

GEF

Global Environment Facility

MOHAMED T. EL-ASHRY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
AND CHAIRMAN

October 26, 1998

Dear Council Member,

I am enclosing a medium-sized project entitled "*Northern Belize Biological Corridor Project*". The GEF will contribute \$ 748,430 towards the total cost of \$ 3.91 million.

This medium-sized project is developed within the framework of an overall biodiversity conservation strategy for Belize and addresses prevalent threats to biodiversity present in the project area. The project aims to secure long-term conservation of biodiversity of global importance in the "Maya Lowlands" of north-eastern Central America by assisting in maintaining ecological linkages between protected areas across northern Belize and neighboring countries. The corridors so created constitute a critical link in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor system. Project expected outcomes include (a) refinement and application of mechanisms for corridor creation and management appropriate to the northern Belize context; (b) consolidation of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area; (c) consolidation of the network of corridors across the northern coastal plains; and (d) improved public awareness and support to biodiversity conservation. The proposed medium-sized project complements well other national and regional activities.

The proposal is being sent to you for information. However, we would welcome any comments you may wish to provide by November 9, 1998, in accordance with the procedures approved by Council.

Sincerely,

for Mohamed T. El-Ashry
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment:

Northern Belize Biological Corridor Project

Cc: Alternates, Implementing Agencies, STAP

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

RECEIVED

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GEF SECRETARIAT

DATE: October 21, 1998

TO: Mr. Mohamed El-Ashry, Chief Executive Officer, GEF
(Attention Program Coordination)

FROM: Lars O. Vidaeus, GEF Executive Coordinator



EXTENSION: 3-4188

SUBJECT: **Belize – Northern Belize Biological Corridors Project**
GEF Medium-Sized Grant – Final CEO Endorsement

1. Please find attached the final version of the above-mentioned Medium-Sized Grant which is ready for final circulation to the Council. This version incorporates changes recommended by Secretariat staff:

(a) **selection criteria for sub-projects:** an annex has been included detailing the criteria which will be used; the WB will sign-off on sub-project selection during the first year to ensure appropriate application of the criteria; these criteria would be reviewed and adjusted, if necessary, at the end of the first year.

(b) **environmental education:** we agree that environmental education and awareness is critical in a project of this nature; unfortunately, the cost table presentation does not fully disaggregate all such expenditures planned under the GEF Alternative; we estimate that costs of environmental education/awareness activities are closer to 5-10% of total project costs; we have added a new section 8.2 in Section VIII (Public Involvement Plan) to clarify this.

(c) **pipeline:** we have added a new country program framework section in Section II (Current Situation) to explain how the WB/GEF and UNDP/GEF activities in Belize fit together.

(d/e) **social assessment issues:** MSP project activities are designed to be the follow-up to the social assessment; we have reconfirmed with Programme for Belize that there are no indigenous land claims in the project area.

(f) **recurrent costs:** sustainability/recurrent costs are given more detailed treatment in Section V (Sustainability Analysis).

(g) **absorptive capacity:** this topic is also given greater attention in Section V (Risk Assessment).

October 21, 1998

2. Please send us a copy of your out-going letter to Council for our records. Many thanks.

cc: Clark (LCC3); Lovejoy, Graham (LCSES); Kimes, Castro, Bossard (ENVGC)
ENVGC ISC
IRIS3

Misaac

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NORTHERN BELIZE BIOLOGICAL CORRIDORS PROJECT
MEDIUM-SIZED GRANT PROJECT BRIEF

PROGRAMME FOR BELIZE

October 21, 1998

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Acronyms	iii
Project Summary	1
1. Rationale and Objectives	5
2. Current Situation.....	6
3. Expected Project Outcomes, with Underlying Assumptions and Context	9
4. Activities and Financial Inputs to Enable Outcomes	11
5. Sustainability Analysis and Risk Assessment	15
6. Stakeholder Involvement and Social Assessment	16
7. Incremental Cost Analysis	18
8. Public Involvement Plan	19
9. Budget and Project Implementation Plan	20
10. Monitoring and Evaluation	21
11. Technical Review (Project Checklist).....	22

Annex 1: Selection Criteria for Sub-Projects

Map: Major Protected Areas and Biological Corridors of Northern Belize
Endorsement Letter from GEF Focal Point for Belize

ANNEXES (Available on Request)

1. Detailed Information on Current Status of Conservation in Belize
2. List of Protected Areas
3. Total Vegetation Map with Corridor
4. Three Major Vegetation types with Corridor and Protected Areas
5. Protected Areas Map with corridor, Land ownership and Communities
6. Management of the NBBCP by PfB
7. Summary of Consultation Process
8. Bibliography
9. Project Proposals Submitted by Various NBBCP Stakeholders

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFFWCFR	Association of Friends of Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve
ALIDES	Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development
ASONCO	Association of Northern Belize Conservation Organizations
BAS	Belize Audubon Society
BELRIV	Belize River Valley
BONCO	Belize Old Northern Highway Communities Organization
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCAD	Central American Commission of Environment and Development
CTWS	Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary
EEC	European Economic Commission
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GoB	Government of Belize
IUCN	World Conservation Union
MBC	Mesoamerican Biological Corridor
NBBC	Northern Belize Biological Corridor
NBBCP	Northern Belize Biological Corridors Project
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPAS	National Protected Areas System
PA	Protected Area
PACT	Protected Areas Conservation Trust
PfB	Programme For Belize
RBCMA	Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area
SDA	Special Development Area
SGP	Small Grants Programme
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Identifiers

1. *Project Name:* Northern Belize Biological Corridors Project.
2. *GEF Implementing Agency:* The World Bank.
3. *Country in which project is being implemented:* Belize.
4. *Country eligibility:* Belize ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity on December 30th 1993.
5. *GEF focal area:* Biodiversity.
6. *Operational program/short-term measure:* Forest Ecosystems (Operational Program No. 3).
7. *Project linkage to national priorities, action plans, and programmes:* The project is consistent with the initial draft of the National Biodiversity Strategy and with the National Biological Corridors study (developed as the Belizean contribution to the regional GEF-funded Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project). The National Protected Areas Systems Plan (1995) also explicitly promoted the concepts of corridors in Northern Belize. Finally, Belize has also produced, with the technical assistance of the World Bank, a National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) which includes as priority actions: strengthening land-use management, reducing deforestation and unsustainable agricultural practices, and expanding the use of financial mechanisms for environmental and natural resource management. This project is consistent with all these identified priorities.

This project is being developed within the framework of an overall biodiversity conservation strategy for the country. In addition to the proposed Northern Biological Corridors project, Belize is also planning to undertake three other conservation related projects with GEF support: Conservation/Sustainable Use of the Barrier Reef Complex (UNDP), Community Managed Sarstoon Temash Protected Area (IFAD/WB), and Co-management of protected areas (UNDP/PACT). These other GEF projects will take place in geographically distinct areas of the country. In addition to these national initiatives, Belize is participating in two regional projects: the Regional Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project (UNDP) and the proposed Regional Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System Project (WB). The GoB has established a Technical Coordination Committee to ensure coordination of the various mesoamerican corridor initiatives.

8. *GEF national operational focal point and date of country endorsement:* Ms. Zenaida Moya, Ministry of Economic Development, by letter dated May 5th 1998.

Project Objectives and Activities

9. *Project rationale and objectives:* The project aims to secure long-term conservation of biodiversity of global importance in the "Maya Lowlands" of north-eastern Central America by maintaining ecological linkages between protected areas across northern Belize, from northern

Belize to the Maya Mountain/Mountain Pine Ridge massif in central Belize, and from northern Belize into the Maya and Calakmul Biosphere Reserves in Guatemala and Mexico respectively. The corridors so created constitute a critical link in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC) system. The identified corridor areas comprise a mosaic of large and small private land-holdings with a relatively low proportion of national lands. Corridor creation therefore emphasizes private sector and community approaches that capitalize upon, mobilize, and reinforce public interest and participation.

