OCEANA Protecting the World's Oceans

E - NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2019

#TOLOVEANDPROTECTBELIZE

CONTENTS

- **01** CAMPAIGN UPDATE
- **04** REEF WEEK 2019
- 05 RIDE TO THE REEF
- **06** LOVE ACROSS THE COUNTRY
- **07** LA RUTA MAYA CLEANUP CAMPAIGN
- **08** COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES
- **10** MANATEE APPRECIATION DAY
- 11 FISH SCHOOL 2019
- **12** LIONFISH DERBY
- **13** EARTH HOUR 2019
- **13** CLIMATE CHANGE PROTEST
- 14 WORD SEARCH
- **15** CHILDREN'S CORNER
- **16** VENDOR REGISTRY
- **19** UPCOMING EVENTS
- **20** INCASE YOU MISSED IT!
- **20** WAVEMAKER SPOTLIGHT



8: COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ACTIVITIES FROM PRESENTATIONS TO CLEANUPS, THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE. OUR FIELD REPS HAVE ACTIVITIES TAKING PLACE ACROSS THE COUNTRY.



A LOOK INTO WHAT WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON DURING THE LAST FEW MONTHS.



4: REEF WEEK 2019 "STORIES OF OUR REEF, WRITTEN AS ONE - DIS BOND KYAAHN BROK!"



16: VENDOR REGISTRY FIND OUT WHO HAS BEEN TAKING STEPS TO GO GREEN.

To love and protect Belize

FISHING FOR A FUTURE Why We Should All Care How Our Food Is Caught

For generations, Belizean fishers have been exemplary stewards in the management of national fisheries. Testament to this has been fisher support in national efforts at sustainability such as the establishment of marine protected areas and replenishment zones (and their expansion); seasons and quotas for products like lobster and conch; and most recently, the zoning of national waters to manage access to fishing grounds. Expected and unexpected challenges have naturally impacted the implementation of each of these initiatives but given that a strong, sustainable fishery is the big picture, support for these efforts endures. You see, Belizean fisheries directly benefit more than 15,000 of us every day. And that's just on the commercial end. For these men and women, fishing is not just a way of life, it's their lifeblood.

Long before science confirmed it, Belizean fishers have appreciated the benefit of making choices today to avoid a lack of options tomorrow. Around the region and the world, Belizeans have witnessed how corruption, a lack of transparency and unsustainable practices have resulted in fishermen risking life and limb in a desperate race to fish smaller and fewer species in deeper water; and never has it been more expensive to do so. We've also had a front row seat to the mayhem that plays out every day at sea in illegal and destructive activities.

The fact that one such practice has undermined national efforts has not been lost on Belizean fishers. For decades, they've seen this gear mock the protected status of creatures like turtles, dolphins and manatees. For decades, they've seen first-hand the destructive and indiscriminate nature of this gear for species that ought to be released. For decades, fishers have recommended that we don't use this gear. And yet today, we're still talking about gillnets.

So, what's a gillnet? A gillnet is designed to catch fish by allowing only their heads to get through a walllike mesh, thereby entrapping them by the gills. Everyone accepts that gillnets are very efficient at trapping fish. But they're too "good". Gillnets trap everything, meaning they kill both targeted and undesired species. To make matters worse, most of the time, these undesired species end up discarded as "by catch"; hence the adjectives most commonly associated with them: indiscriminate and destructive.

The adverse ecological and economic impacts to Belize is glaring in the context of our national financial landscape. Belize's economy depends on healthy marine resources via a) tourism; since marine attractions are the backbone of our tourism product, and b) commercial fishing in terms of jobs, food security and national export commodities. Lobster and conch are Belize's most lucrative seafood exports. The total annual output for commercial fisheries is approximately 30 million dollars. Finfish generates just under a million dollars. Since not all finfish are caught using gillnets, gillnets represent a fraction of that figure.

