversity Clearinghouse for the country. The ERI itself was created at UB based on the lessons learnt from the implementation of a project to develop a Bachelor in Natural Resources Management Degree Program with funding from the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) and the Oak Foundation. The ERI was established precisely in order to respond to research and monitoring needs, expand the University’s capacity-building ability for natural resources and PA management in the country, and fulfill the role of the national university within the process of implementation of the NPASP.

At this point in time the ERI has already made significant progress in each area mentioned above. In December of 2010, after a process of consultation with PA managers and other stakeholders, the ERI produced a National Environmental and Natural Resources Management identifying research gaps relevant to PA management. This agenda is a guide for research conducted by the ERI as well as local and international partners. Currently, the ERI is actively conducting research and monitoring in the Turneffe Atoll and the Central Belize Corridor, areas identified as gaps in the National PAs system. This work is meant to inform decisions for bringing these areas under management.

Another NPASP area in which the ERI has begun work is the development of a National Biodiversity Monitoring Program. Initial meetings with multiple stakeholders have established the need for the coordination of such a program and standardization of indicators and data collecting protocols. The monitoring program will in fact be informed through the ERI’s research efforts, participation, and coordination of national networks including the Coral Reef Monitoring Network (CORAL), the Spawning Aggregation Monitoring Network

(SPAGS) and the National Hicatee Conservation and Monitoring Network (NHMCN). As part of the work with these networks and to develop the Biodiversity Clearinghouse for the country, the ERI has constructed and/or maintains multiple databases for monitoring and research. Finally, the ERI has completed the re-curation of the national herbarium currently housed at the Belize Forest Department, and is actively involved in the addition of new collections.

It is within this context of implementation of the NPASP that the ERI placed a bid to develop the National Training Program for PAs Management as part of the SNC.PAS project. When the ERI placed the bid for the consultancy it had already made strides in preparing the way to start the development of the training program. For example, as part of an Oak Foundation-funded project entitled: *"Developing national research and monitoring capacity for the management of Belize's marine protected areas and natural resources"*, the ERI obtained some support to conduct a national training needs assessment. In addition, the ERI was also able to engage its partner, the Ya'axche Conservation Trust, into developing the ranger training components of the national training program by capitalizing on Ya'axche's long term plans to develop a Ranger Training Academy and willingness to create synergies. The collaborative effort with Ya'axche and other organizations is what will lead to the institutionalization of a national training program without duplicating efforts. Furthermore, recognizing that the successful development and implementation of a national training program is dependent on how well it can harness the experience and capacity of multiple training institutions, the ERI also engaged the Center for Protected Areas Management Training (CPAMT) at Colorado State University into helping to develop the national training program for Belize. The CPAMT has decades of experience in PAs management training across the globe and annually conducts and/or hosts training in Latin America and the Caribbean.

2. Program Goal and Objectives

The overarching goal of the National Training Program for Protected Areas Management in Belize is to develop national capacity for protected areas management to enhance and sustain management of the National Protected Areas System.

The main objective of the training program is to establish effective institutional capacity within PAs management organizations for strategic planning, program development and implementation and long-term sustainability. This objective will be achieved through the delivery of applied training to build capacity under the priority areas identified in the National Training Needs Assessment for PAs Management (see Progress Report for Consultancy).

The program also aims to fulfill three more objectives: institutionalization of the program within Belize in order to guarantee continuity and follow-through in the form of an established support system, coordination in order to maximize resources and avoid duplication of efforts, and continuous engagement of local or international partners with expertise in the various areas related to PAs

management to participate in the delivery of training and as a way of ensuring the program's quality and relevance.

3. Program Contents and Duration

The National Training Program for Protected Areas Management will in the first instance be offered over a three-year period as suggested by stakeholders who participated in the Validation Workshop for the National Training Needs Assessment in July 2011. The program can be evaluated during this period to determine if any changes, adjustments or additions need to be made in successive rounds of the program. In this first instance, the program will focus on offering specific training courses within the first six priority areas identified in the National Training Needs Assessment, as follows:

- Priority Area 1: Institutional and Organizational Strengthening
 - Operational Policies and Procedures Level 1
 - Operational Policies and Procedures Level 2
 - Financial Management Level 1
 - Financial Management Level 2
 - Human Resources Management
- Priority Area 2: Research and Monitoring in PAs
 - Research and Monitoring for PAs Management Level 1
 - Research and Monitoring for PAs Management Level 2
- Priority Area 3: Specialized Ranger Training
 - Ranger Training: Core Skills and Competencies
 - Ranger Training: Practical Field Skills
 - Ranger Training: Law Enforcement
- Priority Area 4: Conservation/Sustainable Financing for PAs
 - Conservation/PA Management Sustainable Financing - Basic
 - Conservation/PA Management Sustainable Financing - Advanced
- Priority Area 5: Protected Area Management Effectiveness
 - Protected Area Management Effectiveness
- Priority Area 6: Protected Area Management Planning
 - Protected Area Management Planning

The contents of each of the training courses under the six different priority areas were validated in September 2011 via two national stakeholder workshops held in Belize City and Dangriga, respectively (see excel file with list of participants in these two workshops, summary of evaluations and workshop notes). The comments received from workshop participants were incorporated into the draft course outlines presented at the workshops and are reflected in the course outlines that accompany the training course materials.

