

OCEANA Protecting the World's Oceans

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BELIZE BANS GILLNETS

GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE PASSES HISTORIC LEGISLATION PROHIBITING
THE POSSESSION AND USE OF GILLNETS IN BELIZEAN WATERS.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR VP

JANELLE CHANONA



My fellow Belizeans,

I realize there's so many reasons to be sad and scared right now. I realize there's still no end in sight for the pandemic. But I also realize that amid everything 2020 has brought to all of us, we can still find nuggets of joy, reasons to hope and moments of love that brighten the darkness. My constant prayer is that somehow, hope, joy and love will find their way to you in this very different Christmas season.

Since I last spoke to you, there's been good news on the work front. On November 4th, Statutory Instrument 158 of 2020 was signed into law by the Minister of Fisheries. For resource strapped enforcement agencies, this turns a complicated process into a binary matter. No gillnets, no problem. Gillnet? Fines and penalties apply. This policy outcome is therefore realistic—because it's easy to enforce and strategic because it eliminates by-catch and stops illegal fishing activity.

“The ban on gillnets covers Belize's entire marine territory. This means that more than 36,000 square kilometers of the Caribbean Sea is now fully protected from gillnets, all forms of trawling and offshore oil activity.”

The ban on gillnets covers Belize's entire marine territory. This means that more than 36,000 square kilometers of the Caribbean Sea is now fully protected from gillnets, all forms of trawling and offshore oil activity. Through your unwavering support, that of the Oceana board and our incredible donors to a financial support package, the legal, Belizean fishers declared beneficiaries by the Government of Belize have received two of a total of 24 payments to facilitate their transition away from gillnets.

Following elections in November, we have already begun conversations with Belize's new Prime Minister, Hon. John Briceno as well as key members of his Cabinet including the Minister of Natural Resources and Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Cordel Hyde, the Minister of Environment Hon. Orlando Habet and Minister of Blue Economy, Hon. Andre Perez and their respective teams to apprise them of the work completed to date. We are also highlighting that this new administration can solidify key milestones such as making the ban on offshore oil **permanent**. And most importantly, we are emphasizing that organizations like Oceana are keen to work with the Government of Belize to create a vibrant, abundant Caribbean Sea, for the benefit of all Belizeans.

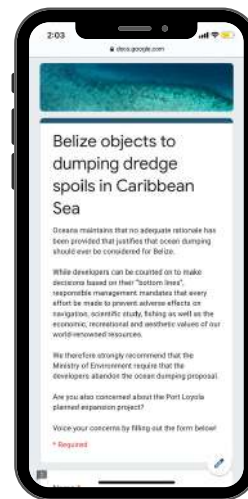
A MESSAGE FROM OUR VP

JANELLE CHANONA



These initial conversations have had to include discussions regarding a developer's proposal to dump dredge spoils into the Caribbean Sea between the Belize Barrier Reef and the Turneffe Atoll. Oceana and several other organizations continue to maintain that ocean dumping should never be considered for Belize, given the inevitable negative impact of that material to the marine environment and key economic drivers such as tourism and fishing. When the mathematicians crunched the numbers, they determined that 5 million cubic meters of dredge spoils were equivalent to 200,000 school buses; the length and width of Caye Caulker at a foot high; and those spoils would fill approximately half of Great Blue Hole if poured inside. And that's the minimum amount the developer would dump. We've collectively asked for this project to be rejected so long as ocean dumping is a part of the plan.

The Government has told us the project is on pause. Based on previous experience, we know that your voice counts! If you haven't already, please join the conversation. **While dumping the dredge spoils at sea would save the developer money, the true cost of the damage to the environment would be to the rest of us.** The covid-19 pandemic has forced us to do a lot of reflection, to appreciate what truly brings value to our lives. What was once esoteric, is now an existential truth: the health and integrity of our natural world makes our lives possible.



[JOIN THE CONVERSATION](#)

[**CLICK HERE**](#)

The new year brings the promise that by continuing to work together, we will not only survive all the challenges ahead, we will thrive well past them.

With love from our homes to yours,
Janelle

BELIZE BANS GILLNETS

On November 5th, in a landmark step to protect livelihoods and strengthen marine conservation, the Government of Belize passed the Statutory Instrument 158 of 2020 titled Fisheries Resources (Gill Net Prohibition) Regulations 2020, banning the possession and use of gillnets in Belize's marine territorial seas, Exclusive Economic Zone and internal waters. This legislative step thus, renders all gillnet licenses invalid.

This decision and action have been welcomed by Oceana, Belizean fishers, and NGO partners as a momentous step to protect invaluable marine environments and safeguard the livelihoods of tens of thousands Belizeans. With the enactment of this Statutory Instrument, Belize becomes one of the first countries in the world to put an end to gillnet fishing in its territorial waters.

The Statutory Instrument was preceded by a government announced moratorium on the issuance of gillnet licenses in 2019, and a collaborative agreement between the Government of Belize, the Coalition for Sustainable Fisheries and Oceana, to render support to gillnet fishers to transition to alternative income-generating opportunities and to support the voluntary surrender of gillnets.

Collectively, the Coalition for Sustainable Fisheries and Oceana have fundraised BZ\$2 million dollars to support eligible gillnet users to transition away from the gear to alternative means of income generation as well as by providing direct financial support during that process. With a successful transition program in place, those gillnet fishers licensed in 2018 who met eligibility for the livelihoods transition program and agreed to surrender their gillnets, are being transitioned away from this destructive form of fishing. The implementation of the transition program is being overseen by an oversight committee appointed by the Minister of Fisheries, comprising Government, the Coalition and Oceana.


Oceana wholeheartedly congratulates the Government and people of Belize on this historic policy change. Our commitment to the longevity and success of the ban is unwavering. Our efforts moving forward will therefore include enforcement to address the daily and rampant scourge of illegal fishing. "Today is a very good day. Destructive gillnets are banned, and Belizean fishers will be supported during their transition away from this gear. Based on those facts, we believe any future administration will have a hard time proving to Belizeans that repealing the gillnet ban would be in our collective best interest", stated Janelle Chanona, Vice President.

Oceana continues to work to ensure that Belizeans will be able depend on a bountiful and beautiful Caribbean Sea for generations to come.

Belize tackles a triple threat

—

Oceana and its allies successfully fought to ban bottom trawling and offshore drilling in Belize. Now, harmful gillnets are being blown out of the water, too.

A photograph of a fisherman on a boat, with another fisherman in the background. The scene is set on the coast of Belize's Tobacco Caye. The fisherman in the foreground is holding a line, and the background shows the ocean and another fisherman working. The overall tone is teal and green.

Local fishers drop a line off the coast of Belize's Tobacco Caye. Most Belizean fishers use sustainable fishing methods like line fishing, but a small number of gillnets have continued to plague local marine life and habitats - until now.

Feature

For a country that's slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Massachusetts, Belize boasts an inordinate number of ocean wonders. It's home to the world's second longest barrier reef, which Charles Darwin once described as "the most remarkable reef in the West Indies." Here, you'll find more than 500 unique fish species – enough to give every Belizean island its own mascot and still have about 50 left over.

Because this little Caribbean country has a lot worth protecting, it has enacted some of the strongest ocean conservation laws in the world – and they just got even stronger. Following hard-fought victories that banned all trawling and offshore oil drilling in Belize's waters, the country has now outlawed gillnets, a fishing gear that kills turtles, manatees, and many other marine animals.