But then there's cultural pride. The fact that we are home to the second longest barrier reef in the world is our national claim to global fame. It would be impossible to attempt to describe Belize without beautiful and bountiful marine resources. And fresh fish is always on the menu—breakfast, lunch and dinner. So, it's also just as hard to imagine a Belize where Belizeans cannot enjoy a fresh from the sea seafood meal. But the reality is that fish, especially finfish, is already hard to source in some parts of the country. In fact, the importation of all kinds of fish, even catfish, is already happening to meet the demand of both citizens and tourists. Just as disturbingly, sometimes these imported fish are being sold as local favorites. The reality that one day frozen fish might be our only option is a powerful incentive to identify and use ways to catch finfish sustainably in Belizean waters.

So what's the plan?

Of the 2,716 commercially licensed Belizean fishermen, in 2018, there are 83 licensed gillnet users country wide. The proposal already being endorsed by fishers, including current and former gillnetters, is that following a phase-out period, the use of gillnets would no longer be allowed in Belizean waters. During the phase out period, there would be activities, including access to financing opportunities, to give those fishers access to alternative gear, entrepreneurial skills training, financial literacy and access to valued added marketing opportunities and support. Some of the 2,633 commercial fishers, as well as recreational fishers have even offered to share their fin-fish catching methods with their counterparts. Isn't that a thing of beauty? Fishers keen to help each other to ensure that everyone can keep fishing! That should be music to the ears of decision-makers. You see, it would be far easier supporting 83 families replace their incomes from gillnetting than help 2,500 Belizeans find entirely new jobs.

That's right, 2,500 jobs. That's how many Belizeans are directly employed in the sports fishing industry. That's the kind of fishing where anglers fly into Belize from all over the world, head out to a fly-fishing resort or lodge, pay for a sports fishing license, wake up at dawn, cast all day in the hopes that a permit, tarpon or bonefish will bite. And if they get lucky, they'll even get to land it and take a photo. And then you know what they do? They carefully take the hook out the fish's mouth and they, wait for it, put the fish back in the water. And then they start casting all over again. And they'll do this for days. Paying guides from sunrise to sunset to take them to the best spots to find these finicky fish. Whether they catch one or not, fly fishing guides get paid. And good money. Economic studies show that sports fishing generates approximately 100 million dollars, yes you read that right: 100 million dollars annually. And just as importantly, all that income flows through our entire economy via sports fishing licenses, tour guides, restaurants, taxi drivers, gas stations, shopping centers, vegetable stores, resort staff, government taxes, on and on.

But since the species that flyfishermen are paying to catch and release are often bycatch in gillnets, those 2,500 fishers and their families are keen on supporting gillnetters use different methods to catch fish. That way, everyone wins. That way, everyone gets paid. That way, everyone keeps fishing.

To love and protect Belize

To love and protect Belize

So what's the catch?

As a people, we're still talking about gillnets two decades after the first petition went to the Minister of Fisheries to stop their use. You might be asking why. So are we. We have some good ideas about where the resistance is rooted. As many Belizean fishers will agree, gillnets are the gear of choice for foreign fishers; typically, the ones who sneak in illegally to pillage our waters and head home across the border. The reality is that some people benefit from allowing this practice to continue unabated. If you dive deeper into the issue of illegal fishing, it's also about the types of fish and other seafood products that they are targeting.

Enforcement

Resources for monitoring and enforcement are always limited. But the reality is that by its very nature, gillnet fishing is very difficult to monitor, let alone enforce. Nets are often set overnight and because they catch everything, by the time the nets are checked in the morning, everything has already drowned. The Coalition for Sustainable Fisheries, a group made up of both fishermen and non-Governmental organizations, maintains that those resources for enforcement would be much better used to stop illegal fishing activity, most Belize fishers say is the number one threat to all Belizean fishers.

Through constructive dialogue, the Coalition is in a position to support Belizean gillnetters lead on the next steps towards sustainable fishing practices. Through open communication and transparency, together, we can all play a role in safeguarding our food security, our fisheries resources and just as importantly, our fishing livelihoods. If we fish sustainably, we can always fish. If we fish sustainably, we can always enjoy fresh fish. If we fish sustainably, we can always catch and release sports fish species. And if we fish sustainably, then future generations of Belizeans can always rely on fishing as a way of life.