Indicator: Current deforestation rates in northern Belize are estimated at 13,400 ha/year (1994 figures cited in White et al., 1996). By the end of the project, deforestation rates within the Northern Belize Biological Corridors, adjusted for their area, should be 25% or less of the current deforestation rate for northern Belize. The Programme for Belize (Pfb) is currently measuring deforestation rates for all of northern Belize and will have access to such data.

10. *Project outcomes:*

A) Refinement and application of mechanisms for corridor creation and management, appropriate to the northern Belize context. The network of corridors envisaged for northern Belize (see attached map) include corridors extending through the Rio Bravo Management Conservation and Management Area (RBCMA) north-eastward through primarily small land holdings and the Belize River Valley corridor from the RBMCA south-eastward to Monkey Bay Nature Reserve requiring a primary emphasis on actions involving major landowners.

B) Consolidation of the RBCMA, as the critical link between the corridor networks of Belize and the MBC as a whole, through a series of investments in the conservation area and with surrounding local communities.

C) Consolidation of the network of corridors across the Northern Coastal Plain, from the RBCMA north-eastward, primarily through investments at the community level.

D) Enhanced awareness of the MBC and conservation issues in general, on the part of the student population, general public, and decision makers, translating into support for the Corridor concept.

Indicators:

1) Six communities or major landowners (representing about 50% of those targeted by the project) successfully implementing new land management approaches compatible with Corridor objectives (for outcomes A, B, and C).

2) Alteration in formal conservation status of lands on a minimum of four sites located in corridors such that their biodiversity comes under stricter protection (for outcomes A, B, and C).

3) At least 50% of the secondary school student body exposed to Corridor concept; ten media presentations concerning corridors given to the general public (for outcome D).

11. *Project Activities to achieve outcomes:*

Outcome A): Refinement and application of mechanisms for corridor creation and management, appropriate to the northern Belize context.

Activity A1. Continued research into the biological characteristics of corridors, their potential routes, and land tenure patterns.

Activity A2. Development of incentives for private sector and community participation in corridor creation, through easements, other legal and financial mechanisms, and adoption of revenue-generating activities compatible with conservation aims.

Activity A3. Development of methodology for monitoring of effectiveness of corridors as a tool for conservation, tested during the project lifetime.

Activity A4. Technical personnel for coordination and field support for corridor creation activities.

Outcome B): Consolidation of the RBCMA.

Activity B1. Enhanced protection of the RBCMA through a series of investments in protection and more sustainable use of the biodiversity of this privately managed area.

Activity B2. Technical support for community-based conservation and economic development projects identified as priorities by the Belize River Valley (BELRIV) communities east of the RBCMA.

Activity B3. Technical support for community-based conservation and economic development projects identified as priorities by the communities of northern Orange Walk District north and north-eastward of the RBCMA.

Outcome C): Consolidation of the network of corridors across the northern coastal plain.

Activity C1. Support for community-based and other projects contributing to corridor creation. Project proposals received to date include: Barworks - protected area and tree nursery; Shipstern Nature Reserve - enhanced protection and sustainability; Fireburn - protected area establishment; Fireburn - game-farming, ecotourism, agroforestry; Progresso Lagoon - watershed monitoring; Old Northern Highway - establishment of protected area, agricultural training, and ecotourism; Crooked Tree Lagoon - community participation in protected area management; Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve - community-based forest management and environmental education.

Outcome D): Improved public awareness and support.

Activity D1. Implement environmental awareness programme in the secondary schools of Corozal, Belize, and Orange Walk Districts (presentations at schools, displays, educational materials, support for field visits).

Activity D2. Implement environmental awareness programme directed towards the general public (environmental awareness strategy formulation, production of presentational materials).

Activity D3. Facilitation of public participation in corridor activities (support for local associations such as the proposed Association of Northern Belize Conservation Organizations (ASONCO), including travel costs for participation) and support for inter-organizational coordination through a Technical Advisory Group.

Project Administration:

Activities: in addition to baseline administrative staff and infrastructure, support services and equipment to execute MSP project activities would include: accounts clerk, vehicles and vehicle maintenance, office equipment, office maintenance costs, coordination expenses, and audits.

12. Estimated Budget

GEF PDF: US\$ 24,930

GEF MSP: US\$ 723,500

Co-financing MSP: US\$ 3,155,000

Total MSP: US\$ 3,878,500

Total GEF (PDF+MSP) US\$ 748,430

Information on institution submitting project brief

13. *Information on project proponent:* Programme for Belize (Pfb) is a Belizean non-profit company dedicated to conservation and sustainable development. It owns and manages the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area, which is held in trust for the people of Belize under the terms of a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Belize.

14. *Information on executing agency (if different from project proponent):* Same as above.

15. *Date of original submission of project concept:* July 1st 1997.

Information to be completed by implementing agency

16. *Project Identification Number:*

17. *Implementing Agency Contact Person:*

Douglas J. Graham, Task Manager, Latin America and Caribbean Region (202-473-6667)

Christine Kimes, Global Environment Coordinator, LAC Region, (202-473-3689)

18. *Project Linkage to Implementing Agency Programme(s):* A Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for Belize was prepared in November 1993; it notes the need for Belize to deepen its conservation efforts and slow deforestation. The proposed MSP would contribute to these CAS objectives. In addition to these country-specific goals, the World Bank is also actively supporting the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC) throughout Mexico and Central America, and is promoting or financing MBC projects throughout the region. The proposed project in Belize will be the Bank's first major conservation initiative in Belize, and it will be highly complementary to MBC programs elsewhere in the region. See Section 2 of this Brief for a more detailed presentation of the GEF programme framework in Belize.

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

I. RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

Despite being the one of the smallest countries in the region (total land area of 22,960 km²), Belize shows as much diversity in low altitude habitats and biota as any Central American state. The documented biodiversity includes about 4000 plant species, 162 mammals, 571 birds and a herpetofauna of 144 species. Inventory of other groups is incomplete, but believed to display the same general features – biotic communities characteristic of the Mayan lowlands with good numbers of regional endemics and a few country endemics. The other important feature is that these communities occur within extensive tracts of natural habitat and are fully functional, indicated by the occurrence of good populations of top predators and scavengers.

An extensive protected areas network has been built up in Belize, including statutory, private, and community-managed reserves of various forms. Currently some 55 reserves are recognized in the terrestrial and coastal/marine environment. These range from strict nature reserves and national parks to forest reserves and other management regimes permitting extractive use.

The protected area network is dominated by the bloc of statutory reserves occupying the Maya Mountain/Mountain Pine Ridge massif. The Rio Bravo Conservation Management Area and the Aguas Turbias National Park form another conservation management unit. This area joins directly to the Maya Biosphere Reserve of Guatemala via the Río Azul National Park, itself linking to the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in Mexico. The Rio Bravo thus constitutes the Belizean portion of one of the largest remaining tracts of forest in Mesoamerica.

The value of these two sites on a regional and international level cannot be underestimated. Their current quality is further enhanced by being embedded in an area dominated by natural vegetation, maintaining connections to other existing protected areas (e.g. Crooked Tree, Freshwater Creek, Shipstern Nature Reserve); at present it is still possible to walk through natural habitats the length of the country from the Columbia River Forest Reserve to Shipstern Nature Reserve. These connections are, however, now becoming tenuous and being broken. Maintaining them is recognized as essential for the conservation of the biodiversity of Belize, as expressed in both the National Protected Areas System Plan and the National Biological Corridors Plan developed as part of the consultative process under the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project.

The objective of the proposed project is to maintain the ecological linkages that currently connect major protected areas within northern and central Belize to the regional Mesoamerican Biological Corridor system. It therefore helps maintain the value, in terms of biodiversity conservation, of the protected area network in northern Belize by preventing it from becoming a scatter of isolated sites. It also contributes to maintenance of biodiversity on a regional scale, across the Maya Lowlands. Two valuable by-products of this activity are the development of mechanisms for securing the conservation of recognized gaps in the national protected area system, and, by using an approach emphasizing wide stakeholder participation, promoting community and private sector collaboration in corridor creation that may be replicable elsewhere. The project is consistent with GEF Operational Program No. 3 “Promoting the Conservation of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems”.

