



TIDE Interim report to the SUMMIT
Foundation: January 2008 to September 2008

MARINE ENVIRONMENT

TIDE rangers arrested 6 illegal Guatemalan fishers in Port Honduras Marine Reserve: September in Belize is a month of celebration, but TIDE Rangers stepped up patrols in Port Honduras Marine Reserve working collaboratively with Belize Defense Forces and Fisheries officers.. During August 2008, several fishers from Guatemala received warnings and asked to cease illegal fishing by TIDE Rangers. In Early August, 8 rangers from TIDE were trained and certified as Special Constables with powers to arrest within Protected Areas. In September 2008 rangers arrested six (6) Guatemalan fishers fishing illegally in PHMR, *“This is a great victory for us”* one ranger commented, *“we have been trying to arrest these illegal fishers for a while now, but now that we have special constable powers, it is much easier”*. The illegal fishers were charged and sent back to Guatemala.

One of the greatest threats to PHMR identified during our Conservation Action Planning was over-fishing. Local fishers have expressed concern that illegal fishing inside and just on the borders of PHMR conducted by fishers from other countries has a significant impact. As a result TIDE continues to be involved in the Tri-National Alliance, TRIGOH to address these concerns.

TIDE Marine Biologists conducts commercial fish stock assessment in PHMR. Renata Ferrari, former marine biologist for TIDE started this important project that prepares TIDE for the revision of the management plan for PHMR and serves as an indication of commercial fish population structure. New senior marine biologist, Dr. Nicola Foster, continues work on the commercial fish stock assessment with assistance from the junior biologist, Marlon Williams (former head ranger for PHMR), other rangers and community members. Included in the assessment is regular monitoring of conch, lobster, coral reef health, sea grass health, mangrove productivity and water quality. This information assists TIDE in making sound management decisions that benefits the local community and the wider Mesoamerican barrier reef system.



TIDE rangers on routine patrol, educating fishermen and checking for proper documents

Increasing the management effectiveness of PHMR through national efforts and new approach

A significant accomplishment this year has been the analysis of scientific data collected in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve over the past years. This data demonstrates that the safe zones in PHMR are more productive than the general use zones, but are too small to have significant impacts. TIDE cannot increase the size of the safe zones, but works to advocate and seek support from communities through regular meetings with stakeholders from Punta Gorda, Monkey River and Punta Negra. Meetings stress the importance, function and need for increasing the size of safe zones in PHMR. Through TIDE membership with the Association of Protected Areas Management Organization (APAMO) support is provided to the Belize Fisheries Department for the increase in the size of safe zones in all marine protected areas in Belize.

Marine protected areas all over the world have been focusing on management effectiveness. TIDE reviews what methods work well in PHMR and where we struggle and continually adapt our management strategy. TIDE is exploring the possibility of partnering with Environmental Defense to pilot an incentive-based sustainable fisheries management proposal for Port Honduras Marine Reserve that will contribute to fisheries management.



COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

Multi-sector law enforcement

TIDE has increased the engagement of other law enforcement officers in our patrols since January 2008. TIDE has conducted coastal and land patrols with the soldiers from the Belize Defense Force (BDF) and rangers from Ya'axche Conservation Trust (YCT) on a weekly basis. Patrols resulted in the confiscation of three (3) illegal gill nets and five (5) illegal long lines that were used contrary to the laws of Belize. Gill nets and long lines are detrimental to marine resources as each result in by-catch that cannot be consumed. On land, the Belize Forest Department rangers also accompany TIDE rangers on patrols. Due to limited staff at the department these patrols were not as frequent. "We have noted more wildlife sightings since we increased our joint patrols with BDF" said Carlos Bardalez (TIDE park ranger).



TIDE rangers and BDF on joint patrols

Saving critically endangered species

Dermatemys mawii, locally known as Hicatee, is a freshwater turtle that is currently listed as critically endangered and faces serious threat of becoming extinct largely due to over hunting. Hicatee grows up to two feet in length and lives only in the eastern freshwater waters from Yucatan, Mexico to the Honduras. Belize has the highest recorded populations followed by Mexico; none were reported in Honduras. TIDE is partnering with the Belize Fisheries Department, Ya'axche Conservation Trust, and local experts to draft a national recovery plan for Hicatee. Several meetings have been held to chart the way forward, with baseline assessments scheduled to start early 2009.

Dermatemys mawii, photo credit www.tigr.org



Protecting riparian zones

Unplanned coastal and riverfront development and farming threaten the survival of flora and fauna in Southern Belize. TIDE, with support from the US and Belize government through the Debt for Nature swaps purchases key parcels (riverfront, lagoon, or beach) from private land owners. These lands are kept for the people of Belize and cannot be developed except for low impact tourism ventures.

The new parcel at Big Falls Plantations at Big Falls Village protects 14 miles of riverfront or riparian zones which prevents erosion, filters pollutants, cleans runoff waters; provide food and habitat for aquatic and terrestrial biota. TIDE commitment has ensured no net loss of littoral forest or mangrove forest in the areas managed by TIDE.



TIDE's Private lands, Belize



TERRESTRIAL ENVIRONMENT

When was the last time you saw something for the first time?

"It's been a long time since I've seen a great curassow." It was once common to hear that remark from rural community members. TIDE lands had once been the home of these magnificent birds and after 10 years we can safely say, *"They are back"*. TIDE terrestrial rangers and scientists are recording sightings of curassows as close as 200 meters away from the ranger station. *"Our biodiversity monitoring results has made me feel so proud of our work"* reported the manager of the lands, Eugenio Ah. The great curassow is only one of the species threatened by hunting and found to be thriving on TIDE's lands. The white-lipped peccary, widely hunted in the past, are frequently spotted in herds of 20 – 30 individuals stampeding through the pristine forest that TIDE owns and manages. Biodiversity monitoring has also helped TIDE to see species of birds, both resident and migratory, recorded for the first time on our lands.



Great curassow (Photo credit; Belize zoo)

Wildfire suppression and Yellow-headed parrot augmentation in Payne's Creek National Park

The first step to suppress wildfires in pine savannahs is to establish a structure. Almost every dry season in Belize (February to May) Mario's voice crackled over the CB radio in TIDE's office, *"There is a wildfire in Payne's Creek National Park (PCNP), I need some assistance immediately"*. This year was no exception and after the smoke cleared thirty percent of the pine savannahs were burnt...again. Immediately after the dry season, TIDE took the lead in formalizing and activating the Southern Belize Fire Working Group, with Mario Muschamp, Manager of PCNP as the lead person. TIDE conducted additional training in fire management for rangers, community members, and pine forest concessionaires. TIDE is developing a fire management plan for PCNP and surrounding pine savannahs. While suppression is important to the ecosystem, prescribed burning plays a vital role in protecting the endangered Yellow-headed parrot nests.



Fire management trainees in PCNP after prescribe burn

Conclusion - Since January 2008 TIDE has had many stories of success. TIDE is rated in the top 20 for innovative project for the Freshwater Cup, conducted record breaking training for staff; implemented alternative livelihood training for community members in all stages of SCUBA diving and tour guide training, successfully coordinated the development of a Conservation Action Strategy and work plan for the MMMC, and built awareness in environmental education and beach clean ups with many local groups and institutions. Throughout, the support from the SUMMIT Foundation was greatly felt and appreciated. The year is almost done, but there is still so much to be accomplished. We believe that with the passion displayed by the staff, we can certainly achieve our highest goals. TIDE is once again expresses gratitude to the SUMMIT Foundation for continuously believing in our work and supporting us through the years.