So never be afraid to ask what you're paying for...and what your eating. Ask where your food came from and how it was caught. By voting with your dollar and your fork, you will help to keep Belizean fishers fishing.

Janelle

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March was one of the busiest Months for Oceana as the team spearheaded the planning of the annual Reef Week! Held from March 8th to March 17th, this week is dedicated to raising awareness on the importance of protecting and preserving our beautiful Barrier Reef. The week is planned in celebration of Mesoamerican Reef Day on March 10th, each year launching under a different theme. This year's theme was: Stories of our Reef written as one... dis bond kyaahn brok!" Reef Week activities were especially important as April 22nd is set to be the commencement day of the phase out of single-use plastic and Styrofoam products in Belize.

Oceana Belize hosted its annual Ride to the Reef, a cycling ride from Belmopan to Belize City. Our other events included: our Instagram competition, the Paint the Reef night, an Oceana movie night and the introduction of our metal Tiger Grouper Fish used to collect plastic bottles in Punta Gorda. Oceana also partnered with TASA in Corozal to conduct presentations at several schools and to do a poster competition. We had cleanups, a football tournament, and even attended an environmental fair hosted by Nazarene High

School in Belize City. Other activities done by our partners included: La Ruta Maya River Challenge from San Ignacio to Belize City; Little Water Caye Clean up in Placencia; the Lionfish Derby and also the annual Reef Fair, which was held in Orange Walk Town on March 15th, with the annual English Caye Reef Swim as the closing event. There were also beach clean ups, presentations at several schools, social media competitions and Fish Right Eat Right restaurant certifications countrywide. We continue to work diligently and improve our relationships so that next year's Reef Week is an even greater success!













Keep Calm and Ride On

Now in its sixth year, the 2019 edition of the Ride to the Reef continues to offer fledging and fully-fledged cycling enthusiasts the chance to combine a fitness challenge while showing support for Belize's marine resources.

The ride highlights a major national issue every year. In 2019, riders supported the call for Belize to stop the use of gillnets, an indiscriminate fishing gear that is undermining efforts to sustainably manage Belizean fisheries. Through Oceana's transparency tactics, we now have data which confirms that in 2018, a total of 83 Belizeans were licensed to use this gear. Oceana and other members of the Belize Coalition for Sustainable Fisheries are confident these fishers can be supported to sustainable alternatives. If we fish sustainably, we can always fish! This confidence is boosted by the reality that gillnets are the gear of choice for illegal fishers. That fact led to Belizean fishers asking government officials to ban them as far back as the 1980s.

It's time to stop the nets! (Click here to learn more)



Keeping to tradition, the Ride to the Reef started at the steps of the National Assembly in Belmopan, the seat of the country's constitutional power, and headed north towards the coast via the George Price Highway. This symbolizes the connections made in the corridors of power and our precious marine resources. The peloton swelled to a 100 cyclists enroute. With two rest stops at Cheers and Hattieville respectively, the riders completed the 51-mile journey in three and a half hours, averaging 14 miles an hour. The event ended at the BTL park on Princess Margaret Drive, where the riders were treated to lunch and a token of appreciation for participation.

Riders ranged in age from 9 to 60 and everyone agreed that the fun and sociable atmosphere made the miles fly by! Oceana thanks all the participants for their continued support of this annual event. We are especially grateful to the men and women of the Belmopan City Council's Traffic Department, Belmopan Emergency Services, the Belize Police Department's Traffic Unit, Ordonez Bike Shop, the Belize City Council and its traffic department and to BTL's Digi crew for their respective roles in ensuring safety throughout the event. When we work together, we make sensational waves to safeguard our resources...and the people who depend on them!