4. Program Schedule

Several pieces of information were considered in the development of the program schedule shown in Table 1. The first information considered was feedback from stakeholders on what would be the most appropriate dates for them to participate in training. Protected Area Managers and Co-managers expressed that the fire season from February to May (for those managing terrestrial areas) and the tourist season from November to April were the most inadequate period for training, especially for field staff. Field staff at the workshops preferred for training to take place outside of November to May and hence be concentrated during June-October. Participants at the workshop did express that they could build in some flexibility in their schedules especially if exact dates for training were provided to them in advance and if multiple sessions of the same course were envisioned throughout the 3-year period; the latter would allow them to not have to send all of their staff for training at once.

Another consideration taken in the scheduling of courses over the 3-year period, especially in determining how often to repeat courses, was a survey conducted by the ERI to determine the staff numbers and staff categories/types for all of the PA Management organizations (see attached excel file). For example, the survey revealed that there are 97 rangers currently working within PAs necessitating at least one run of the full set of the ranger training courses every year. In addition to this survey, the ERI has also received detailed information on staff members who would participate in courses offered in the first 18 months of the training program. The information received is for staff from the following: Shipstern Nature Reserve, Ya'axche Conservation Trust, PACT, Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO), Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD), Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA), Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE) and Spanish Creek.

5. Modes of Delivery

Each course in the program will be delivered as stipulated in the course outlines accompanying the course materials for the training program. Overall, there was general consensus that although face-to-face delivery of training, including classroom teaching, workshops and field-based or field courses, is often best, alternative means of delivery such as online distance learning (ODL) should be explored for the program. As the program stands all courses emphasize application through practical exercises and the majority will be delivered face-to-face. For example, the three courses comprising the Ranger Training will all be delivered through direct interaction with instructors. A few courses including the Research and Monitoring Level 2 and the Sustainable/Conservation Finance - Advanced will be delivered in mixed mode with both direct and online interaction with instructors. The online component is particularly being explored with participants who may already have a university degree and may be more accustomed to working independently and using computer technology.

Table 1 below includes information on the mode of delivery for the courses to be offered as part of the training program.

Table 1: 3-year Schedule for National Training Program for Protected Areas Management

COURSES		DURATION & DELIVERY MODE	DATES	Year 1 Feb 2012- Jan 2013	Year 2 Feb 2013- Jan 2014	Year 3 Feb 2014- Jan 2015
1	Research & Monitoring for PA Management 1	8-day field course & 3 day workshop - spread over 3 weeks	End of Feb to mid March	X	X	X
2	Research & Monitoring for PA Management 2	5 weeks online, 2-weeks field course, 4 days workshop - spread over 12 weeks	March online sessions, end of April field course, May workshop sessions	X		X
3	PA Management Planning	2 weeks classroom and field activities	March	X	X	
4	Financial Management –Level 1	5 day workshop	End of May	X	X	
5	Conservation Finance - Basic	1 week workshop	End of May	X	X	
6	Operational Policies and Procedures 1 - Introduction	3 day workshop	Early June	X	X	
7	Ranger Training - Core Skills	2 weeks – classroom and field activities	First 2 weeks in July	X	X	X
8	Ranger Training - Practical Field Skills	2 weeks – classroom and field activities	Last 2 weeks of August	X	X	X
9	PA Management Effectiveness	1 week - workshop	September	X		X
10	Ranger Training - Enforcement	2 weeks – classroom and field activities	First 2 weeks of October	X	X	X
11	Conservation Finance - Advanced PoWPA module	1 month online	End of October to mid November	X		X
12	Conservation Finance - Advanced	1 week workshop	January 2013	X		X
13	Operational Policies and Procedures 2 - Advanced	4 day workshop	Early May 2013		X	X
14	Financial Management 2 - Advanced	5 day workshop	Early June 2013		X	X
15	Human Resource Management	4 day workshop	End of June 2013		X	X

6. Other Considerations

During the consultations that were part of the development of the National Training Program for Protected Areas Management several important additional aspects and issues were discussed. Consideration of these for inclusion in the program would greatly strengthen it. These aspects include: certification, institutionalization and support systems, a training of trainers component and program expansion to include other priority training needs identified in the National Training Needs Assessment for Protected Areas Management. In addition, a final issue that arose in the discussions was the question of availability of resources to allow full program implementation and the sustainability of the program.