In addition to implementing a nationwide gillnet ban, the Belizean government signed an agreement

with Oceana and the Coalition for Sustainable Fisheries to help licensed gillnet fishers transition to other jobs.

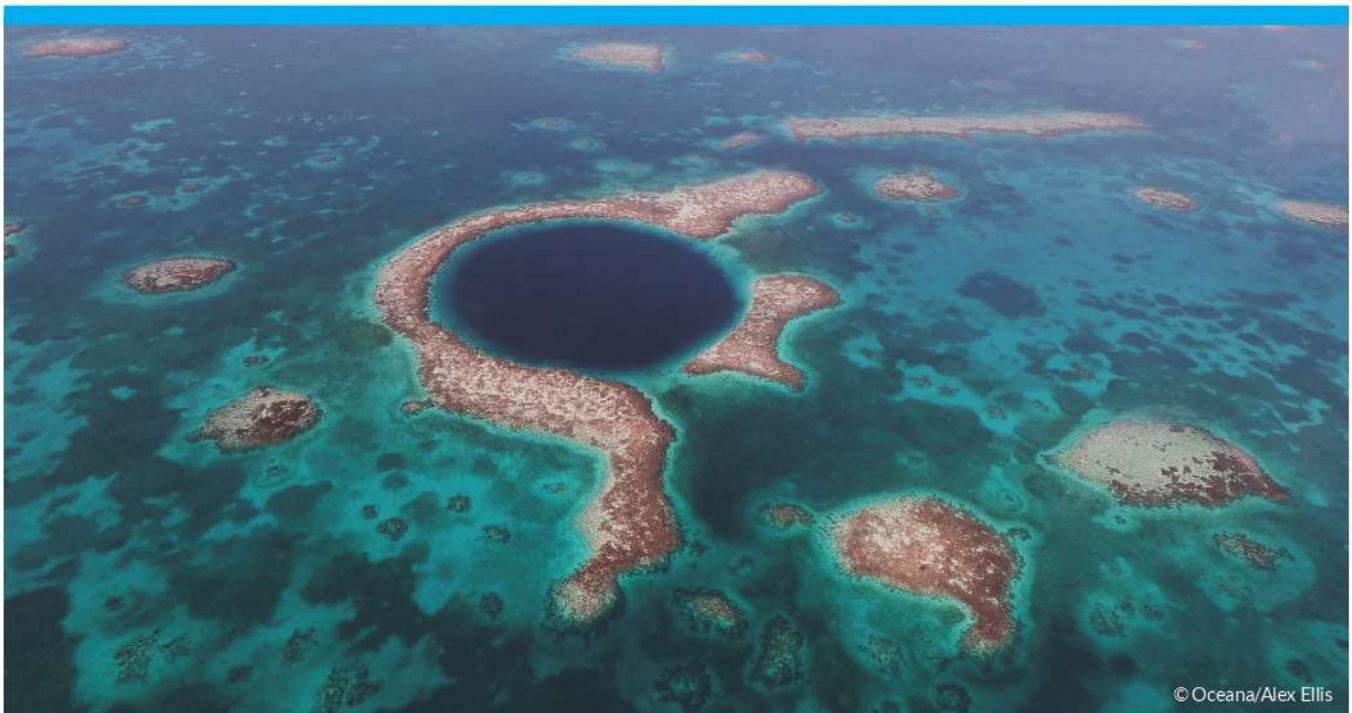
As a result, Belizean waters will be protected well into the future.

In the words of Janelle Chanona, Oceana's head in Belize, "This is a historic moment for Belize, her people, the Caribbean Sea and, most importantly, for everyone who depends on the country's marine resources for their livelihoods."



A landing site and fish market is photographed in Dangriga, a town in southern Belize. Fisheries accounted for 3% of Belize's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015.

© Oceana/Alex Ellis



© Oceana/Alex Ellis

Belize's Great Blue Hole, a massive marine sinkhole and World Heritage Site, is one of the many remarkable features that benefits from stronger ocean protections.



© Jenna Godfrey

Lowell "Japs" Godfrey is a leading expert on seaweed farming in Belize. He has worked hard to protect marine ecosystems, and in recognition of his tireless efforts, he received an Ocean Hero Award from Oceana in October 2020.

Walls of death

To say that gillnets harm marine life would be putting it delicately. The reality is far grislier. Nicknamed "walls of death," these nets, which can measure a mile long when linked together, are indiscriminate in what they catch. They're designed to snag fish by their opercula – the plate that protects their gills, also known as a gill cover – but they also trap non-targeted animals. (For more on how they work, read Dr. Daniel Pauly's column on page 26). Once ensnared, an animal might suffocate to death because they can no longer push air through their gills, or because they cannot resurface to breathe.

Many of these dead animals are chucked back into the ocean because they can't be sold for profit. In Belizean waters, protected species like bonefish, tarpon, and manatees – and at least one species

of endangered shark – have fallen victim to gillnets. In 2015, a rarely seen scalloped hammerhead got tangled up in a gillnet and drowned, making local headlines and sparking outrage. Gillnets have also ensnared critically endangered sawfish, a unique ray with a long snout and sawlike teeth that is said to be locally extinct.

For Lowell "Japs" Godfrey, a former gillnetter in Belize, the carnage and wastefulness were too much

to bear. He handed over his net more than a decade ago and never looked back, instead switching to sustainable seaweed farming.

"With gillnets we have a lot of stuff that we just dump because we kill it, and we don't use it," Godfrey said. "That is one of the things that caused me to back off [from using gillnets]. I use [my vocation] not only to earn money, but to educate myself about the marine environment." ▶

“With gillnets we have a lot of stuff that we just dump because we kill it, and we don't use it. That is one of the things that caused me to back off [from using gillnets].”

Lowell "Japs" Godfrey, former gillnetter

'Gear of choice' for illegal fishers

Godfrey's career change was part of a larger trend. Gillnetting has fallen out of favor, and nowadays, fewer than 100 licensed gillnetters remain in Belize. In fact, less than 3% of commercial fishers in Belize use gillnets, and some Belizean fishers have been backing a gillnet ban for more than 20 years.

The problem persists, in large part, because gillnetting is the "gear of choice" for illegal fishers, according to Chanona. Many gillnetters are coming from neighboring countries and fishing illegally in Belizean waters, then swinging by other countries' ports to sell their catch. Doing so depletes Belize's ocean and deprives local fishers and tourism workers of income that hinges on abundant oceans.

"COVID has reminded us that fishing-based income is more important than ever to protect," Chanona said. "Foreign gillnetters come to their favorite fishing spot in Belize, then take all their marine products to ports in Guatemala and Honduras. Even though they are fishing in Belizean waters, none of the fruit of that labor comes through the legal economy here in Belize. Belizeans will have nowhere to fish if everything is depleted by destructive fishing practices."

Illegal gillnetters are believed to target sharks, which are not widely eaten in Belize but are in considerable demand in Guatemala and Honduras, especially during the Catholic Lenten season when observers abstain from eating land-based animals. They are also believed to fish in marine reserves. Because these products are not processed at Belizean ports, there's no record of what's been removed from the ocean, potentially putting some species at risk of overfishing.



Gillnets are pictured in a boat in Belize's Riversdale village. Gillnets can be destructive even when they're lost or forgotten in the water because they continue to catch animals. This phenomenon is known as "ghost fishing."