Love Across the Country

During the month of February, group activities were planned by Oceana's grassroots team to celebrate our love for self, community and the environment. Stann Creek field representative, Mrs. Shanda Sainsbury, collaborated with SEA and visited schools in Independence Village where she gave out cupcakes while highlighting the importance of love for our waters and our country.

For the third consecutive year, Oceana teamed up with the Department of Youth Services Corozal to host the Love Fair. Community groups, NGOs, government departments and cultural organizations were invited to showcase their work and meet with the public. This year we were also graced with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), who was the highlight of the fair as well as the To'one Masehualoon group that had the kids learning the Maya language and the ways before plastic.

On February 14th, Toledo Field Representative, Analee Nicky Chuc, held a pop in photo booth/presentations at 8 different schools throughout the Toledo district. During these presentations, students were taught the importance of why we should love and protect our environment! Oceana was also present at SJCJC annual love fair. SJCJC wavemakers were in attendance with a love photobooth and cupcakes were given out as a thank you.













Interact Club of Sacred Heart College's La Ruta Maya River Clean-up Campaign

Written by: Kelvin Tillett, Interact Club Advisor

La Ruta Maya River Challenge is marketed as being "more than just a race" and they are not wrong. "It was launched on March 9th, 1998 to promote 'natural products' and sports in Belize and it is now considered one of the longest canoe races in Central America" (La Ruta Maya Belize, ND). The mastermind Richard Harrison also intended to raise consciousness about one of Belize's natural resources: The Belize Old River. The Interact Club of Sacred Heart joins the effort to promote the protection of our coastal waters and executed a river cleanup along the Macal River in San Ignacio



The Interact Club of Sacred Heart College offers youths from San Ignacio, Cayo, a platform to become leaders and be active in the community. The club has been successfully involved in numerous projects in San Ignacio and on Friday, March 8th, 2019, the club participated in the La Ruta Maya River Challenge by cleaning the river side after the race took off that morning from the iconic Hawksworth Bridge. Sponsored by the San Ignacio Town Council, a total of 8 interact and 4 teachers from Sacred Heart College cleaned the river banks. Garbage ranging from plastic bottles, plastic plates, plastic cups, plastic bags, straws, broken glasses, cable ties, bottle caps, shoes, food, cardboard, and more were collected. The club successfully picked up the garbage and separated them into plastics, glasses and organics for the Town Council's garbage trucks to pick up and properly dispose of.



We hope to promote further awareness to the community in keeping our environment clean, not only for ourselves but for generations to come.

Community and Outreach Activities

Oceana in Belize travels across the country to support and participate in community events where we can engage in discussion about the negative impacts of destructive fishing gear like gillnets, plastic pollution and its detriment to our ocean and marine life, while also updating Belizeans on recent campaign developments. We also share information about our fragile marine ecosystem and how protecting our marine resources can continue to provide jobs and food for all Belizeans now and for future generations. Oceana has always believed in sustainable fishing practices and fishing for a future, this is why Oceana is focused on phasing out the use of a destructive fishing gear: gillnets. With cleaner, more selective gears available, there is no reason to continue using a method that undermines efforts to sustainably manage commercially, economically and biologically important fish species.

















Since our last guarter we've continued to raise awareness through information booths at community events, classroom and community presentations, and coastal and river cleanups. At these events. thousands of Belizeans continue to learn of our efforts to protect Belize's marine environment and also how they can become wavemakers themselves. Oceana has been present in schools across the country doing classroom presentations to better inform our children and teachers on how we can do our part to help preserve our bountiful marine ecosystems. Some of these schools include La Isla Bonita Academy, Ambergris Caye Elementary School and San Pedro RC School, St.Alphonsus Primary School, Trio **Government School. All Saints Primary** School and San Antonio Government School. Elective classes are also held weekly at Ocean Academy.

