

**Ecologically friendly can also be Economically viable and sustainable.**



Our natural environment is a priceless treasure. Our resplendent beaches, waters, forests, flowers and wildlife are irreplaceable assets which must be safeguarded for all Belizeans, present and future.

Though young, Belize has an outstanding record on environmental matters. Our country is a signatory to many international treaties and protocols concerning the environment. We take these obligations seriously and are committed to fulfilling them.

We are fortunate that much of our country is still environmentally intact... and we will aim to keep it that way. The Government of Belize (GOB) supports the principle of environmentally-friendly economic development.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment's (MNRE) Department of the Environment has a competent and professional staff, dedicated to serving the public and preserving the environment.



### ***Protecting Today's Environment for Tomorrow's Generation***

The Department of the Environment (DOE) was formed in September 1989, became functional in 1991 and was legally established in 1992 by the enactment of the **Environmental Protection Act (EPA)**. This reflects the solemn commitment of the Government of Belize to the protection of the country's natural resources and environment.

It is also testament of the GOB's pursuit of a harmonious balance between the human and natural elements of the nation.

#### **The DOE's Mission Statement:**

"The Department of the Environment, within the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE), is responsible for fostering the prudent use and proper management of the natural resources of Belize, the preservation, protection and improvement of the environment and the control of pollution, thus guaranteeing a better quality of life for present and future generations."

The main objectives of the Department of the Environment are:

- ☞ To foster an appreciation for the natural environment of Belize and the importance of a healthy environment in the pursuit of the social and economic well-being of all Belizeans;
- ☞ To identify the major environmental problems confronting Belize and to work towards the solution of these problems;
- ☞ To assist and work in close partnership with project proponents in ensuring that their projects are both environmentally and technically sound through the implementation of Government's Environmental Impact Assessment requirements;
- ☞ To have an effective compliance monitoring programme aimed at ensuring compliance with Belize's Environmental Laws;

- ☞ To continue the development of a functional process for strong intra/inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral cooperation which is essential in addressing environmental issues;
- ☞ To work closely with local, regional and international agencies and organizations on environmental issues; and
- ☞ To develop and promulgate new regulations and standards for the prevention and control of pollution aimed at ensuring a greater and healthier quality of life for all Belizeans.

#### **What the DOE Does**

Some of the main functions of the Department of the Environment are to:

- Ensure protection of and rational use of Belize's natural resources
- Advise the Government of Belize on policies relating to environmental matters
- Regulate matters potentially hazardous to the environment
- Ensure compliance with the Environmental Protection Act and subsequent regulations
- Examine and evaluate and, if necessary, carry out environmental impact assessment and risk analysis and make suitable recommendations to mitigate against harmful effects of any proposed action on the environment
- Educate the public on environmental matters

- Work closely with reputable international organizations to enhance environmental prospects for Belize

The Department of the Environment is currently focusing on three major areas: Environmental Compliance Monitoring, Public Awareness/Environmental Education and Project Evaluation.

### How it operates

The Department of the Environment works closely with other government agencies to ensure that environmental concerns are considered in all development plans. Passage of the 1992 Environmental Protection Act mandated that the DOE be vested with authority to oversee the nation's environmental matters. These include matters concerning urbanization, mining, petroleum development, agriculture, and aquaculture among others.

### Environmental Protection Strategies

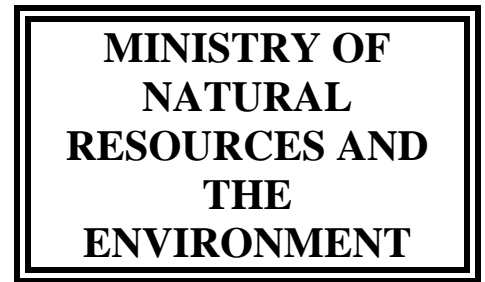
The Department's major tasks are to recommend priorities among environmental programs and to assist in achieving international cooperation in dealing with environmental problems. The strategies of the Department are centered on:

- Strengthening the coordination of environmental activities between government and non-government organizations.
- Establishing and enforcing standards for pollution control.
- Reviewing and revising, as necessary, existing environmental legislation regulations as well as strengthening their enforcement.

- Promoting environmental planning for key areas of development such as the coastal zone, islands and tourism sites.
- Facilitating public participation in environmental issues, through public education campaigns and district outreach activities, in order to encourage community based environmental planning and enforcement of regulations.
- Ensuring that the Government's Environmental Impact Assessment procedures are implemented for all environmentally sensitive projects.
- Establishing, upgrading and maintaining information systems to store data and other information on the environment so as to facilitate planning and monitoring.



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*Balancing Development and the Environment*