“ Foreign gillnetters come to their favorite fishing spot in Belize, then take all their marine products to ports in Guatemala and Honduras. Even though they are fishing in Belizean waters, none of the fruit of that labor comes through the legal economy here in Belize. ”

Janelle Chanona, Oceana's head in Belize

Playing by new rules

Under a Belizean law passed last year, all commercially licensed fishers must meet new requirements: They must be Belizean citizens who have lived in Belize for the last six months, and they must sell their products exclusively in Belize. Gillnetters who held licenses in 2018 must also meet these requirements to qualify for funding that would help them transition to another field of work.

Now that a ban is enacted, gillnet fishing in Belize's maritime territory,

including its Exclusive Economic Zone, is illegal and subject to penalties and fines. If anyone participating in the transition program is convicted of illegal fisheries activities, the financial support would be rescinded immediately.

But before these transitions occur, a panel of representatives from the government, Oceana, and the Coalition for Sustainable Fisheries must vet everyone who held a gillnet license in 2018. Tracking them down, however, may take a bit of detective work.

Charting a new course

Fortunately for the legally licensed fillnetters who will be swapping out their old careers for new ones, they won't be complete guinea pigs, nor will they be going it alone. Many Belizean fishers have already given up their gillnets - voluntarily - to protect the home that they love. Lowell Godfrey's road to success is a paved in seaweed, but many former gillnetters have also become fishing guides.

Tourism has become one of Belize's most lucrative - and popular - industries, but the Coalition for Sustainable Fisheries plans to make a couple different career paths available to gillnetters. The Coalition, which is leading the retraining and transition process, is developing one training program for tourism and another for shrimp fishing. The latter would teach fishers how to use small traps - a far cry from the harmful trawls that industrial fishers use (the likes of which have been banned in Belize).

When all is said and done, fishers will have new vocations that not only provide income, but also instill pride and maintain their dignity as providers for their households, Chanona said. As stewards of Belize's ocean, they will be doing their part to protect and preserve it for future generations.

"This is as much a victory for Belize as it is a testament to the perseverance of the local fishers who have overwhelmingly opposed this destructive fishing gear for decades," Chanona said. **"Every law, policy, or regulation that protects Belize's marine resources is a win for the tens of thousands of Belizeans who depend on those resources for their food, their jobs, and their way of life."**



Oceana Wavemakers in Belize banded together to protest offshore oil exploration. In 2017, Belize became the first country in the world to completely ban offshore oil and gas development.

**Note: This article was written prior to the November legislation officially banning the use of gillnets in Belizean waters.*

All eligible fishers have been identified.

OCEAN HERO AWARDS 2020



On Wednesday, October 14th, Oceana formally recognized two outstanding Belizeans as the 2020 Ocean Heroes during its first ever virtual award ceremony. This year's winners are Placencia fisher turned seaweed farmer, Lowell Godfrey and Punta Gorda fisher and businessman, Neville Smith.

Lowell 'Japs' Godfrey was born and raised in the popular Southern village of Placencia, where he has been fishing for over forty years. Once a traditional commercial fisherman, Godfrey is now one of the pioneers of seaweed farming in Belize. During his decades as a commercial fisher, he has witnessed first hand the decline in fishery stock over the years as well as the destructive nature of gillnets, a realization that prompted his transition to seaweed farming. Now, over ten years later, as the Chairman of the Placencia Producers Cooperative, Godfrey has propelled the seaweed farming industry to the forefront of Belize's marine conservation initiatives. A globally recognized trainer for seaweed mariculture in Belize, Japs continues to educate himself and others on best marine practices, as he lives doing what he loves while protecting Belize's natural resources.

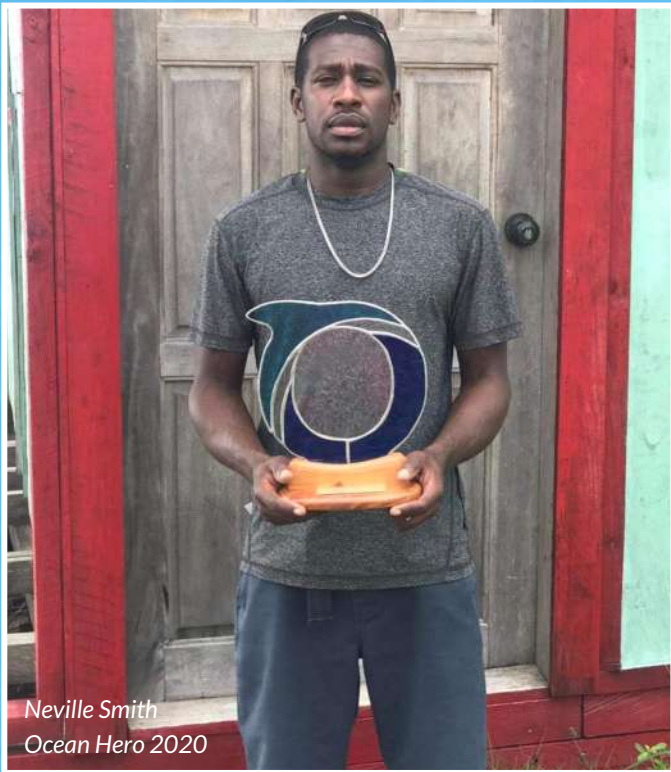


Lowell 'Japs' Godfrey
Ocean Hero 2020

"An Ocean Hero to me is someone that is out there in the marine environment, [who] takes care of it, [who] educates people about it. [They go] about physically, trying to make a difference in how you approach or address problems facing the ocean.", shared Godfrey.

Lowell Godfrey's daughter, Joelle Godfrey, presented his award on Oceana's behalf.

To see Lowell Godfrey's Ocean Hero video, click [here](#).



Neville Smith
Ocean Hero 2020

Born and bred in Southern Belize, Neville Smith's journey as a lover of the sea, began when he was only nine years old. Growing up between Dangriga and Punta Gorda, Neville inevitably found himself in the world of commercial fishing. A fisher for over twenty years, Smith has also worked as a tour guide for more than fifteen of those years. Now firmly rooted in Punta Gorda, Smith hosts educational trips for youths, teaching many of them to swim, and all of them to appreciate and value Belize's bountiful marine resources. During each trip he takes out, whether it is an educational trip or a tour, he also always has a beach cleanup. Neville continues to host countless cleanup campaigns throughout Punta Gorda and he continues to work within his community to ensure that others will be able to experience the beauty and bounty of the Caribbean Sea he grew up exploring and

Smith shared, *"I want [the kids] to see and to feel what I felt even before now. You went out, the ocean was lively, you see fish, you see turtles, you see dolphins, porpoises – you see everything. There is never a dull day on the ocean."*

To see Neville Smith's Ocean Hero video, [click here](#).

The Oceana Ocean Hero Awards began in 2009. Past award recipients are Lionel "Chocolate" Heredia, Dr. Melanie McField, former Fisheries Minister Rene Montero, Lisa Carne, Jamal Galves, Miguel Alamilla, Captain Romauldo Badillo Sr., Janet Gibson, Wil Maheia, Luz Hunter, Madison Edwards, Michael Heusner, Captain Earl David Jr, Guadalupe Lampella and Dale Fairweather.