II. CURRENT SITUATION

Corridor Design and Protected Areas in the Project Area

Feasibility studies financed under the PDF Block A grant identified the location of natural vegetation linkages across northern Belize, and gathered information on land tenure patterns along these potential corridor routes. These studies built on previous work done during the preparation of the Belizean portion of the regional GEF Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project. These studies were accompanied by extensive consultation with stakeholders (community groups, private landowners, government representatives) to assess the potential for actions on the ground. Over 60 stakeholders were able to overfly the potential corridors (courtesy of Lighthawk), to obtain a better appreciation of existing natural corridors.

The resulting design (see the map at the end of this document) includes a corridor south-eastward from the RBMCA across the Belize River Valley (all other alternatives already being broken by agricultural expansion) and at least two alternative routes across the Northern Coastal Plain, both radiating north-eastward from the RBMCA.

The Belize River Valley Corridor passes from the eastern Rio Bravo southwards through the Meditation and Castille properties (both large holdings and currently on the market), to the Liddal, Hamze and Belize Zoo properties (large holdings with owners willing to consider corridor creation if appropriate mechanisms and incentives can be devised), and across the Western Highway at Mile 30 – 32 to link to the Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and Monkey Bay Nature Reserve. These form a narrow connection onto the Maya Mountain massif.

The extensiveness of remaining natural habitat and uncertainties about long-term prospects for corridor maintenance in any given area led to the Northern Coastal Plain corridors being designed as a network rather than a single corridor. They pass from the eastern Rio Bravo in a north-easterly direction to the Belize River Valley communities, of which seven are already organized into the Community Baboon Sanctuary. From there, one route passes via Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary and private lands (for which the feasibility of corridor creation remains unassessed) to Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve. A second route links the Belize River Valley communities to those of the old Northern Highway, organized into the Belize Old Northern Road Community Association (BONCA), and again to Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve. The linkage from Freshwater Creek Forest reserve to Shipstern Nature Reserve will be consolidated by an array of community initiatives involving maintenance of natural linkages. There are also larger land holdings (Collgery, Punta Alegre, Warrie Bight) that could contribute to the corridor if, as with the Belize River Valley corridor, appropriate mechanisms and incentives can be developed. Local NGOs and CBOs participated in corridor design, and contacts exist, through local NGOs, with the major landholders. The entire area lies within the Corozal East Special Development Area (SDA), and there is potential to use this physical planning tool both to consolidate corridor connections and generally to integrate the corridors within land use plans.

This design links together all but one of the existing protected areas in northern Belize, and also incorporates a recognized gap in the protected area system (Whitewater Creek, lying between the RBCMA and the Castille property). It also incorporates Fireburn Forest, Barworks, Progresso Lagoon watershed, and Quash Savannah within the corridor, comprising habitats with poor representation in the national system.

Socioeconomic Context

The population stands at 230,000, of which 50% is urban (1997 mid-year estimates). Average rural population density is only 10/sq. km but some 66% of the country is marginal for agriculture and the population is therefore concentrated in the areas with the best soils. These include, within northern Belize, the Belize Valley and the northern plain. Indeed, the population density of 197 persons per sq. km of cultivated land is higher than that of Honduras and Nicaragua.

Demographic trends in Belize are strongly influenced by immigration and emigration. Immigrants from Central American countries, mostly refugees from Guatemala and Salvador, settle primarily in rural areas. Emigration is mainly from urban areas, towards the United States. Population growth rate, taking account both birth/death rates and immigration/emigration, stands at 2.6% p.a. and is highest in the rural areas. The combination of concentration of settlements in particular localities, and a relatively elevated population growth rate at these sites, leads to hotspots with high deforestation rates and expansion of unsustainable agricultural practices on marginal lands.

For such a small country, Belize is remarkably diverse culturally. English is the common language throughout northern Belize but the language in the home is predominantly Spanish in both Orange Walk and Corozal Districts. The German-speaking Mennonites form a distinct cultural group with its own social structure. Although many people in the north can claim Mayan descent, there are no organized indigenous peoples groups and no pending indigenous land claims in the project area. This contrasts with the more traditional communities in the south of Belize.

Belize is classed as a developing country. In 1991, the literacy rate was 70% for both sexes. Available preliminary data for 1996 indicate that the per capita GDP was \$2,307 US and the real GDP growth was 3.8%. In 1995, 25.3.% of all households were considered poor, and 9.6% as extremely poor.

Principal Threats to Biodiversity in Belize

At this time, the degree of pressure on biodiversity in Belize is relatively low. Threats can however be identified and are expected to intensify. The following were identified during the preparation of the national plan for the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project:

- human population increase, associated with increased poverty;
- deterioration of the marine and coastal environment through uncontrolled economic development;
- unregulated industrial growth resulting in inadequate solid, liquid and industrial waste management;
- small-scale slash and burn agricultural practices resulting in large areas being stripped of natural vegetation;
- wildfires caused through small farm activities or through other effects;
- unsustainable hunting and fishing activities;
- land distribution policies which result in the reduction in the stock of arable land available for agricultural purposes;
- inadequate enforcement of environmental laws and regulations; and
- introduction of exotic species.

The current impacts of these threats vary, and most are local in effect. However, they do indicate

that the present generally healthy state of the environment cannot be expected to continue indefinitely. Measures must be taken to maintain it in the face of foreseeable and mounting pressures.

GEF Programme Framework

The proposed MSP would address those threats to biodiversity present in the project area, and is being developed within the framework of an overall biodiversity conservation strategy for Belize. This conservation strategy is based upon the establishment and maintenance of two biological corridors: the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (terrestrial) and the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System (Coastal/Marine). Overall coordination of MBC initiatives in Belize is ensured by a Technical Coordination Committee originally established for preparation of the regional MBC project.

The *Belize Mesoamerican Biological Corridor* terrestrial program comprises three medium-size projects (MSPs): “Northern Belize Biological Corridors” (WB/PfB), “Co-managed Protected Areas System (UNDP/PACT), and “Community-Managed Sarstoon Temash Conservation” (WB/IFAD). These three MSPs are at the final stages of circulation and review prior to CEO endorsement. The areas selected for support were identified through the Regional MBC preparation exercise as priorities for conservation. The three MSPs target different sections of the country (Northern, Central, and South), and would support the conservation of a mosaic of forest types and freshwater and coastal ecosystems. Different executing agencies (NGOs and local communities) have developed the proposals and would be responsible for project implementation. This diversity of executing agencies is expected to contribute to long-term absorptive capacity within Belize and sustainability of these initiatives beyond the immediate project implementation period. Mechanisms have been defined for information exchange and sharing of lessons across the three MSPs to enhance cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences.

Conservation of the Belizean segment of the *Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System* will be supported by the “Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Barrier Reef Complex” project (UNDP/GoB) which was recently approved for work program entry at the October 1998 GEF Council meeting. This project would focus on (i) consolidating capacity to mainstream biodiversity conservation into a coastal zone policy framework, (ii) establishing a Belize Barrier Reef PA network, (iii) integrating marine biodiversity conservation into caye development plans, (iv) establishing a sustainable financing mechanism for marine biodiversity conservation, (v) removing the legal and institutional barriers to marine biodiversity prospecting, and (vi) supporting public outreach (training, information dissemination, awareness – raising).

In addition to these nationally based projects, Belize is participating in two regional projects: the Regional Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC) Project (UNDP/UNEP) and the proposed Regional Mesoamerican Barrier Reef (MBR) System Project (WB). The MBC project was approved for work program entry in November 1997, and would support: program coordination for corridor consolidation, information and monitoring systems, capacity-building and intra-regional exchanges, participation/awareness raising, and regional policy harmonization. The Regional MBR System Project is under preparation prior to submission to the GEF Council later this FY. It would assist the countries of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras to strengthen and coordinate national policies, regulations, and institutional arrangements for marine ecosystem conservation and sustainable use, with a particular focus on transboundary issues. These would include: standardizing ecosystem monitoring for development of a regional information system;

harmonizing regulations and enforcement mechanisms related to effluent standards, management of shared fish stocks, and EA/zoning requirements for coastal development and tourism; and disseminating information on the regional MBR conservation initiative to the regional and international community.