There was an overwhelming amount of support from validation workshop participants for the idea of a program that is offered in Belize and is coordinated and implemented via the national university. Several advantages to this approach are listed below:

- Increased likelihood of continuity for the program;
- Ability/Flexibility to design an in-country support system that is institutionalized and which can always be accessed by those trying to apply the knowledge and skills gained from the training;
- Value for investment by allowing participation in a local training program which is likely to have lower costs as compared to participating in similar training abroad;
- Potential for participants in the program to use alternative teaching platforms such as ODL;
- Potential for participants to receive University credit and/or certification for courses taken as part of the training program.

All stakeholders participating in the workshop were also enthusiastic about receiving University-level certification and/or University credit for the training courses. A Protected Areas Ranger Certificate Program offered by the University of Belize to trainees who already possess a high school diploma can definitely be incorporated as part of the National Training Program based on the courses being offered as part of it. The Ranger Certificate Program would be comprised of a minimum of 30 credit hours awarded after successful completion of the three Ranger Training courses, Research and Monitoring Level 1, PA Management Planning, PA Management Effectiveness, College English I, College Algebra, Introduction to Computer Science and Fundamentals of Environmental Science and Conservation. The latter four courses would be completely transferable into any current Associate or Bachelor Degree Program of the University while the former would count towards a minimum of 6 credits (2 courses) within the current Natural Resources Management Program of the University. Awarding college credit to participants taking other course combinations as part of the training program is also possible, and program expansion to include other specific training needs identified in the National Training Needs Assessment would allow for additional University Certificate Program offerings.

During consultations, there was also wide support for the idea of eventually expanding the training program to include a Training of Trainers course. The idea behind this course is that instructors would evaluate and select a smaller subset of participants from the various courses offered as part of the training program, based on performance and interest, to participate in a specially designed Training of Trainers course. These participants would then receive leadership; communication and pedagogical training that would empower them to deliver training within subsequent runs of the training program itself or within their own institutions. A small fund would enable them to apply on a competitive basis for a grant to prepare and deliver training to their organization or another as part of their training as trainers. Trainers would receive annual certification, which would be renewed based on the amount and level of training they delivered during the year.

This entire section of this report is included under this heading of "other considerations" because inclusion of these aspects in the National Program for Protected Areas Management hinges on the availability of resources. Institutionalizing the program through the University is a good first step in ensuring that the capacity created and the lessons learnt from the training program remain within Belize and allows for the maximization of resources. However, a final recommendation is that beyond the SNC.PAS project, the University and the NPAS seek the necessary partnerships and resources needed to enable the implementation of the program proposed in this document, the expansion of course offerings to cover other identified priority areas and the enrichment of the program through integration of the issues discussed within this section.

Workshop to validate the National Training Program in Protected Areas Management and its contents

Sept 6th, 2011 Belize City workshop session, CZMAI training Room

	Name	Organization	Position
1	Bruno Kuppinger	Agucaliente Wildlife Sanctuary	Coordination
2	Amanda Acosta	Belize Aududon Society	Executive Director
3	Joyce Tun	Protected Areas Conservation Trust	Grants Officer
4	Miguel Alamilla	Hol Chan Marine Reserve	Manager
5	Darrell Audinette	Protected Areas Conservation Trust	Grants Officer
6	Ralna Lamb	Association of Protected Area Management	Project Officer
7	James Azueta	Fisheries Dept	Ecosystem Mngt Unit Coordinator
8	Violet Jeffords	Spanish Creek Wildlife Sanctuary	Coordination
9	Raymond Reneau	Spanish Creek Wildlife Sanctuary	Chairman
10	Arlene Maheia	National Protected Areas Secretariat	Program Assistant
11	Maria Vega	Friends of Swallow Caye	Consultant
12	Dana Rhamdas	Community Baboon Sanctuary	Coordinator
13	Julio Maaz	Wildlife Conservation Society	Coordinator
14	Elma Kay	ERI / UB	Science Director Terrestrial
15	Leandra Ricketts	ERI / UB	Science Director Marine
16	Melissa Almendarez	ERI / UB	Assistant

Workshop to validate the National Training Program in Protected Areas Management and its contents