During the virtual presentation of awards to both honorees, Oceana's Vice President, Janelle Chanona, stated *"Every day courage has few witnesses. But theirs are no less noble because no drum beats and no crowds shout the names of unsung heroes. That's a play on something written by author Robert Louis Stevenson. I repeat it now because that's what this event means to the Oceana Belize team—a chance to beat the drum and shout the names of the ordinary men and women who are doing extraordinary work that benefits all Belizeans. They do it quietly, often at great personal cost and they do it with their whole heart. Tonight we are proud to recognize two more Belizeans as Ocean Heroes. The quality of the nominations always makes the choices extremely difficult. The work of this year's awardees have national impact, safeguard marine resources and ensure generational legacy."*

The stained-glass awards were made by local artist, Leisa Carr-Caceres of [Belizean Craft and Colors](#).



OCEAN HERO
AWARDS 2020

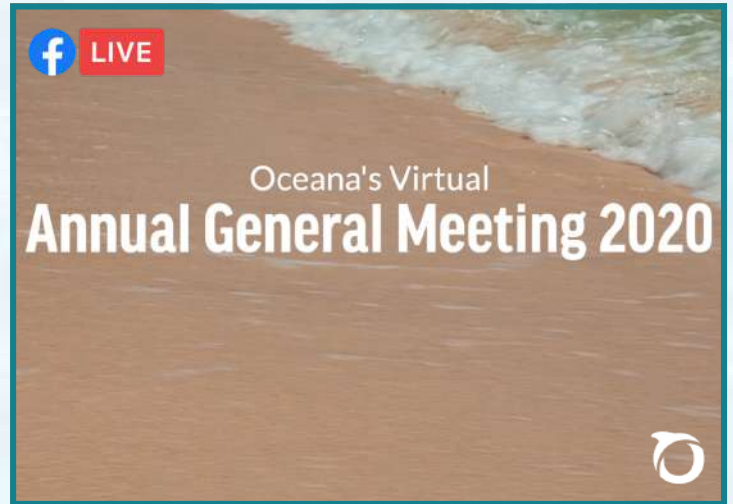


ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

On Saturday, October 24th, supporters around the world tuned in as Oceana hosted its first virtual Annual General Meeting for its dedicated supporters, or 'Wavemakers', on Facebook live.

During the AGM, several Wavemakers were awarded certificates of appreciation for their sensational support for Oceana's campaigns and initiatives over the past year. The awardees included the Rotaract Club of Corozal; the SCA Wavemaker Club from Belize; Kanish Cocom from

Cayo; Ishmael Garbutt from Stann Creen and Marvin Vasquez from Toledo. Oceana was also proud to recognize Carina Paz as 2020's National Wavemaker of the year.

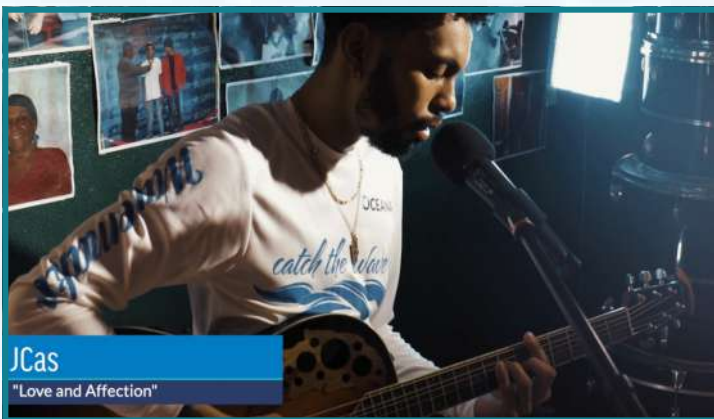


Carina Paz grew up in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, finding her love for marine protection and education at an early age. In the past, she has organized and hosted two marine exhibitions aimed to raise awareness among young students about marine creatures. She has spearheaded numerous cleanup campaigns on the island as well as tree planting events in commemoration of Earth Day, World Environment Day, and Reef Week. She also served as the youth ambassador and lecturer at Green Reef Summer camps for the years 2013-2015. Carina has also broken records as the youngest swimmer to complete "Swim to the Reef" event, geared towards raising awareness of Hol Chan Marine Reserve and reef conservation. In her role as the Vice President of the SCA Wavemaker club, she has led the charge in advocating against plastic usage on campus. Through her passion and love for the sea and marine life, she has empowered others to work alongside her as she continues to advocate for marine conservation.

Keynote speaker, **Celishia Guy**, is an advocate for marine conservation in her research and field work with the Clearwater Marine Aquarium. During her presentation, she spoke about the ocean's significance in our everyday lives and the very real threats that marine health faces, including climate change, plastic pollution, illegal fishing, and overfishing. Moreover, she express how important it is that we take decisive action to mitigate these threats in order to safeguard our natural resources.



Entertainment was provided by local musician, **JCas**, and local comedian, **Kris**, of Just Kidding Entertainment.



Oceana Belize is fortunate to have a tight-knit community of Wavemakers that assist in our campaign efforts countrywide. Belizean Wavemakers are part of the more than a million Oceana members that support the protection and restoration of the world's oceans.



The National Wavemaker award was made by local artist, **Aesha Garel** of Zest Handcrafted.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

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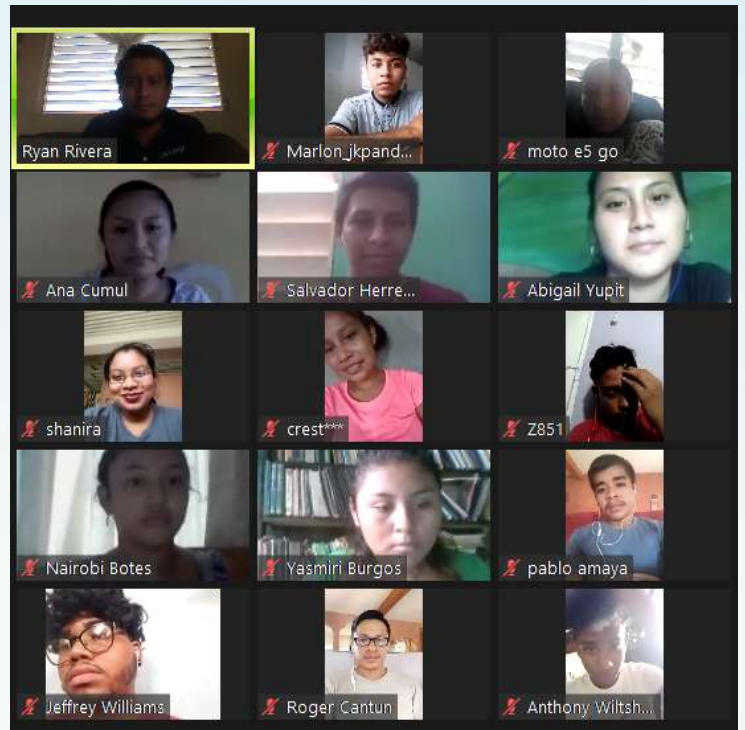


COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Presentations

Oceana continued to host remote presentations via Zoom in the various districts. In the north, we hosted presentations to over sixty students in the Centro Escolar Mexico Junior College. We also led online presentations to over eighty students at La Inmaculada RC School, over sixty students of the Corozal Junior College Biology class, forty-two students from the Corozal Community College Biology and ACE class, as well as with twelve of the Corozal Junior College Peer Helpers.



In the Belize district, we partnered with Jamal Galves of Clearwater Marine Aquarium to host a presentation on the state of Manatee populations in Belize, where he spoke to students about number of manatee deaths per year and what can be done to safeguard these gentle giants. We also presented to over 40 students at St. Joseph Primary School, during this presentation, they learnt more about Oceana's gillnet campaign. We were encouraged by the rush and excitement of the students to participate in the discussion.