The Implementing Agencies have coordinated their efforts to support these GEF-supported initiatives to ensure non-duplication and complementarity of activities. The MBR in-country project teams will work closely together to ensure coordination and non-duplication of activities; this coordination and information exchange will continue during implementation to ensure complementarity.

III. EXPECTED PROJECT OUTCOMES WITH UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND CONTEXT

Outcome A: Refinement and application of mechanisms for corridor creation and management, appropriate to the northern Belize context. The network of corridors envisaged for northern Belize (see attached map) include corridors extending through the Rio Bravo Management Conservation and Management Area (RBCMA) north-eastward through primarily small land holdings and the Belize River Valley Corridor from the RBMCA south-eastward to Monkey Bay Nature Reserve, requiring a primary emphasis on actions involving major landowners.

Work undertaken under the PDF Block A Grant demonstrates that there exists the physical and biological basis for a corridor system in northern Belize; remote imagery and overflights show continuous natural vegetation connecting all the protected areas, although the linkages along both the Northern and Western Highways are few in number and becoming tenuous.

The pattern of land ownership, however, is not homogenous. It ranges from large private estates of up to 10,000 ha and more, to lands held speculatively, to communities with many small individual land holdings. There are also national lands of which some are unallocated, some under lease or concession, and some formally constituted in protected areas and forest reserves. The interests of the various stakeholders are similarly varied — the public consultations, however, demonstrated a constituency of support for corridor creation if it is mutually beneficial to all parties. The consultations have helped identify what the stakeholders recognize as benefits, and also highlighted concerns that must be taken into account in project design. The most important concern, strongly voiced by the CBOs, is that initiatives should be participatory and consensual.

Activities grouped under this outcome are designed to address the needs of corridor creation and management given the complex situation described above. The underlying assumptions are as follows.

- Although a critical mass of information sufficient for project design is available, there is a continuing need to refine the information base (biological, socio-economic) upon which project activities are founded. Flexibility must be retained in project implementation in order to adapt activities to new information, opportunities, or situations, as they arise.
- No one approach will address needs of corridor creation along its entire length. A variety of approaches are needed, each tailored to the specific circumstances and opportunities of that particular section of the corridor. The overall emphasis is upon creation of incentives for

meaningful participation by stakeholders. Nonetheless, incentives for major landholders (the focus of the project's activities in the Belize River Valley Corridor) are liable to be fundamentally different to those of interest to communities. Actions are, however, in line with three general trends: recognition of the importance of private initiatives in conservation action, paralleled by the need to create structures and mechanisms to promote them; increasing organization and assertion of interests at community level; and support for promoting in these areas a range of land management approaches developed on the Rio Bravo.

Outcome B: Consolidation of the RBCMA, as the critical link between the corridor networks of Belize and the MBC as a whole, through a series of investments in the conservation area and with surrounding local communities.

The Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area is the only viable linkage between Belize and the rest of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. All other potential linkages are already broken by agricultural expansion either within Belize or immediately across the international frontiers. Its long-term future must therefore be assured to maintain the overall integrity of the MBC. It is secure now, but a long-term threat is posed by a growing pressure for land; the fundamental issue is therefore one of social sustainability. The underlying intent of project-funded actions designed to attain Outcome B is to transfer the experience and technical expertise developed by the PFB in the RBMCA. The assumption is that this will help demonstrate the relevance of conservation management actions at the community level in key areas surrounding the RBMCA. The selection procedures and eligibility criteria for sub-projects are provided in Annex 1 to this Brief.

Outcome C: Consolidation of the network of corridors across the northern coastal plain, from the RBCMA north-eastward, primarily through investments at the community level.

In contrast to the Belize River Valley Corridor, the corridors across the Northern Coastal Plain will be defined by an array of community-led initiatives. During project preparation, nine detailed proposals were submitted by local NGOs and CBOs and it is expected that funding will be provided for most of these projects (see Annex 1 for sub-project eligibility criteria).

We have assumed that: i) devolution of management responsibilities to the communities is the most effective approach for long-term sustainability of the corridors; and ii) the sum of these individual actions amounts to consolidation of a functional biological corridor. The project proposals developed by the communities are seen as working documents, giving an overall scope of work and an initial costing. It is assumed that modifications may be necessary during implementation, requiring careful oversight and guidance from Programme for Belize without lifting the initiative from the communities themselves. This will be an important part of the work of the project coordinator. It is also conceivable that other activities may be identified in the course of project implementation.

Outcome D: Enhanced awareness of the MBC and conservation issues in general, on the part of the student population, general public, and decision makers, translating into support for the Corridor concept.

A primary outcome will be improved public awareness on the importance of biological corridors as a strategy for biodiversity conservation. This increased awareness is expected to create favourable conditions for corridor creation and management.

IV. ACTIVITIES AND FINANCIAL INPUTS TO ENABLE OUTCOMES

The following table summarizes the financial inputs for each component and the following texts provide a more detailed description of the activities planned under each component.

The Project Budget in US\$ by Project Component

Project Component	GEF	Other Sources	Project Total
A: Planning for Corridor Creation and Management in Northern Belize			
- A1: Research and Dissemination of Corridor Concepts	\$15,000	0	\$15,000
- A2: Development of Incentives for Corridors	\$30,000	0	\$30,000
- A3: Development and Implementation of a Monitoring System	\$18,000	0	\$18,000
- A4: Technical Personnel	\$90,000	0	\$90,000
B: Securing Integrity of the RBMCA			
- B1: Investments Within the RBMCA	0	\$2,650,000	\$2,650,000
- B2: BELRIV Investments	\$75,000	\$25,000	\$100,000
- B3: Orange Walk Community Investments	\$75,000	\$25,000	\$100,000
C: Corridors in the N. Coastal Plain	\$265,000	\$265,000	\$530,000
D: Public Awareness and Support for Corridors			
- D1: Environmental Education in Schools	\$28,000	0	\$28,000
- D2: Environmental Education for Public	\$6,000	0	\$6,000
- D3: Facilitation of Public Participation	\$18,000	0	\$18,000
Project Administration	\$103,500	\$190,000	\$293,500
Total	\$723,500	\$3,155,000	\$3,878,500
Preparation Costs (Block A Grant from GEF)	\$24,930	\$10,000	\$34,930

Outcome A: Planning, development, and application of mechanisms for corridor creation and management, appropriate to the northern Belize context and including, primarily through actions involving major land-owners, creation of the Belize River Valley corridor from the Rio Bravo to Monkey Bay Nature Reserve.

Activity A1: Continued research into the biological characteristics and land tenure patterns of potential corridors as well as into alternative routes. This activity provides for continuing refinement of the corridor concept during the project lifetime, through further research (consultancies: US\$ 10,000) and transmission of research results to interested parties (training: US \$5,000). Total: US\$ 15,000 (all GEF funds).

Activity A2: Development of incentives for private sector and community participation in corridor creation, through easements, other legal and financial mechanisms, and promotion of revenue-generating activities compatible with conservation aims. PFB intends to thus take advantage of approaches originally developed for the RBMCA. This activity is of central importance, providing benefits to the landowner or community through participation in corridor creation and management, and can be broken down into two sub-activities.

The first is to develop a framework of incentives for private-sector participation in conservation actions, and builds upon present interest in legal and financial mechanisms facilitating such participation and promoted through the Central American Commission of Environment and Development (CCAD). The intent is to move from the general to the specific, using consultants with experience of similar initiatives in Central America, to explore the applicability of these mechanisms in the specific case of the biological corridors of Belize. This is particularly relevant in the case of the large holdings of the Belize River Valley.