Community and Outreach Activities



This year Oceana took part in the 16th annual Placencia Sidewalk Art Festival, sharing information on Oceana's campaigns and outreach work. In Caye Caulker, Oceana's Caye representative had the opportunity to team up with Belize District Field representative to carry out a cleanup with the St. Catherine Academy wavemakers and members of SJCJC Student Council. In Corozal, Oceana and Rotaract teamed up to help erect a wall to separate San Antonio's Government School's Standard 6 class from the computer lab. We also had Oceana's Toledo field representative partnering with TIDE for a week of presentations to different schools in the Toledo district, focused on addressing Plastic Pollution and how we can do our part, however small, to help create cleaner waters.



On March 13th, Nazarene High School held its Environmental Fair where Oceana took the opportunity to speak about sustainable fishing and the harmful impacts of single use plastics. Oceana's Corozal field representative also participated as a judge for an art competition held at the fair. Oceana is grateful for our many partnerships, friendships and to our ever-growing wavemaker family. We would like to thank everyone that has invited us into their homes, workspace and to all the schools that have given us a chance to speak with their students.

If you are aware of an event happening in your community or if you would like to know how you can volunteer or have Oceana as a guest at your school, please contact our Outreach Assistant, Ms. Camille Wade, at cwade@oceana.org.





Photo Credit: Luz Hunter

Our gentle giants, the endangered manatees, have been under increased threats the past 25 years. In the 90s, we used to observe them in large mating herds off the Belize City coastline, but today, all we see are dead ones that wash ashore.

I've enjoyed watching them at the Belize River mouth, while snorkeling on the reef and along the coast. It's so peaceful to watch them, yet I felt concerned for their safety, and saddened since there are many speeding boats traversing the area, seemingly without a care for the endangered manatees living below.

If people were to observe a dead manatee up close - and the sad state of each and every one -they too would soon become an advocate for the dire change needed to save the manatee from extinction in Belize.

I've come upon recently deceased manatees, dead manatees with exposed unborn fetuses, manatees with large prop scars, but the stench of a rotting manatee is the worst, with the hordes of turkey vultures that quickly identify the rotting corpse. Sometimes only the grey fleshy skin of the once majestic manatee laps with each wave at the seashore's edge. Each time I encounter a dead female manatee, I think about the unborn calves that will never be. Each time I see a dead manatee, there is an empty pit in my stomach, that yet another manatee has been killed, with no apparent concern of its passing.

So far this year, the number of dead manatees is less than that from the last two years, making me wonder, has the population gotten so low that there just aren't that many anymore to kill?

When I see a dead manatee, I think of how the manatee used to gracefully glide through the water exploring the reefs, seagrass beds and rivers, the same way I enjoy snorkeling, diving and exploring our aquatic realm, and I am left with a melancholy feeling knowing there is one less manatee unable to explore Belize, and one less manatee for future generations of Belizeans and visitors to enjoy.

But it's not too late yet, we do still have them. It's time to protect their critical habitat now to avoid extinction later.

Fish School 2019

On February 23rd, 2019, Oceana held a one-day training workshop entitled "Fish School". A total of twenty journalists from several Belizean media houses attended.

This workshop was led by two individuals, Margot Stiles; Marine scientist and Chief of Strategy and Philip Chou – Senior Advisor, Science and Strategy, both from Oceana. Several topics were discussed during the training session, these included: overfishing & illegal fishing, climate-related changes and its impact, seafood sustainability, fish and habitat, fisheries management, fishing methods and transparency. This workshop even gave way for attendees to voice their experiences about the challenges they face when reporting or covering fisheries related stories. All participants received certificates upon completion.

Our Vice President, Janelle Chanona, shared her thoughts: "Fishing is part of the Belizean DNA. It's a valued cultural tradition and an important source of food and income for many coastal communities, yet it remains a complex theme for journalists to cover. Effective fisheries communication and a strong, informed media is necessary to not only build awareness but also a more complete understanding of the importance and urgency of sustainable fisheries management by the public."

Oceana continues to work with the Belizean public to create awareness and to bring about change as it relates to Belize's fisheries sector.