Sept 13th, 2011 Dangriga Town workshop session, Pelican Beach Resort

	Name	Organization	Position
1	Juliet Neal	Belize Tourism Board	Capacity Building Officer
2	Sahlini Cawich	Southern Environmental Association	PA Program Director
3	Julian Lewis	Friends of Gra Gra Lagoon	Project Director
4	Mario Muschamp	Toledo Institute for Development & Environment	Terrestrial Manager
5	Marchilio Ack	Yaaxche	Head Ranger
6	Lee McLoughlin	Yaaxche	PA Manager
7	Ekatrina Alexandrova	Yaaxche	Operations Manager
8	Joel Verde	Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development	Executive Director
9	Jim Barborak	Clorado State University	Director Center for PA Management
10	Christine Valerio	Protected Areas Conservation Trust	Grants Officer
11	Leon Westby	Forest Department	Forest Officer
12	Saul Cruz	Forest Department	PA Program Manager
13	Elma Kay	ERI / UB	Science Director Terrestrial
14	Leandra Ricketts	ERI / UB	Science Director Marine
15	Melissa Almendarez	ERI / UB	Assistant

Evaluation Summary
validate the National
Training Program
Protected Areas

Sept 6th Belize City session
 10 evaluations received

Poor	Average	Above Average	Excellent
	1	6	3

1) How would you rate this session?

2) In one sentence, please describe your thoughts on this session with respect to its value for you.

It's very valuable in terms of improving knowledge of management

very good session-valuable information sharing session and input from stakeholders

very constructive, I just wish more people had shown up

covered all the important aspects for a National Training Program

the presenters engaged the audience successfully

from the perspective of PACT the session is valuable in organizing or structuring training efforts that will help to indicate priorities for investment in capacity building

the session is of great value since it provides for feedback to be given on courses presented and the process being taken to execute

very valuable and constructive

very valuable in allowing participants to give practical input to training courses

it is very productive and knowledgeable

3) Please rate the following specific aspects:

	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
	Poor	Average	Good	Very good	Excellent	
Audio Visual	0	0	2	6	2	0
Handouts	0	0	2	4	1	3
Scope of content	0	0	3	4	3	0
Depth of content	0	0	3	2	5	0
Applicability of content	0	0	3	3	4	0
Speaker - performance	0	0	1	4	5	0
Speaker - knowledge	0	0	1	5	4	0

4) What could have been covered more quickly?

the length given for each topic was appropriate
the introduction
course outlines basic overview needed
I think time is very essential however the time given to

5) What needed more time?

course contents

6) What wasn't covered?

7) Other feedback or comments:

I like the idea of accreditation not only for education purposed with universities and MoE but also from MNRE and MAF to certify participants - officials are recognized as specialized professionals; sort of like the special constable training

This step towards training PA managers, rangers etc is an excellent initiative towards institutional strengthening. This will definitely benefit organizations and funders.

keep up the excellent work! Maybe for the future instead of plastic chairs wooden chairs are a little more comfy

the workshop was good to my knowledge of understanding what needs to be don't and how to do it with the right methods. I need all the information I can get to improve and develop our organization, all the information was very good and well presented.

Evaluation Summary To validate the

National Training Program Protected Areas Management

Sept 13th Dangriga Town session
10 evaluations received

1) How would you rate this session?

Poor	Average	Above Average	Excellent
		5	5

2) In one sentence, please describe your thoughts on this session with respect to its value for you.

Valuable session provided the opportunity to make recommendations and update material

Information sharing / awareness on initiatives taking place to improve overall PA and organizational management

Adequately prioritizes and addresses capacity gaps and this was effectively communicated

Comprehensive overview of PA training needs and current status of consultation

Lunch and snacks

6) What wasn't covered?

Thorough discussions ensured all was included
Everything, aspect of the proposal training was covered
Areas not covered came up during discussions with group

7) Other feedback or comments:

We need serious commitment from proposed participants to attend
The breakdown of the courses seems very good.
Excellent exchange within the group and a positive feeling that this PA management training will take PA's to the next level, where I believe we should be.
I expected to see more representation of the CBO's. These are especially important as their capacities are the most in need. Their input is invaluable especially for the level 1
Some of the units outlines is not fully relevant to marine staff/organizations as it is to terrestrial although optimal. Identify possible options for marine entities or ensure all units cater to both marine/terrestrial co-managers.

Very informative and one of its kind in Belize

Very educational and touches most aspects of PA Management

Clearly delivered updates on progress of consultancy with well outlined plans

These sessions will surely improve the knowledge and skills of PA managers and the organizations

I am glad its being done. This program looks excellent

3) Please rate the following specific aspects:

	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
	Poor	Average	Good	Very good	Excellent	
Audio Visual	0	0	1	3	6	0
Handouts	0	4	1	2	2	1
Scope of content	0	0	0	5	5	0
Depth of content	0	0	0	7	3	0
Applicability of content	0	0	0	6	4	0
Speaker - performance	0	0	1	4	4	0
Speaker - knowledge	0	0	0	5	5	0

4) What could have been covered more quickly?

Discussion was appropriately timed
The time spent on the modules was sufficient
All was done in good time
Timing was good. Discussions were right on track

5) What needed more time?

Initial Introduction to the management needs project - where its going, long term plans
Timing was appropriate
Timing was sufficient
The time allotted was sufficient