The second is to take the experience, successfully developed on the Rio Bravo, in implementing revenue-generating activities compatible with conservation, and promote their use, modified as necessary, by participants in corridor management both as incentives and means of sustaining activity beyond the project life. Forms of revenue-generation include nature tourism, carbon sequestration and other land-purchase mechanisms, sustainable timber offtake, extraction of non-timber products, and development of community enterprises. Agroforestry is a new project area for Programme for Belize, and this also complements the NBBCP. Facilitating access to fresh funding sources is also envisaged. This activity consists primarily of transfer of expertise and experience.

The total budget allocation for activity A2 is US\$ 30,000 (all GEF funds). Costs are for consultancies (US\$18,000), for training (US\$10,000), and for exchange visits (travel: US\$ 2,000).

Activity A3. Development of methodology for monitoring of effectiveness of corridors as a tool for conservation, tested during the project lifetime.

The intent of this activity is to develop and test a procedure allowing internal and external evaluation of project effectiveness. This is particularly important for the corridor project, because of the breadth of actions it incorporates and the consequent risk of disaggregation into a bundle of separate activities, individually worthy but collectively not achieving a functional corridor. The cost consists of local consultancies: US\$ 18,000 (all GEF funds).

Activity A4. Provision of technical personnel for coordination and field support for corridor creation activities.

Coordination, and the provision of guidance and support in implementing activities to ensure true participation by stakeholders, is a critical element in project implementation. This activity supports the two key field posts of Project Coordinator (in overall charge of project implementation) and Community Development Worker (with particular responsibility for the community initiatives).

Both posts will be integrated into the PfB management structure. Budget allocation: US\$ 90,000 (all GEF funds).

Outcome B) Securing long-term integrity of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area as the critical link between the corridor networks of Belize and the Mesoamerica as a whole.

Activity B1. This activity refers to funding that will be disbursed by the Programme for Belize in the RBMCA during the next three years. The activities are intended to increase the sustainability of the RBMCA as a conservation unit by generating means of income generation. Investments are planned in the areas of carbon sequestration, certified timber, non-timber forest products, and ecotourism. Planned investment is \$2.65 million (all of which are funds of Programme for Belize or other financiers).

Activity B2. Technical support for community-based conservation and economic development projects identified as priorities by the Belize River Valley (BELRIV) communities.

This and the following activity will finance an outreach programme directed towards communities peripheral to the Rio Bravo. Geography and their socio-economic context distinguish the two components directed respectively towards the English/Creole-speaking Belize Valley and the Spanish-speaking northern communities.

The BELRIV communities both lie on the periphery of the Rio Bravo and form the first link in the Northern Coastal Plain corridors. PfB has already supported community actions in this area. A significant proportion of its work force (including senior staff) has also been recruited from this region. The intent is to stimulate or reinforce community initiatives that contribute to corridor aims, and that promise to be financially and socially sustainable beyond the project life. Costs lie in assistance in finance, workshops, and provision of technical support. Budget allocation - US\$ 75,000 from the GEF and \$25,000 from in-kind contributions from the communities.

Activity B3. Technical support for community-based conservation and economic development projects identified as priorities by the communities of northern Orange Walk District.

The concept here is identical to that described for BELRIV, but applied to the communities to the north and east of the Rio Bravo. It should be noted that four proposals from these communities, more appropriately addressed under this activity than through the creation of the northern coastal plain corridor, have already been received through the consultation process. Others, including at least one from the Blue Creek Mennonite Community, have also reached conceptual stage. Again, costs lie in assistance in finance, workshops, and provision of technical support. Budget allocation - US\$ 75,000 from the GEF and \$25,000 from in-kind contributions from the communities.

Outcome C) Creation of a network of corridors across the northern coastal plain from the Rio Bravo to Shipstern Nature Reserve, through community and other actions. This outcome is to be achieved by a grouping of community initiatives, each free-standing at a local level but together constituting a major part of the NBBCs.

Activity C1. Support for community-based and other projects contributing to corridor creation.

The consultation process conducted with PDF grant funding produced a range of project proposals from local CBOs and NGOs that form the basis of a corridor. These include: Barworks - protected

area and tree nursery; Shipstern Nature Reserve - enhanced protection and sustainability; Fireburn - protected area establishment; Fireburn - game-farming, ecotourism, agroforestry; Progresso Lagoon - watershed monitoring; Old Northern Highway - establishment of protected area, agricultural training, and ecotourism; Crooked Tree Lagoon - facilitating community participation in protected area management; Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve - community-based forest management and environmental education. It is recognized that modification of the original proposals may be necessary during the project life, and other good initiatives may be catalyzed during project implementation. The budget allocation is US\$ 265,000 (from the GEF) and an additional \$265,000 which is one half in-kind financing from the communities and one half co-financing from a variety of donors and NGOs working in these communities.

Outcome D) Improved public awareness and support. Three separate, but mutually reinforcing, actions are proposed to achieve this outcome. These actions would complement public awareness/outreach activities included in the community sub-projects described above.

Activity D1. Implement an environmental awareness programme in the secondary schools of the three northern districts of Corozal, Belize, and Orange Walk. This activity targets the student population, itself a potential and influential participant in corridor creation (consider for example the Progresso Lagoon proposal, submitted by the Progresso Youth Group). Funding areas includes presentations at schools, displays, production of educational materials, and support for field visits. Total budget allocation - US\$ 28,000 (all GEF funds), consisting of equipment (US\$ 10,000), training (US\$ 10,000), and travel (US\$ 8,000).

Activity D2. Implement environmental awareness programme directed towards the general public. The intent here is to create a favourable climate of opinion within which corridor creation and management can take place. Emphasis is upon reporting to the general public, via the media, initiatives and on-going activities under the project. Principal costs include the formulation of a formal strategy to be sustained over the three-year project life, and the production of presentational materials as part of strategy implementation. Budget allocation - US\$ 6,000 (all GEF funds), consisting of equipment (US\$ 2,000) and training (US\$ 4,000).

Activity D3. Facilitation of public participation in corridor activities. Meaningful participation by CBOs in corridor activities implies enhanced organization at a local level, coordination of local interest groups, and — often a major constraint — the resources for local representatives to participate on a regular basis. This is recognized by the community groups, as demonstrated by their presentation of the ASONCO concept. Post-project sustainability is in large measure dependent upon promotion during the project of a robust structure to allow continued community involvement. This activity would also support a project Technical Advisory Group, which would provide a mechanism for stakeholders to contribute to the project (see also 8.1). Budget allocation - US\$ 18,000 (all GEF funds), consisting of training (US\$ 16,000) and travel (US\$ 2,000).

Project Administration

The Programme for Belize will act as the local implementing agency for the project. It is therefore responsible to the funding agency and must provide the necessary project support services, both in the field and from the central administration. Program administration costs for the RBMCA baseline activities are estimated at \$150,000. Additional administrative costs associated with the proposed MSP would include the following major items: accounts clerk (central office - US\$ 18,000), vehicles and vehicle maintenance (field- US\$ 40,500), office equipment (field and central

office - US\$ 15,000), office maintenance costs (field and central office - US\$ 15,000), coordination expenses (US\$40,000), and audits (central office - US\$ 15,000). The MSP budget allocation for this component includes US\$ 103,500 of GEF funds for the above mentioned expenditures and an additional \$40,000 from PfB (over and above their baseline administrative costs).

V. SUSTAINABILITY ANALYSIS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Sustainability Analysis

The project has strong community, NGO, and CBO support, is designed to maintain and enhance the level of participation during implementation, and provides for local institution-building to maintain post-project activity. Because community organizations are already in place, early mobilization of support for local initiatives is possible, allowing good use to be made of the entire three-year project life. This reinforces credibility from the outset, and offers a degree of consistency in support for local initiatives that has been notably lacking to date.

There is also strong Government of Belize (GoB) support, especially from the four key ministries responsible for environmental and natural resource management. This support comes from the contribution made by the project to execution of national policies and programmes, and extends, through national participation in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project, to the regional level.