See more pictures here! 🤇





Photo Credit: The San Pedro Sun

In an effort to eradicate the invasive species, Lionfish, Barrier Reef Sports Bar hosted its 4th annual Lionfish Derby. Oceana in Belize and their wavemakers, along with Frontier were invited to participate in the Derby on Saturday, March 23rd at Barrier Reef Sports Bar in Caye Caulker. Eight teams, including two teams from San Pedro town, competed in the Derby. The competition included 4 categories: the biggest Lionfish, the smallest Lionfish and the most Lionfish caught both scuba and free diving. At 6AM, the teams reported to the designated dock where their vessels and gear were inspected by Fisheries Department officials. The time limit set was until 3:00 pm the same day. **The 8 teams caught a total of 618 lionfish**.

The winners of the Lionfish derby were team Ketch Goma winning the "Biggest Lionfish", Team French Angel winning both "the smallest Lionfish" and "the most caught by free diving". Lastly, the team Amigo's del Mar won "Most caught by scuba diving" prize for the second year in a row. The Lionfish population continues to be a threat to our reef, but with events like the Lionfish Derby – we hope to continuously work toward minimizing numbers. On March 30th, Belizeans across the country celebrated Earth Hour. The one-hour event is now the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment, often inspiring millions of people to take action on issues regarding our planet and the role we all play in it's sustainability. Earth Hour is a global switch off done as a symbol of our commitment to the planet.

Climate Change Protest



On March 15th, students from Punta Gorda were striking for climate change. They joined the worldwide movement, #strikeforclimate, where millions of youths across the globe took the day off from school to protest about the state of the environment being left for them. The kids wanted to speak up about their environmental concerns and their parents assisted in making their voices heard.

13

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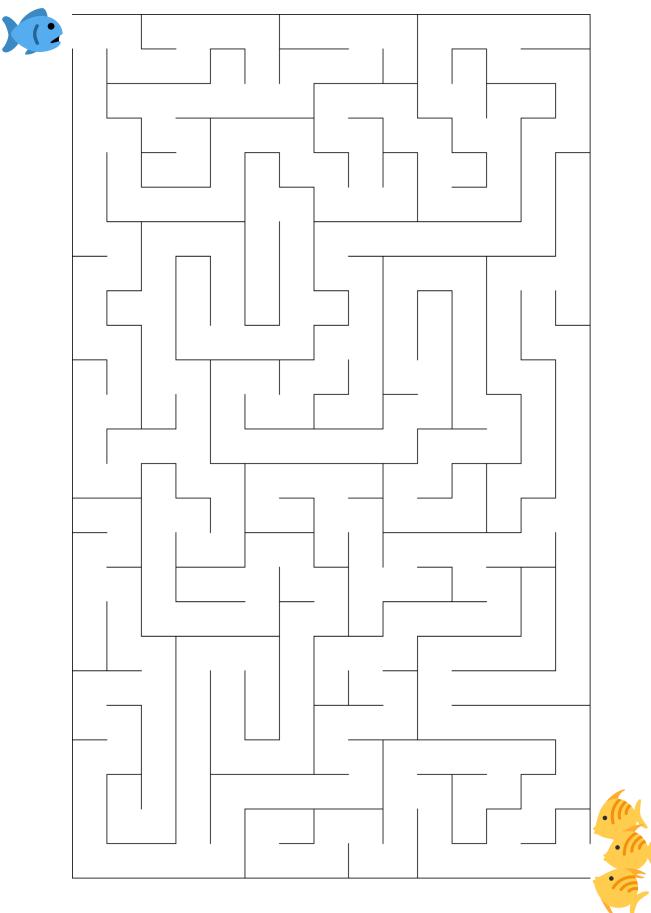
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Find the following words in the puzzle. Words are hidden $\rightarrow \psi$ and \checkmark .

BLUE HOLE BONEFISH DOLPHIN ENDANGERED GILLNET INVASIVE SPECIES LIONFISH LOGGERHEAD TURTLE MANATEES NASSAU GROUPER PEOPLES LAW PERMIT STINGRAY TRAWLING TURNEFFE ATOLL

Children's Corner

Can you get the fish safely to its friends?



