



Belize Fund For A Sustainable Future



## Marine Spatial Planning

### Stakeholder Engagement Field Report

<b>Meeting Session:</b> 1	<b>Date:</b> April 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2023
<b>Location:</b> Island Magic Beach Resort Conference Center, Caye Caulker	<b>Time:</b> 6:30pm – 8:00pm
<b>Number of participants:</b> 13	<b>Language:</b> English
<b>Report submitted by:</b> Janel McNab, MSP Coordinator CZMAI	

#### Phase 1- Objectives of these targeted meetings are to:

1. Socialize the MSP launch (set expectations)
2. Present a timeline of activities
3. Explain what an MSP is and why is Belize doing one
4. Share where stakeholders can access information/updates on the MSP process
5. Receive stakeholder’s feedback on how they see themselves involved in the process
6. Receive stakeholder’s feedback on preferred methods of engagement for the MSP process

#### 1. **Organizer and Collaborators:**

The meeting was attended by the public with a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from tourism, fisheries, citizens, and environmental conservation sectors. The goal was to address critical issues related to the development of the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan Process.

#### 2. **Main outcome/Findings:**

- The cutting of mangroves is severely affecting Caye Caulker and the surrounding reefs, placing the island in a critical state.
- The island is facing unsustainable growth due to excessive and unplanned development, with too many large buildings.
- There is concern that Belize is entering the Blue Bonds initiative without addressing other major issues.
- Existing development rules need to be strictly enforced to prevent further environmental degradation.
- The community desires greater involvement in decision-making processes regarding the island's future.
- There is excessive pressure on the area, necessitating the clear definition of zones.

- The Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI) lacks a presence in the area, impacting effective management.
- Claims on beach and mangrove areas are affecting fishermen's activities, and by law, these areas should not be privately owned.
- There is a need to end private ownership of beaches and waterfronts, with better management and enforcement.
- Private investors are blocking public access to parts of the beach.
- The absence of the Caye Caulker Planning Committee is a concern.
- Unregulated dredging is occurring, necessitating better management and enforcement.
- There is a contradiction among agencies regarding sewage disposal, with untreated sewage being dumped inappropriately.
- Ministers having the final say in statutory instruments (SIs) is problematic, rendering the process ineffective.
- There is significant tension in the community, leading to a demand for immediate action rather than more meetings.
- Concerns were raised about the misuse of funds and the building of debt.
- The expansion of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Plan was applauded, but there is a need for adequate on-ground management capacity.
- The public wants to assist in managing the island but feels hindered by the government, which seems to focus only on Hol Chan.
- Belize is perceived to be undergoing an identity crisis.

### 3. **Concerns/Challenges:**

The meeting highlighted several major concerns and challenges:

- The underdevelopment of sewage treatment facilities is a major issue.
- The expansion of reserves is questioned when current ones are not adequately maintained or monitored.
- The private ownership of beachfront and mangrove areas is problematic.
- The rapid loss of these vital ecosystems needs urgent action.
- There is impatience regarding how long it will take for management plans to mature and show results.
- The displacement of the Fisheries office is a concern.
- There is a conflict between eco-tourism and cruise tourism development.

### 4. **Collaboration:**

- A representative from the community should attend sector-specific meetings to gather data and inform about upcoming meetings.
- Belize Water Service needs to be involved in planning water piping and distribution.
- Solid Waste Management should be involved in developing waste treatment plans.
- Tourism agencies need to be actively involved in planning.

- The building authority should be included in the decision-making process.

**5. Follow up actions by TNC/CZMAI:**

Two follow-up actions were identified to ensure ongoing progress:

- CZMAI, with assistance from TNC and the Belize Fisheries Department, will organize sector-specific meetings to focus on major use zones.
- Efforts will be made to consult locals about the best times for follow-up meetings, incorporating a mix of interviews, one-on-one discussions, and community meetings.

**6. Key Takeaways and Next Steps**

Key Takeaways:

- **Enhanced Engagement and Communication:** There is a critical need for better engagement and communication strategies to involve a broader range of stakeholders.
- **Focused Management:** Identifying and concentrating on major use zones will enable more targeted and effective management.
- **Essential Collaboration:** Collaboration across various sectors and increased community involvement are vital for successful marine and coastal management.

Next Steps:

- **Sector-Specific Meetings:** Plan and schedule sector-specific meetings by CZMAI with TNC's assistance.
- **Comprehensive Communication Strategy:** Develop a communication strategy to address highlighted concerns.
- **Outreach Programs:** Launch outreach programs through local media and direct engagement with community leaders.