Lastly, in the south, Oceana hosted two presentations to students from Independence High School, class of 3 Tourism and class of 3 Arts Business, each with 21 students. These were general presentations to teach students about Oceana and raise awareness about our campaigns and the need to protect Belize's marine environment.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Collaborations

Oceana also continues to find ways to collaborate and partner with organizations as we all work to adjust to the new normal. Through these collaborations, we have been able to give back to various communities during these difficult financial times. Oceana once again partnered with Rotaract to support their food drive initiative which benefitted families in the fishing communities of Sarteneja and Copperbank as well as flood victims in the Cayo District, mainly San Ignacio, Bullet Tree and surrounding areas.



Cleanups

Cleanups spearheaded by volunteers such as Ms. Nathalya Marin, Ms. Lianne Hoare and Gival Marin, were led in Corozal. The team ensured that all COVID-19 regulations were followed. Cleanups were also done in Belize City as Wavemakers cleaned around their neighborhoods and Marine Parade. They were assisted by the Cleanswell App, which allows users to record details of trash collected. The data is then accessible via Ocean Conservancy's website, Tides. A virtual training was hosted to advise volunteers on how to use this mobile application.

Our team thanks all Wavemakers and partners for their unwavering support during this challenging year and we look forward to seeing you in 2021!

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BELIZE'S FISHING INDUSTRY

Written by: Andrea Polanco



It has been six months since the COVID-19 pandemic has grounded Belize's tourism, which has resulted in a sharp decline in economic activity. And while it may be the industry that has taken the hardest hit for Belize, the two thousand seven hundred plus licensed commercial fisherfolk will remind you that their bread and butter, too, has suffered a massive blow. The demand for seafood has dwindled on the local and international markets which means less money in the fisherman's pockets and a dent in the country's revenues earned through fisheries exports.

HOW IS COVID-19 AFFECTING FISHERIES?

Belize's Lobster Season opened on June fifteenth but, much to the fisherfolks' dismay, the prices for lobster tails and whole lobsters were down significantly compared to 2019. Fishermen were offered a first payment of twelve dollars and a second payment at a later date, because of the unstable international market.

Fisherman William Johnson has been operating in Turneffe for the past forty years – this price, he says, is one of the worse he has received for harvesting lobsters. *"The price has dropped so much that I am simply not making the finance I used to make when the lobster was working and the fishing was good. It's one of the worse I have experienced and it is all because of COVID-19."*

The drop in demand for seafood on the international market has resulted in a sharp decline in prices for fishers. Lobster tails go for ten and twelve dollars to cooperatives for the export market. That price, according to fishers, is two and a half times less than last year's price.

As a result, Sarteneja-Caye Caulker fisherman, Eduardo Arceo, called for a fixed price for lobster, *"I believe that it is going to cripple the local economy. Why can't they standardize the price of the seafood industry? Why do the fishermen have to go out there for twelve dollars a pound? You need to catch three lobsters to get one pound. And that is the reality."*

But fishermen are also struggling to sell their products on the local market because of the closure of hotels and restaurants. And the joblessness and salary cuts have forced many consumers to decide between one pound of fresh fish for eight dollars or pre-packaged frozen chicken for half that price. And as Johnson discovered, fish often can't compete with the most affordable protein on the market.

"It is kinda tough for me to sell my fish because most of the people can't afford to buy for what we are selling it for. So, we gotta reduce the price to sell. We also have to cut down the amount of products that we bring in because if we bring too much, we can't sell it. Sometimes, we have to give away some of it to the people who want fish but can't afford to buy."

HOW ARE FISHERFOLK RESPONDING?

Fisherfolk are scaling back on fishing activities to reduce their catch, while others are slashing prices to sell on the local market. Others are also seeking alternative livelihoods to supplement their income and provide for their families.

For the first time in forty years, fisherman Johnson is seeking to diversify by turning to seaweed farming. *"I am thinking of going into this seaweed farming to help me out with my lobstering [sic] because the first lobster season is not good and now with the pandemic, I need to do something else."*

And Johnson's partner agrees with him. Fisherwoman Jessica Gibson has only been fishing for the past couple years but she also recognizes that the fishing industry was already troubled before the pandemic dealt its blow. *"It wah come in on the side because we do fishing and diving and sometimes the fishing and diving don't work out because there are a lot of fishers competing for these resources so sometimes it doesn't pay off and so the seaweed that we do on the side will give us extra to help us on the side."*

And containment restrictions and access to local markets have created other challenges for fisherfolk. Fisherman Jason Young describes how his livelihood has been crippled as a result, *"It has been rough. Really, really rough. No source of income. Everything just locked down. No movements. [I was] stuck on the island for a month. It is really rough. We deh from hand to mouth .We are taking it one day at a time - all we can do."*

But months later and nothing has changed and Chairman of the National Fishermen Cooperative Elmer Rodriguez says that's because it is out of their control. He points out that it is the demand in the U.S.A that determines the price. *"The prices on the foreign market are not the same. It has drastically dropped everything by about forty to forty-five percent when compared to last year."*



OUTLOOKS FOR LIVELIHOODS & RECOVERY

Because the situation is fluid, it is not certain when the sector will recover and at what rate it will do so after the pandemic.

Rodriguez says that they may even be forced to make workers redundant in the longer run if the world market price plummets further. He likened the current state to the economic crisis of the early 2000s. He says it took years for the market to recover - he fears the pandemic has the potential to do the same. "We experienced something like this in 2005-2006, when the US economy contracted. It will take time for world market to recover - I would say it took years to recover the last time and with COVID-19 it will take some time, too."

If the pandemic persists and the economic fallout continues, some fisherfolk may not be able to afford to earn a living through fishing. Currently, fisherfolk are experiencing hard times and many are struggling to support their households. And because the sector provides employment for vulnerable groups, it is not far-fetched that these challenges can give rise to secondary impacts of COVID-19, including poverty and hunger.

IS THERE ANY CONSEQUENCE FOR MANAGEMENT?

With the collapse of the tourism industry and slowdown of the global economy, most marine protected areas lost their biggest revenue stream which has forced them to cut costs. The Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations calculates a loss of one point three million dollars with a projection of two point four million in financial loss through the end of the year.

And managers of these protected areas are concerned these revenue losses will result in scale down of monitoring and enforcement which will see illegal fishers and other nefarious operatives capitalizing on the situation to engage in illicit activities.

Valdemar Andrade, the Executive Director of the Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association, shares the TASA experience, "We toned down a lot. For us, when we calculated the loss it was tremendous. At the start of the pandemic, we were minus seven hundred and fifty-thousand dollars and we gradually worked with partners and have it down to four hundred and seventy-thousand right now."

Jose Perez, Executive Director, and Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations points out the serious consequence this can have, "if we

should not recover, the situation could be dire; the many gains that have been achieved over the years when it comes to biodiversity protection and conservation and the safeguarding of our ecosystems will be very exposed. So, imagine how much that will affect operations; not just for the conservation work that needs to be done but also very importantly for the surveillance and enforcement."

In a matter of weeks, the local commercial fishing hit rough seas because of COVID-19.