Prospects for financial sustainability are enhanced by the emphasis upon long-term incentives and local revenue-generation that are incorporated within sub-project activities. Each of the sub-projects emphasizes building up community capacity to manage and conserve their own resources and to attract additional capital (through ecotourism and a variety of income-generating activities). The ability of the local organization to guarantee some degree of long-term financing is a selection criterion for the sub-projects (see Annex 1).

It is also worth noting that Programme for Belize is a successful and well-funded NGO in Belize that attracts significant investments from the global community for many of its innovative programs. It would be hard to find an organization in Belize that might offer better perspectives for ensuring long-term support for community-based projects it feels are important to their long-term conservation and development goals. The project concept finds its origins in the commitment of Programme for Belize both to provide for the long-term future of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area and to fulfil its mandate to promote conservation of biodiversity and sustainable economic development at a national level. This is a long-term commitment, and remains effective beyond the project life-span.

Finally, it became clear during the consultations that the project area is blessed with a strong youth movement which takes biodiversity conservation and their environment very seriously. Support for this movement is channeled through the project, and provides for long-term sustainability.

Risk Assessment (and Mitigation)

The absorptive capacity to implement this and other proposed and ongoing GEF activities in the country is a risk. However, the fact that this proposed medium-sized project (and the two others in the pipeline: the PACT Project and the Sarstoon-Temash Project) are almost entirely implemented

through the non-governmental sector minimizes any risk of overwhelming the capacity of the public sector. In the particular case of this project, the fact that PFB is one of the largest NGOs in the country with more than ten years of experience in handling substantial project budgets, indicates that the executing agency has considerable absorptive capacity. In fact, the GEF donation will only represent about one quarter of the NGO's expected conservation program.

The project is dependent upon close coordination between a wide variety of sub-projects. Any disagreements within or between the array of NGOs, CBOs, private sector, and government participants, or conflicts between their various activities and programmes, could seriously handicap the project. Indeed, some degree of internal friction is almost inevitable. This places a premium on the skills of the Project Coordinator. Part of the role of the GoB's Technical Coordination Committee is to act as an arbiter if required.

A related but separate risk is that focus on corridor creation may be lost, leading to disaggregation into the array of individual projects of which it is composed. Essentially, the means of project implementation may come to be regarded as the project end. The role of the Project Coordinator, backed by previous experiences by PFB in its outreach and education programmes, is paramount. Implementation support from the World Bank, involved in many other MBC projects in the region, should also help maintain the integrated focus of the project.

Another risk, again related to the foregoing, is that unrealistic expectations may be raised by the prospect of international funding. The availability of the funding will therefore create pressure for project support for actions that, however worthy, attractive or necessary, cannot be justified through this particular mechanism. The purpose of the screening procedures now being developed are to minimize this risk. The organizational capacity developed through the project should help relieve this pressure by strengthening local organizations' ability to access new funding sources that may address other needs.

The existence of a support mechanism for community initiatives, especially if sustained for three years, may lead to dependence. This is mitigated by the screening process, which must include an exit strategy. It also requires in-kind and/or co-financing, demanding from the outset a strong indication of local support.

Some sectors of the population may choose not to participate in, or withdraw from, the project. This will create points of vulnerability along the corridor route. This is mitigated by the strategy of creating, wherever possible and facilitated by constant corridor refinement, a corridor network rather than a single corridor route. It is also possible, even probable, that not all actions identified will prove feasible as the project moves into the implementation phase. This is mitigated by flexibility in project execution, allowing redirection of funds from one action to another if this proves necessary to achieve project objectives.

A long-term risk is that rising demographic pressures resulting from population growth and immigration will overwhelm the corridors. Although largely out of the project's control, this is mitigated by taking action now, while relatively low pressure provides a window of opportunity to establish and consolidate durable structures that can better withstand or adapt to future circumstances.

VI. STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

Stakeholder Involvement

Extensive stakeholder participation was encouraged in project formulation, in recognition of the key role stakeholders would play in future implementation. Thirteen workshops, serving both to explain the concept and invite input, were held in the three districts, attended by 442 persons representing farmers, timber producers, women's and youth groups, tourism businesses, NGOs, CBOs, religious groups, government employees, political parties, GoB officials, village leaders, students at all levels and environmentalists. The opportunity presented by Lighthawk (an international NGO specializing in provision of light airplanes for conservation purposes, visiting Belize annually) allowed over 60 participants to view the entire corridor from the air. With the use of regional and national maps showing protected areas and corridors and the issue of brochures and handouts, including the use of written and TV media of national coverage, the project has already reached a wide cross section of the Belize population.

In a parallel process, a Technical Advisory Group was formed, under the Chairman of the National Biodiversity Committee of the Ministry of Natural Resources and facilitated by the National Coordinator of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project. The purpose of the Group was both to ensure integration with GoB initiatives and to address the technical, economic and social issues that must be fitted into or could impact upon the project. Three regular and three special meetings of the Group were held over the five month period of project preparation.

The concrete result of the consultation process was the submission of project proposals from a number of interested groups, and concepts from others, including the major landowners. These gave a scoping of the form of activities, and their costs, needed to address priority issues of concern to the stakeholders. The scoping has been used to frame this project proposal. The Technical Advisory Group will be maintained during implementation of the project and will play a role in selection of sub-projects as well as other aspects of the project (see also Section 8.1)

Social Assessment

A number of key issues directly relevant to the project can be drawn from the information gathered during project preparation.

This is an agricultural region but overall availability of land is not yet a constraint in the project area. Even in the smallholder areas, where individual holdings vary from 20 to 80 acres, only 20-40% of the area may be under cultivation. This does not, however, mean that land issues are not acute in some localities. Pressures are greatest along the main highways, where the needs of the established population are augmented by settlement both of poor Central American and wealthier Asian immigrants.

Other constraints are operating, however. Disparity of access to training between the poor and the non-poor has been identified. Another is lack of labor, low labor productivity, and high labor cost. In the Belize Valley, the younger people tend to emigrate for lack of local opportunities, leaving an older population employed in subsistence farming supplemented by cash remittances from their offspring. In the north, the problems are seasonal bottlenecks in production and supply instability. In general, labor implications of any new commitment is an important consideration. Finally, there are serious difficulties in accessing credit and, when available, the high direct and indirect cost of

lending is prohibitive.

These issues translate into unequivocal support for exploring and opening new markets for traditional ethnic or new products. Indeed, the Belize Valley communities already benefit from limited trade, tourism and fishing opportunities, and the communities of the Northern Coastal Plain wish to engage in similar activities. This is demonstrated by the degree of interest, mixed with caution and on some issues — notably access to land felt most strongly by particular communities — the opportunity to vent concerns, experienced during the consultation process. The specific issues raised can be grouped under the following headings:

- The need for benefits, arising from participation in corridor creation, for both large and small land-holders;
- The need for clear understanding of rights of use, ownership, and length of agreement, where land is voluntarily incorporated in the biological corridor;
- The need for a balance between pure protection and both agricultural and other land use, including hunting, but also including creation of community-managed or co-managed reserves; and
- Insistence upon inclusive and meaningful participation by local entities, opportunity for involvement of teacher and student groups, and grass-roots organization to promote local interests.

The proposed MSP has been designed to take these concerns into account.

VII. INCREMENTAL COST ANALYSIS

Baseline Scenario: The Baseline Scenario is the likely course of events that take place in the country in the absence of GEF funding. In the case of this project, Programme for Belize under the Baseline Scenario will be making a substantial investment in the Rio Bravo Management and Conservation Area but not in any other areas. The approximate funding that the Programme for Belize will be directing to the RBMCA over the next three years is estimated at \$2.8 million, which includes the costs of conservation and sustainable use projects within the RBMCA (\$2.65 million) and the costs of program administration (\$0.15 million). Funds for the existing Pfb RBMCA programs are derived from internally generated funding and from a variety of donors and funding sources (the European Union, developed country power utilities, and other smaller financiers). We consider that approximately half of the amount of \$2.8 million is generating global benefits (investments in carbon sequestration, certified timber, non-timber forest products, protection of conservation areas, and research) while half is generating national benefits (investments in ecotourism, certified timber, non-timber forest products, protection, research, and agroforestry).

