

Mayor Daniel Guerrero
San Pedro Town Council
Barrier Reef Drive
San Pedro Town
Ambergris Caye

July 17th 2018

Good day Mayor Danny,

We have been made to understand that approval of the Cayo Rosario project by the San Pedro Town Council and the Hol Chan Marine Board is pending. We write to inform that we stand with the guides, businesses and people of Ambergris Caye who say no to dredging and no to over-the-water structures in the Hol Chan Marine Reserve. We emphasize that the opposition of this project is rooted in the destruction of the sea floor via dredging and to the over-the-water structures that will impede the livelihoods of Belizean fishermen.

We are sure you have joined in the national celebration of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) recent decision to remove Belize's World Heritage Site from the *Sites In Danger* list. One of the reasons we were put on the *Sites In Danger* list in 2009 was because of approved development activities that undermined the health and integrity of our World Heritage Site; places of universal and outstanding value. Given that the Hol Chan Marine Reserve is the oldest and most successful marine protected area in terms of ecosystem and fish stock protection, approval of unsustainable tourism development activities might once again raise questions about Belize's responsible stewardship of her world renowned marine resources.

We also point out that the new Mangrove Act (attached) which came into law June 23rd, 2018 states:

"The issuing authority shall not issue a permit for the alteration or selective trimming of

- (a) mangroves in areas known to be an active nesting site or resting or breeding area for a colony or conspicuous concentration of birds, including but not limited to pelicans, spoonbills, herons, storks, boobies, frigate birds, and egrets*
- (c) mangroves within existing national parks, nature reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, natural monuments or other protected areas as defined and described in the National Protected Areas System Act."*

Priority areas include:

- Shipstern Lagoon and cayes to sea
- **All other cayes** (inside barrier and atolls)
- Ambergris Caye, Cangrejo

Review of the National Protected Areas System Act (attached) shows that the law also allows for the inclusion as 'special management areas' for protection of (e.g.) bird colonies. The NPAS Policy supports this with:

“Special Management Area” is recommended as an additional designation to cover areas in the landscape or seascape requiring management interventions. These would include (but not necessarily be limited to):

- *Biological Corridors*
- *Bird Nesting Colonies*
- *Turtle Nesting Beaches*
- *River mouths in areas of high boat / manatee conflict (Belize River, Sittie River)*

Where feasible, cayes, inundated mangrove ranges and critical coastal fringing mangrove should be integrated within marine protected areas under the relevant site legislation...”

We therefore call on the San Pedro Town Council to not approve any dredging and over-the-water structures within the Hol Chan Marine Reserve by the Cayo Rosario project or any other pending/future development project to safeguard our invaluable marine resources and the Belizeans who depend on them daily.

We look forward to your response.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