And with the global slowdown of the commercial fishing industry, it's bad news for anyone who makes a living from the sea, however fishermen will feel the brunt of the economic impact. Despite the hardships this pandemic creates for the industry, it must also serve as an opportunity to demonstrate that fisherfolk must diversify their livelihoods and that there are more sustainable ways to manage these natural resources post-COVID-19. But, as a shared resource, it also highlights the need for additional interventions that can champion support needed to shape the economic recovery, as well as the sustainable future for fishing in Belize.

Fisheries Regulations

Fishing Allowed Under Special Regulation

	SPECIE	WEIGHT LIMIT	LENGTH	CLOSED SEASON
	LOBSTER	4oz Tail Weight	3 inches Carapace Length	Feb 15 - June 14
	CONCH	3oz - Market Clean 2.75oz - Fillet	7 inches Shell Length	Jul 1 - Sept 30
	NASSAU GROUPE		Less than 20 inches More than 30 inches	Dec 1 - March 31
	WHELK		2.4 inches or 62mm	Oct 1 - Jan 1

OTHER:

Lobster - No person shall have in possession *diced tail meat, berried/egg lobster*, lobster with tar spot or moulting or soft-shelled lobster.

Conch - No fisherman shall buy, sell or have in his possession diced conch

Nassau Groupers are to be landed whole

Whelk - Provided that a person is in possession of a whelk fishing license.



PROHIBITED Species ILLEGAL TO HAVE IN YOUR POSSESSION.



CORAL ALL species of soft coral and hard coral except Black Coral, which may only be sold, bought and exported under a special license from the Fisheries Administrator.



BONEFISH, TARPON AND PERMIT Catch & Release ONLY



RAYS ALL SPECIES of superorder Batoidea.



PARROT FISH ALL species in the Family Scaridae.



NURSE SHARKS, WHALE SHARKS AND SAW FISH



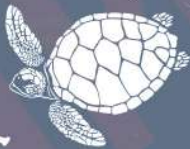
TRIGGER FISH



SURGEON FISH



ANGEL FISH



MARINE TURTLES



SEAHORSES



SEA STARS



DOLPHINS including Bottle Nose, Atlantic Spotted , Rough-Toothed and Spinner



MANATEE

ALL OTHER SPECIES OF MARINE MAMMALS
(including Migratory species)



PAN FRIED FISH WITH CILANTRO KEY LIME BUTTER



by Chef Jennie Staines

Ingredients

- 4 pieces of lionfish or snapper fillet
- Flour
- 4 tbsp butter
- 2 limes (juiced and zested)
- 1/2 tbsp cilantro
- 1/2 tbsp parsley
- Salt (to taste)
- Black pepper (to taste)

Directions

1. Lightly sprinkle fish fillets with salt and black pepper.
2. Dust fillets with a light layer of flour.
3. Place skillet over medium heat and add 2 tablespoons of butter.
4. Once the butter has melted, brown the pieces of fish fillet until golden brown (about 2 minutes on each side).
5. Remove fish from skillet and place on a heated platter.
6. In the same skillet, add the remaining 2 tablespoons butter.
7. Add lime juice, cilantro, parsley, and lime zest and mix.
8. When the butter has melted fully, pour over the cooked fish fillet.

REMEMBERING DR. CANDY GONZALEZ



On May 25th 2020, the Oceana in Belize Family tearfully acknowledged the passing of fierce environmental advocate Dr. Candy Gonzalez. In 2011, the Belize Institute of Environmental Law and Policy (BELPO) and Oceana founded the Belize Coalition to Save Our Natural Heritage, an alliance of many organizations and several individuals that continues to work to safeguard our precious marine environment and protected areas for the benefit of all Belizeans – present and future—from the inherent dangers of the oil industry as well as other overarching threats.

Our team fondly remembers our road trips with Candy as we travelled across the country to consult with Belizeans on the anti-offshore oil campaign. Candy shared her harrowing experiences on the front lines of the civil rights movement in the United States with us. Such context depicts why Candy was never shy about sharing exactly how she felt about whatever situation was in front of her.

While the list of Candy’s legacy of contributions to Belize are long, to us, one of the key documents that stand out is [the Guide to Public Participation](#) which BELPO produced and had translated into several different languages. This document outlines, in a user-friendly manner, the step by step ways Belizeans can involve themselves in policy making. The importance of Belizeans being meaningfully involved in every aspect of decision making of our precious marine and terrestrial resources cannot be overstated.

Our thoughts continue to be with her husband George as well as the rest of her family and circle of friends.

Candy fought the good fight, She finished the race, She kept the faith. May her soul rest in peace and rise in glory.



"Candy added greatly to the strength and camaraderie of our Belize conservation group with her tremendous intelligence, shrewdness, and all-encompassing personality. She had immense care and concern for the environment and worked tirelessly to advocate for positive policy changes in Belize. Her light has dimmed but her legacy lives on. We will continue to hold the torch high and make her proud. Candy will forever be missed. Rest in peace, sweet soul."

– Nadia Bood, WWF

"Dr. Candy Gonzalez will be remembered as a lioness with a great heart who was motivated by her principles towards the conservation of our natural resources. Her smile and sense of humor will be remembered fondly. I will treasure all the memories of the work we conducted as members of the Coalition to Save Our Natural Heritage.

We will celebrate all the successes and accomplishments in her honor. Rest in peace and your legacy leaves on."

– John Burgos, BTIA

GREEN VENDOR REGISTRY

We are excited to see all the green alternatives businesses and restaurants have started integrating into their everyday operations.

Haven't signed up as yet?

Click here to register!



Registered
Vendors



THE 8R CHALLENGE



RETHINK *your choices*



REFUSE *single use*



REDUCE *consumption*



REUSE *everything*



REFURBISH *old stuff*



REPAIR *before you replace*



REPURPOSE *used items*



RECYCLE *as your last option!*

MARINE LIFE WORD SEARCH

W F P H C P E A C O C K F L O U N D E R E H N
W R N K B L A C K D U R G O N O P R A T G U U
H E H N Q T C K R E P U O R G U A S S A N F R
S N T R I G G E R F I S H K G J N G S R M E S
U C W F O Y G J R E T S B O L Y N I P S R S E
A H S J B T X C K C A J E Y E E S R O H H E S
D A E S O U T H E R N S T I N G R A Y D M A H
U N K U D Q X P H S I F L E R R I U Q S K H A
C G K R A H S F E E R N A E B B I R A C X O R
A E G B H F S P O T T E D E A G L E R A Y R K
R L S U P O T C O H C N O C N E E U Q X O S S
R F H S I F G O H G N A T E U L B R K W Y E D
A I A J Q S L R E P P A N S D E R G B T F Q Y
B S Z I C Q G E S S A R W D A E H W O L L E Y
Z H R A I N B O W P A R R O T F I S H Y A E V
G L E L T R U T L L I B S K W A H L Q M W N Q

FIND THE FOLLOWING WORDS IN THE PUZZLE:

BARRACUDA

BLACK DURGON

BLUE TANG

CARIBBEAN REEF SHARK

FRENCH ANGELFISH

HAWKSBILL TURTLE

HOGFISH

HORSE-EYE JACK

NASSAU GROUPER

NURSE SHARK

OCTOPUS

PEACOCK FLOUNDER

QUEEN CONCH

RAINBOW PARROTFISH

RED SNAPPER

SEAHORSE

SOUTHERN STING RAY

SPINY LOBSTER

SPOTTED EAGLE RAY

SQUIRRELFISH

TARPON

TRIGGERFISH

YELLOWHEAD WRASSE

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

A WAVEMAKER'S OPEN AND HONEST STORY OF THEIR COVID-19 EXPERIENCE

Saturday in my family, is our 'shopping' day. It's when we go pick up groceries and purchase odds and ends, if we need them. Thankfully we can pay bills online which we do, but we still have to run out for groceries every now and again. My partner and I normally tackle these errands together with a clear strategy in mind. This particular Saturday though, I had to go on my own. My partner was feeling tired and said he felt a little cold, even though the sun was shining. He was good otherwise, so we didn't think twice about it.