16



100% Eco-friendly

Vendor Copal Tree Lodge Miss Debs **Location** Toledo Various

Biodegradable Food Containers

Vendor	Location
Riverside Tavern	Belize City
Ko-Ox Han Nah	Сауо
Mr. Thimbrel	Cayo (Belmopan Market)
Fansico	Cayo (Belmopan)
Formosa Cafe	Cayo (Belmopan)
Holiday Restaurant	Corozal
Cielo Restaurant at Tony's Inn & Beach Resort	Corozal
Chicken Express	Spanish Lookout
Tipsy Tuna	Stann Creek
Barefoot	Stann Creek
Cocoplum Resort	Stann Creek
Hamanasi Resort	Stann Creek



Eco-friendly Straws

Vendor	Location
Sleeping Giant Lodge	Сауо
Guava Limb Cafe	Сауо
San Ignacio Resort	Сауо
The Lodge at Jaguar Reef	Hopkins

Serves in Reusable Containers

Vendor	Location
Taiwanese Food Stall	Cayo (Belmopan Market)
Casa Cafe	Cayo (Belmopan)
Angels Rotisserie	Cayo (Belmopan)
A&K	Corozal
Marisqueria Pisces	Corozal
Nahil Mayab	Orange Walk

Transitioning to Biodegradable Products

Vendor Trey's Bar and Grill Tutti Frutti Asha's Culture Kitchen PG Stop Clock Walucos Rainbow Cafe Location Cayo (Georgeville) San Pedro Toledo Toledo Toledo Toledo



Businesses making green changes

Amigos del Mar Dive Shop Habet Gas Station Radisson Fort George Hotel and Le Petite Cafe M&M Hardware Chen's Superstore

Distributors

Vendor

Contact Information

Madisco	822-4071	belmopan@madisco.bz		
Eco-Friendly Solutions Ltd	222-5082/5083	ecoproject@yahoo.com		
Green World	223-5659/3635	citruschem@btl.net		
David Rhodes	610-4684	drhodes@aardvarkstraws.com		
LC Distributors	226-4883	lcdistribute@gmail.com		
DML Bamboo Straws	663-0082			
Inga Woods	604-4606			
NaturePlast Belize	610-3152			

Know any other vendors making changes to go green?

Send us an email at cwade@oceana.org!

What's Next?

Hands Across The Sand 2019

Oceana invites its supporters, Wavemakers, and the general public to participate in Hands Across the Sand on Saturday, May 18th 2019! Hands Across the Sand began in 2010 as a response to the BP oil spill and has grown into an international movement with events taking place simultaneously all over the globe. In Belize, Oceana field representatives organize events in various communities countrywide. This year, we want to hold hands in celebration of the leadership Belize has taken in legislating a moratorium on offshore oil activity! Be sure to come out and join hands with fellow Belizeans saying NO to dirty fuels and YES to clean energy!

Look out on our social media for more information!

Other Dates To Look Out For!

April 12th: Centro Escolar Mexico Junior College Open Day

May 24th-26th: Chocolate Festival

June 22nd-24th: San Pedro Lobster Fest Placencia Lobster Fest

June 30th-July 2nd: Caye Caulker Lobster Fest



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



The Government of Belize is accepting public submissions in relation to gillnets up to April 26th, 2019.

Individuals, companies and/or organizations are encouraged to complete the form and share any information as it relates to gillnets in the territorial waters of Belize.

Click here for access to the form $\sim 1 - 1$ and more information!

Wavemaker Spotlight



Mrs Charmagne Wesby- Ramirez, BTIA PG's Tourism Officer, is a very passionate individual who dedicates her time to finding ways to protect and preserve Belize's environment. This year Mrs Ramirez has been an active member in partnering and volunteering her assistance after hours with Oceana in Toledo. She has assisted on various community activities throughout the district. Her time and perseverance have not gone unnoticed - we appreciate you!

We look forward to working with you more in the future!











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