



COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AND INSTITUTE

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Belize launches its first Strategy for Reef Resilience

April 20th, 2023

The Coastal Zone Management Authority & Institute (CZMAI), in collaboration with the Belize Fisheries Department, two key institutions under the Ministry of the Blue Economy & Civil Aviation, is celebrating the launch of Belize's first 'Strategy for Reef Resilience' on April 20th 2023. The Strategy was developed through the Resilient Reefs Initiative (RRI) in collaboration with local non-governmental organizations, local communities, and a global coalition of conservation experts including the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The Initiative supports UNESCO World Heritage listed coral reefs and the communities that depend on them to adapt to climate change and local threats. Initiated by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Resilient Reefs is a collaboration with UNESCO, The Nature Conservancy's Reef Resilience Network, Columbia University's Center for Resilient Cities and Landscapes, Resilient Cities Catalyst, and AECOM. The program is funded by the BHP Foundation.

"The Resilient Reefs Initiative here in Belize focuses on tackling the threats facing our reefs such as the impacts of disease and climate change, rapid coastal development, and overreliance on reef resources for people's livelihood." said Kalene Eck, Chief Resilience Officer-RRI Belize Site/CZMAI.

"Belize is pleased to have co-designed a long-term Strategy that focuses on three key flagship actions specifically tailored to our national context – **restoring our coral reefs, creating sustainable livelihoods and unlocking the potential of blue carbon** – all of which can help scale up our efforts." said Chantalle Samuels, Chief Executive Officer of the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute, Delivery Partner for the Resilient Reefs Initiative (RRI) in Belize.

Great Barrier Reef Foundation Managing Director Anna Marsden said it's imperative we work together to scale the effort to protect the world's coral reefs in this critical decade of action.

"Coral reefs are the beating heart of our oceans, sustaining a quarter of all marine life and one billion people globally, yet they are the most vulnerable ecosystem on the planet. Belize's reef resilience flag-ship actions are *game changers*. Through the Resilient Reefs Initiative, we've provided more than AUD\$1m for key projects that will help restore key coastal and reef habitats and, vitally, focus on improving the wellbeing of Belize's fisherfolk through the creation of viable and sustainable livelihoods."

"Belize is already a leader in conservation. In 2018, it introduced a moratorium on oil exploration and strengthened forestry regulations. It has also created new mechanisms to fund critical



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conservation work, like the Belize Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation Program.” Fanny Douvere, head of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre Marine Programme said.

The strategy features three (3) flagship actions:

Strengthening Coral Reef Resilience: this action aims to strengthen adaptive management and stakeholder engagement to respond to long-term reef threats and build restoration solutions. Partnering with a range of local organizations, including government, researchers, and managers (CZMAI, the University of Belize Environmental Research Institute, Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association, and the Fisheries Department), this action will build the capacity of reef managers, deliver both disease response strategies (tackling the dangerous stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease), and conduct coral restoration activities. The feasibility of scaling this approach to managed areas nationally will be explored, and outputs are expected to inform the National Restoration Plan for Belize.

Coastal and Marine Land Tenure Analysis: This action aims to update the coastal-marine land tenure inventory for Belize. This will contribute to the engagement of coastal-marine land stakeholders (public and private) on better policies, plans, practices, and actions to foster sustainable and climate-smart development on the ground and will inform national action on protection of blue carbon systems, which have significant benefits in terms of risk reduction and carbon sequestration.

Sustainable Resilient Supplementary Livelihoods: This action aims to improve economic resilience to climate change for fishing communities that utilize Glover's Reef Marine Reserve and South Water Caye Marine Reserve by exploring supplementary livelihood options. Belize has had numerous supplementary livelihood initiatives in the past, but impacts haven't been enduring. This project will identify the barriers to success from past initiatives and look to fund new training and partnerships driven by local communities. Lessons from this work will have implications for coastal communities nationwide and action findings will advance priority areas in the Belize Blue Economy Development policy, Strategy, & Implementation Plan.

The full strategy document will be available on the website of the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute and can be accessed via this link: <https://www.coastalzonebelize.org/portfolio/resilientreefsinitiative/>

For more information, please contact:

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