GEF Alternative: The GEF Alternative Scenario includes the above-mentioned baseline activities and a number of complementary project activities (no substitutional activities are planned) which would allow Programme for Belize to extend its program in support of the establishment of several biological corridors radiating out from the RBMCA. The total cost of the GEF Alternative amounts to \$3.88 million. The GEF Alternative would generate a mixture of global benefits (long-term enhanced conservation of the biological corridors as a link in the MBC) and of domestic benefits (income-generation activities for local communities). Consequently, it is proposed that the

incremental cost of the GEF Alternative be financed by a combination of GEF and non-GEF resources.

Incremental Cost: The incremental cost of the GEF Alternative totals \$1.08 million. Recognizing that domestic benefits would be generated under the GEF Alternative Scenario, counterpart funding from non-GEF sources totaling \$355,000 would be provided as follows:

- i) Community-level financing of \$180,000 for projects in their communities;
- ii) Contributions from a variety of other donors (NGOs, bilateral donors, private sector) for a total of \$135,000;
- iii) Contribution of \$40,000 from the Pfb to cover part of the incremental administrative costs.

The incremental cost of generating global benefits under the Alternative Scenario therefore amounts to \$723,500, for which funding from the GEF is requested. GEF financial support would make possible investments that are required to supplement the funding available from other sources, in order to ensure that the various components of the project achieve the goal of consolidating the northern biological corridors in Belize. GEF financing would represent about 19% of total GEF Alternative project costs.

Incremental Cost Summary

Activity	Baseline	GEF Alt.	Increment		
	(\$US'000)	(\$US'000)	(\$US'000)		
	PfB		Others	GEF	Total
A. Corridor Planning	0.0	153.0	0.0	153.0	153.0
B. Rio Bravo Consolidation	2650.0	2650.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
C. Rio Bravo Corridors (BELRIV & Orange Walk)	0.0	200.0	50.0	150.0	200.0
D. N. Coastal Plain Corridors	0.0	530.0	265.0	265.0	530.0
E. Public Awareness	0.0	52.0	0.0	52.0	52.0
F. Project Administration	<u>150.0</u>	<u>293.5</u>	<u>40.0</u>	<u>103.5</u>	<u>143.5</u>
Total	2800.0	3878.5	355.0	723.5	1078.5

VIII. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

8.1 Stakeholder Identification

The key stakeholders identified during project preparation include the government ministries with responsibility for environmental affairs (including the Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Tourism and the Environment, and Ministry of Natural Resources), national environmental NGOs (including Programme for Belize, Belize Audubon Society, and Belize Zoo),

communities, private landowners, and community-based organizations (CBOs) active in the project area.

During the consultation process, there was ample support for the project once the project was understood by the participants. Youths, farmers, and landowners in general expressed their interest to commit their land (or parts thereof) as long as they could reasonably benefit from it, but concerns were also stated. The insights from this process have been used to create a project structure that allows for a high degree of participation but provides the necessary checks and balances for successful project execution and administration.

The primary responsibility for subproject implementation lies with the communities and landowners themselves. In the case of communities, the initiative lies with them to identify appropriate actions that address their priority needs, fulfil corridor objectives, and can pass the screening process. The major landowners are willing to discuss proposals for incorporation of their holdings, if acceptable mechanisms for incentives are devised — a process in which they will also participate. The projects already proposed during project preparation indicate there is sufficiently strong interest to make corridor creation a feasible proposition.

Programme for Belize will act as project administrator and facilitator. It will account to the World Bank as Implementing Agency for the GEF and will disburse to the on-ground implementers according to set guidelines. It will also provide technical support through its existing staff, augmented by the social development worker. The project is integrated into the Pfb management structure, with the Project Coordinator as project officer. The Project Coordinator is also responsible for maintaining close working relations with the individual on-ground implementers and their associated CBOs.

The Technical Advisory Group convened for project preparation will be retained, and will serve a triple role. First, it continues to provide a forum of local technical expertise to evaluate and advise on technical and social issues arising during project implementation. Second, it is the project linkage into the national policy-making structure. Third, by including representation of the community and other interest groups, it provides an access point for presenting local perspectives on corridor-related issues at the technical and policy-making level.

8.2 Environmental Education and Awareness

A critical ingredient in any strategy to involve the public is the emphasis the project gives to environmental education and environmental awareness building. The proposed GEF Alternative involves significant investments in this area, which are estimated as accounting for between 5 and 10% of total project costs. Environmental education and awareness investments are included in several project components (see IC Summary, page 19) although these costs are not presented separately from the main task: (a) Activity B – Pfb’s work with communities in and around the RBMCA emphasizes public awareness/environmental education activities; (b) Activities C and D – all sub-projects in the corridor areas include investments for environmental education and awareness raising as an indispensable ingredient of their conservation strategies; and (c) Activity E – the Public Awareness program includes additional activities to those integrated into community sub-projects in the RBMCA and corridor areas, such as supporting environmental awareness programs targeted to secondary schools and the general public, and facilitating stakeholder participation in project coordination mechanisms (such as the Technical Advisory Group).

IX. BUDGET AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Project Implementation Plan

The Project life is three years. The first two months of project life, timed from initial receipt of funds, represents the preparatory period for recruitment of staff, procurement of equipment, and establishment of working procedures (accounting and reporting systems, reconvening of TAC). The establishment phase - initiating contacts and activities - would take place over the next six months, followed by full project implementation over the ensuing sixteen months. The final twelve months represents a consolidation phase, in which activities are either completed or preparations are made for post-project continuation, as appropriate.

The Project Budget in US\$ by Expense Category

Expense Category	GEF	Other Sources	Project Total
Personnel	108,000	25,000	133,000
Subcontracts (consultants)	61,000		80,000
Subcontracts (community projects)	415,000	315,000	730,000
Training	45,000		26,000
Equipment and Maintenance	82,500	15,000	100,500
Travel	12,000		12,000
PfB RBMCA Investment Program (including program administration)		2,800,000	2,800,000
Project total	723,500	3,155,000	3,878,500
PDF for Project Preparation	24,930	10,000	34,930

X. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A formal internal assessment of progress under the project will be conducted annually. This will be most logically combined with the annual review meeting held to coordinate the carbon sequestration, research, and forestry programmes of PfB. Following normal PfB practice, project-specific financial audits will be conducted annually as a sub-set of the overall audit for the organization. Project reporting will follow World Bank procedures for MSPs. Disbursements will be based on satisfactory completion of agreed performance benchmarks (both programmatic and financial).

XI. TECHNICAL REVIEW

Project Activity Categories

Biodiversity	Climate Change	International Waters	Ozone Depletion
Protected Area Zoning & Management: X	None applicable	None applicable	None applicable
Buffer Zone Development: X			
Inventory/Monitoring: X			
Ecotourism: X			
Agro-biodiversity:			
Trust funds:			
Benefit-sharing: X			
Other:			

Technical Categories

Institutional Building: X
Investments: X
Policy Advice: X
Targeted Research: X
Technical/Management Advice:
X
Technology Transfer: X
Awareness/information/
training: X
Other:

SCREENING GUIDELINES for COMMUNITY SUB-PROJECTS

During preparation of the project, nine detailed subproject proposals were prepared by local community groups in the Corridor (with financial assistance from the GEF Block A grant). These proposals will be screened during project execution using the guidelines below in order to ensure their consistency with the overall project. Those that are not considered to meet threshold criteria will not be funded. In addition, a small number of additional sub-projects will be financed under the project and proposals will need to be solicited and screened during the project (especially for the sub-project investments in the Belize River Valley area and northern Orange Walk District).