I felt good, "normal" and in good spirits, so went about my Saturday morning to buy groceries and pick up a few Christmas decorations. As usual, I made sure to sanitize, wipe down the handles of my grocery cart, wear my face mask, socially distance and sanitize some more. I've been doing that since our first confirmed case of COVID in Belize, often times upsetting people who came too close by reminding them to social distance or to fix their mask.

After my grocery run, I came home and stayed home. I changed my clothes and finished decorating the Christmas wreath for the front door and cozied up on the couch with my partner to watch movies while my teenage son was in his room playing video games. I urged him to come join us, but the movie we chose was too boring for him and the game was too good. Later, I'd be thankful for his choices. That evening, my partner developed a low-grade fever, and I developed my first symptom - a dull, slight sore throat.

The following day (Day 2), I woke up with the worst headache I've had in a while. It passed after I drank my morning coffee, but my sore throat persisted. My partner was the same, fatigued with a low-grade fever. We looked at each other, both thinking the same thing and then we verbally started to talk about whether we were getting the flu, a cold or maybe COVID. We turned to the first place everyone goes to check their symptoms, google. Based on the symptoms, we could have either of the three, and since we weren't knowingly in contact with anyone who was COVID positive, we dismissed it.

On Monday (Day 3), I woke up to another headache, still had my sore throat and started sneezing frequently. I thought to myself, *"This is good. Sneezing isn't listed as a covid symptom. I must have a cold."* I had a virtual work meeting at 9 am and told my colleagues that I think I had developed a 'head cold'. I spoke to my mom and sister later in the day and they both encouraged me to get tested for COVID. My sister said I sounded short of breath, but I didn't want to believe it.

On Tuesday (Day 4), I sent the following message to the staff: *"Just letting you know that I've gotten worse. I am running a fever and have a dry cough in addition to my headache. While I am sneezing as well, which isn't a symptom for COVID, I'm going to get tested later. So fingers crossed that it's just the flu."*

I had been in touch with the Doctor from the hospital, who based on my symptoms told me to go in at 4pm to get tested. Both my partner and I went, thinking it would just be us. Wrong. There was a man in line before me, with his partner/wife and their baby girl. He was frantic trying to get electronic copies of their IDs, which they needed to provide before they got tested. He had to make a phone call, so I went ahead to the cashier, provided my ID and paid my \$210. My partner joined the line after I did and there were already several people that separated us in the line. The lady and her daughter behind me, had a spray bottle with alcohol and were looking at me. I was the only one in line displaying any symptoms, my dry cough. It was particularly windy that evening too, and I felt the breeze go through the 2 shirts I was wearing (a long sleeve button down and tank top underneath).

After my partner provided his info and paid the cashier, both of us went to the booth to get tested. I heard differing stories and reactions to being swabbed, so I mustered the courage and stepped forward into the gloved hands of the doctor who was behind a Plexiglas booth and got swabbed. As the swab went far up my nose, I felt a burning sensation and my eyes instantly started to water. After what felt like a very long time, it was over, and I could taste whatever was on the swab in the back of my mouth. I laughed and cried at the same time. It was then my partner's turn, who laughed at me saying I had to be 'extra'. When his was over, his expression being the same as mine, he complained that his swabbing process took longer than mine had.

We then went back to the cashier to pick up our receipt, at which time, there were even more people in line waiting to be tested. The cashier informed us that we should have our results in about 2 hours. My partner and I drove home and watched TV, eagerly checking our phones around 6:30 to see if there were any messages or missed calls. At seven, I received a call on my phone from the Doctor informing me that both my partner and I had tested positive for COVID. The doctor also told me that my symptoms were worse than that of my partner, and that based on the pain I was experiencing in my lower back, there was a high chance that the virus was already in my lower respiratory system and that she would write a prescription for medication for me to start the day after. I immediately locked myself in our room, called my mom and sister and cried. They cried. My partner called his family, who also cried.

I updated my work colleagues in the group chat, "*I got back my results. I have COVID.*"

Telling my teenage son (who was asthmatic as a child) that we were COVID positive and that we had to quarantine via phone was one of the hardest things I've ever had to endure. I've always taken care of my son, who would take care of him now? He wasn't displaying any symptoms and felt good but could be asymptomatic. Despite that, my wonderful friends and family offered to take care of him while we recovered, but the doctor advised against it and suggested that he stay at home.

We came up with a system to minimize any exposure and just took things day by day.

My partner's symptoms remained the same for the most part, fever, fatigue but he did lose his sense of taste and smell. I on the other hand, who is younger than he is, was struggling with every symptom in the book particularly shortness of breath. I felt lost. There's so much information out there on prevention, but hardly anything on what to do and ways to cope if you do have COVID, aside for self-isolating or being in quarantine. Our friends and family filled this gap, sending us everything they could find, many of which helped me especially with the shortness of breath.

Sleeping or laying on my tummy helped significantly. Drinking hot liquids also helped. I've never drank so much hot tea in my life. Ginger tea. Vervine tea. Chai tea. Chamomile. Hibiscus. Lemongrass. Peppermint. You name it. Gatorade also helped. I had no appetite. The medication also helped, but it took time. I was doing deep breathing exercises and trying to do some yoga. Everyone advised that I should move and try to be somewhat active. I've done yoga for years, so deep breathing isn't new to me. With COVID, I struggled to even complete 8 mins of deep breathing and stretching, nothing near to the rigor of vinyasa that I regularly practice for 40-60 mins at a time.

Days 7-9 were my worst. Physically and mentally. We had bought an oxygen level reader and I monitored my oxygen levels to make sure it never went below 95. My oxygen levels on day 7 and day 8 fluctuated between 96 and 95 but never below. I prayed every time I did a reading. I didn't want to go to the hospital, I wasn't mentally strong enough to go to the hospital.

I worried about my son's present and his future. Before COVID, I was thinking about all the 'to-do's', Christmas gifts, etc. During COVID, I just prayed that I could see Christmas and to hug my son again. I also thought about how other people who are COVID positive are coping. Those who are in the hospital, their families. People who are COVID positive with little means. Those who think they may be positive but don't have the money to pay for the tests or unsure of getting tested because of stigma.

My friends and family provided lots of love, cheering up and support. They dropped off food, bought groceries and cleaning supplies for us and left them in our driveway. Friends brought cookies and wellness drinks. I can't even begin to describe how helpful all of that was. How double chocolate chip cookies cheered us up so much and brought some normalcy.

Day 10, I turned the corner. I physically felt a difference. While I still felt sick, I knew I was getting better. The antibiotics were working. I didn't have pain in my lower back anymore and looked brighter.

Day 13 coincided with the US holiday, Thanksgiving. I had ordered a pecan pie and 'turkey dinna' a month before and while we don't celebrate Thanksgiving in Belize, any excuse is a good excuse to eat turkey and pecan pie or so was my thinking. Except, this year was different, and we were reminded of just how much we had to be thankful for. I was happy to be feeling better, to be recovering, to be able to breathe better. However marginal the progress, progress is progress.

I watched shows on Netflix and read books to pass the time and rested, a lot. I checked on other friends who also had COVID, some who were doing worse than I was. I was grateful. I also realized that it isn't until you're touched by COVID, do you realize that it can happen to you.

We quarantined for 21 days. On Day 21, we re-tested and we are all COVID free. My son thankfully never developed symptoms.

Today, when I look through the Ministry of Health infographics and I see the severity of the spread, I have a greater appreciation for what those numbers represent. I am one of those numbers. I recognize and appreciate my own experience and its impact on my family, friends and colleagues. I look at those numbers and appreciate

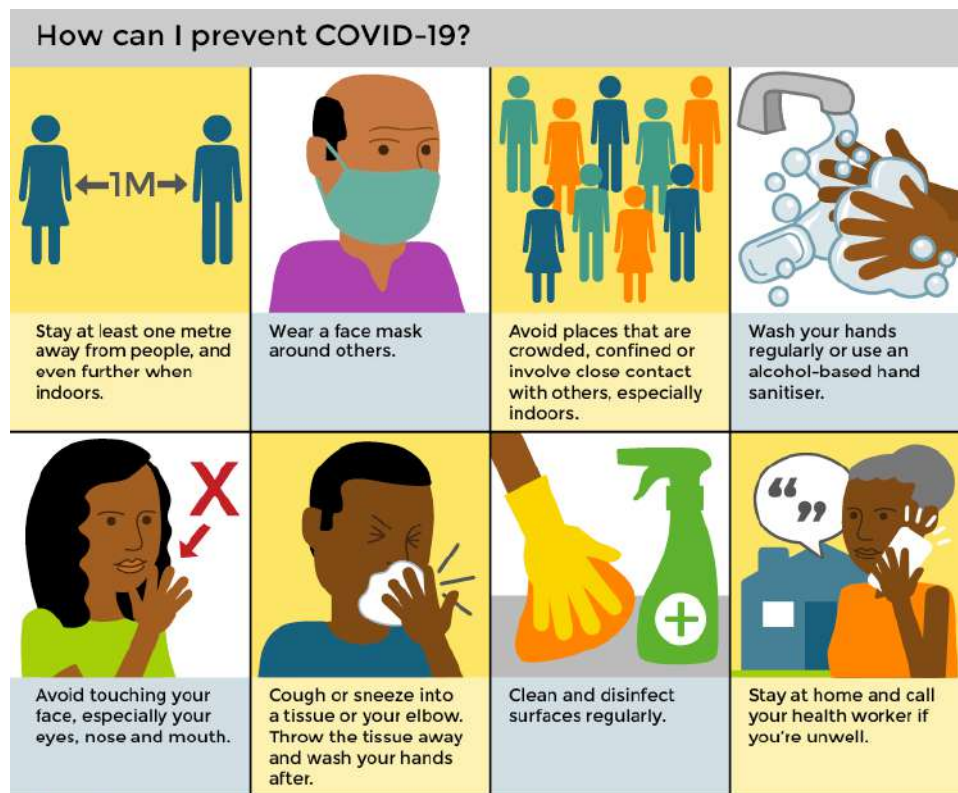
others, their own experiences and that of their families. Many who are rejoicing but some who are grieving. Far too many are grieving.

My partner and I constantly ask ourselves, “What did we do wrong?” We don’t go out. Many of my friends feel I abandoned them because I don’t do lunches anymore or I won’t meet up for a coffee. Our family and friends don’t come over. We only go out to the grocery store and follow all the prevention measures. Where did we drop our guard? While we don’t know for sure, we do know we dropped it.

We have since revised our game plan for groceries and errands. While it does take effort to execute and maintain, it’s easier than having COVID. It’s also cheaper. My two tests came up to \$420, my medication came up to \$140, the oxygen reader cost \$160, for a total of \$720. That’s not even counting cleaning supplies, Gatorade, tea, vitamins and delivery fees. I can’t imagine what it costs to be in the hospital, although I’m sure it’s a price many people are willing to pay to be able to breathe and to live.

I’m thankful every day that I had the support and resources I needed to fight COVID. I’m thankful my case wasn’t severe. I thankful I have a chance to share my experience.

Ultimately, we don’t know which cards we’ll get dealt. The thing is to be prepared. Read the information. Know the symptoms. Don’t wait to get tested or seek help if you are experiencing symptoms. And please, stay home!



Avert) www.avert.org/coronavirus

Source: WHO



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Guyana's oil boom: An opportunity for bold environmental activism

by Tyrone Hall

Tyrone Hall is a Caribbean national with years of experience managing some of the region's leading environmental initiatives. This piece was written as a part of his thesis work during his time as a Vanier and Ontario Trillium Scholar and PhD Candidate at York University.

His research seeks to optimize environmental communication across indigenous and traditional communities in the Pacific, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean.

In this article, he mentions Belize's historic legislation to ban offshore oil exploration, highlighting Oceana's role in this decision.

"Over a seven-year period (April 2010 to January 2017), the environmental community, particularly Oceana Belize, sought to protect an iconic and identity affirming natural asset for Belizeans, and to safeguard the broader marine environment that is of critical importance for efforts to combat the multidimensional challenges associated with climate change, as detailed in CARICOM's Regional Framework that guides climate action. The "No Offshore Oil in Belize" campaign pooled multi-sectoral expertise (law, business, tourism, energy, environmentalists, economists, among others) and institutionalized itself under the Oceana-led Belize Coalition to Save Our Natural Heritage. The campaign articulated a single tripartite goal: to secure a ban on oil exploration in Belize's offshore and protected areas; to strengthen the legislative framework for the equitable distribution of oil revenues; and to promote strong environmental safeguards for the oil industry."

Want to read more?

[CLICK HERE](#)



WHAT'S NEXT?



People's Law Anniversary

December 30th



Love Month

February



People's Referendum Anniversary

February 29th



Reef Week 2021

March



Answer Key

. F . . . P E A C O C K F L O U N D E R . . N
. R . . B L A C K D U R G O N O P R A T . . U
. E R E P U O R G U A S S A N . R
. N T R I G G E R F I S H S
. C R E T S B O L Y N I P S . S E
A H K C A J E Y E E S R O H . E S
D A . S O U T H E R N S T I N G R A Y . . A H
U N H S I F L E R R I U Q S . H A
C G K R A H S F E E R N A E B B I R A C . O R
A E S P O T T E D E A G L E R A Y R K
R L S U P O T C O H C N O C N E E U Q . . S .
R F H S I F G O H G N A T E U L B E .
A I R E P P A N S D E R
B S E S S A R W D A E H W O L L E Y
. H R A I N B O W P A R R O T F I S H
. . E L T R U T L L I B S K W A H



BECOME A WAVEMAKER TODAY!



SCAN ME!

From all of us at Oceana,

*Happy
Holidays!*

Warm wishes for a
blessed holiday
season and a
prosperous new year.



**Check out our
December
campaign!**

Our Staff

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Darius Avila	<i>Office Administrator</i>
Alyssa Carnegie	<i>Communications Director</i>
Janelle Chanona	<i>Vice President, Belize</i>
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The logo for OCEANA, featuring a stylized white wave icon to the left of the word "OCEANA" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

*What you do makes a
difference,
and you have to decide
what kind of difference
you want
to make.*

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

JANE GOODALL