1. Procedure.

The screening of project proposals will be carried out by the Project Coordinator who will prepare a written report of his evaluation for submission to the Technical Advisory Group. This Group represents a wide range of stakeholders in the project, and their participation will ensure fairness and transparency in the choice of sub-projects. The Implementing Agency, the World Bank, will also be asked to provide a no-objection prior to sub-project disbursements during the first year of project implementation, to provide an opportunity for mutual learning in applying the eligibility criteria presented below. At the end of the first year's application of this screening procedure, the process and criteria will be reviewed and any adjustments made, if needed.

2. Eligibility Criteria

2.1. The project must be consistent with the objectives of the Northern Belize Biological Corridors Project:

- The geographical location of the project must lie within one of the biological corridors identified in the Project Brief.
- There must be a concrete benefit for biodiversity conservation on the ground, measured against the likely outcome in the absence of project funding. The linkage between the project objectives and achievement of this benefit must be direct.

2.2. The project proponents must demonstrate understanding of the overall concept of the Northern Biological Corridors Project.

2.3. The project objectives must reasonably match the capability and experience of the proposing entity (including its administrative capacity).

2.4. The project must address the concerns of the community in general. The project must be structured to incorporate meaningful participation of all key stakeholders.

2.5. The objectives of the project must be clear and compelling. Is there a direct and clear linkage between actions and achievement of the objectives? Are project outcomes clearly identified, and achievable in the project life-time? Have risks been considered? Are there mechanisms to adapt the project during implementation to incorporate new information, experience, expertise, and understanding of issues, without altering project objectives?

2.6. The proponent must commit some in-kind contribution or co-financing to project costs. What proportion of project funding will the proponent commit, and what does this represent in proportion to ability to commit?

2.7. There must be a clear exit-strategy from project support to self-sustainability at project end. Will benefits outlast project life? Has the need for post-project sustainability of benefits been fully understood and realistically designed for in project formulation?

2.8. The project must include an evaluation of any possible negative environmental or social impacts and, if such are identified, must include appropriate mitigation measures.

* * * * *

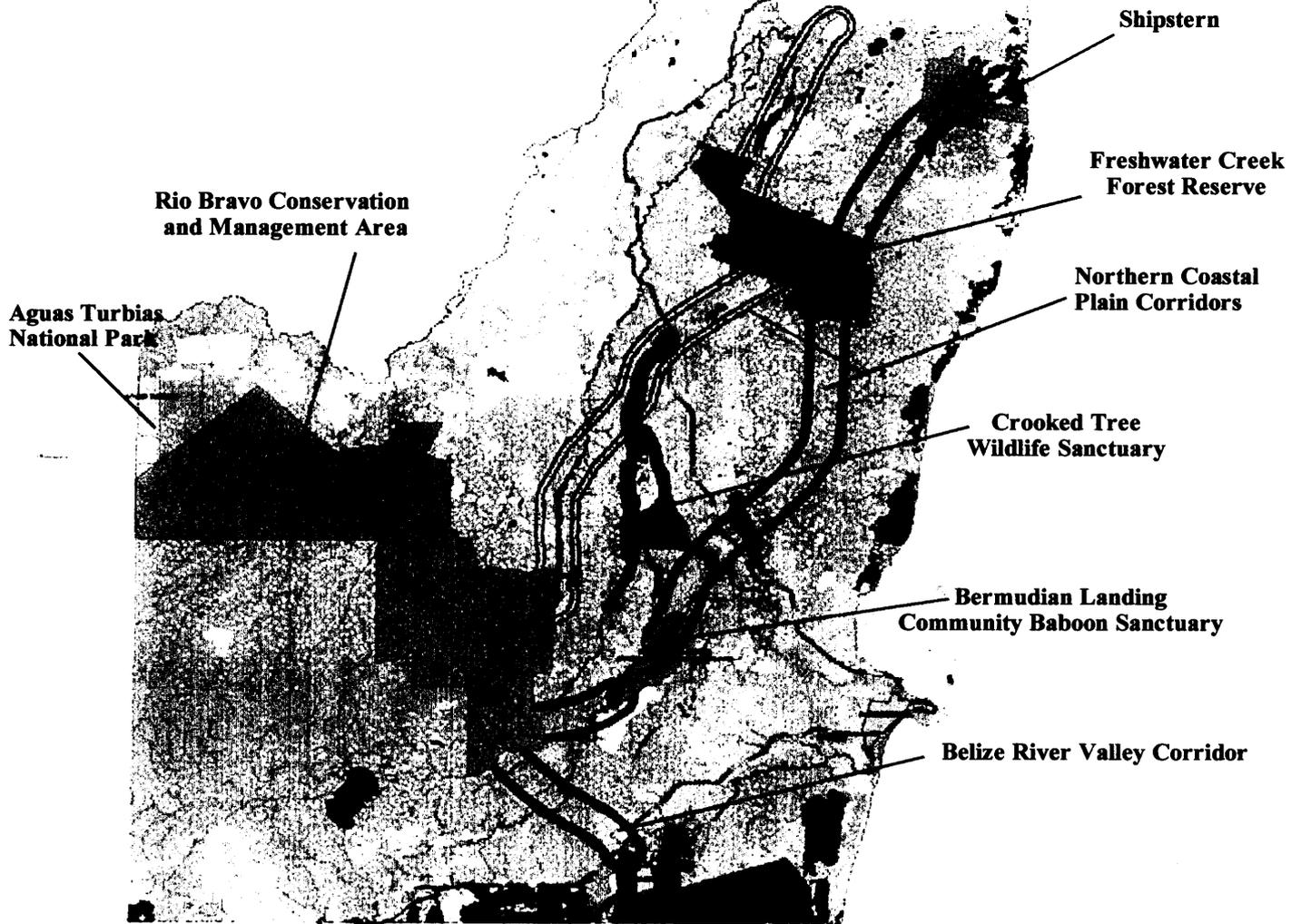
The following characteristics will also be taken into account, but are not absolutely essential in terms of determining the eligibility of the sub-project:

2.9. Is the approach innovative and original, testing new approaches to land management and/or integrating economic use and biodiversity conservation?

2.10. Does the project demonstrate practical approaches to sustainable land use that could be adopted more widely?

2.11. Will the project contribute to institutional growth of effective local organizations capable of leveraging further support favouring biodiversity conservation?

**Major Protected Areas and
Biological Corridors of
Northern Belize**



Source Data	Preparation Information	Location Map	Legend
<p>Prepared by: E. John Turner, Program Manager</p> <p>Project Title: Conservation in Belize and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor</p> <p>Project Number: Meso-Project Program for Belize, Project 1 - Meso-Project 1000</p>	<p>Map No.: 1000001</p> <p>Date: 1998</p> <p>Scale: 1:50,000</p> <p>Author: E. John Turner</p>		<p>PROTECTED AREAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shipstern Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary Bermudian Landing Community Baboon Sanctuary Belize River Valley Corridor <p>NATIONAL RESOURCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shipstern Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary Bermudian Landing Community Baboon Sanctuary Belize River Valley Corridor

BELIZE

MAY 05 1998



GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE
Ministry of Economic Development

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Our Ref.: IA/UN/1/12N/98(13)

P.O. Box 42
Administration Building
Belmopan
Belize, Central America

May 5, 1998

Ms. Kristin Elliot
Global Environment Division
Environment Department
The World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20433

Dear Ms. Elliot:

***RE: GEF MEDIUM-SIZED GRANT FOR CONSOLIDATION AND MAINTENANCE OF
BIOLOGICAL CORRIDORS IN NORTHERN BELIZE***

Further to my letter Ref: IA/UN/1/12TV/98(58) dated March 23, 1998, I wish to refer to the request by Programme for Belize for funding of the above cited project. In my capacity as Global Environment Facility Focal Point, I hereby endorse the request as submitted.

This letter also serves to confirm our agreement that Programme for Belize should be the Recipient of the GEF Grant for the above cited Medium Size Project.

Your kind consideration would be most appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Zenaida Moya (Ms.)
GEF Operational Focal Point
for Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Economic Development