

20 Years of Core Conservation

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FCD Brings in 20 Years



2019 marks 20 years of FCD's existence and 30 years since we started the conservation movement under the name Youth Environmental Action Group (YEAG). One value that became engrained on youth members was the love for the land. So that by 1999, as we metamorphosed into the FCD, the organization felt very strong in the proper management of Belize's natural resources, yet it was clear that development must occur - but it promoted the wise use of the natural and cultural resources. The organization secured staff until 2006, thus from 1989 to 2006, the organization relied solely on

After four years of lobbying, finally a Chiquibul-Vaca Forest Joint Forces Enforcement Protocol was signed on the 13th of December. The protocol is aimed at enabling the formalization of an effective joint coordination and enforcement effort amongst the agencies operating within the Vaca-Chiquibul Forest, and facilitate proper strategic communications between member agencies. The primary institutions are the Belize Defence Force, Police Department, Forest Department and the FCD. The goal is to reduce the critical illegal activities in the Vaca-Chiquibul Forest including agricultural farming, cattle ranching, marijuana cultivation and gold panning. Other secondary threats include: poaching, illegal wildlife trafficking, looting, logging, harvesting of non-timber forest produce and theft.

Signing the protocol in Belmopan were the Minister of National Security, Hon. John Saldivar; Chief Forest Officer, Mr. Wilber Sabido; and Executive Director of FCD, Mr. Rafael Manzanero.

Minister of National Security, Hon. John Saldivar on his keynote address said, "Today's signing is a very necessary

volunteer work. Planting trees, conducting clean-up campaigns and community outreach consumed most of the time and the magic for keeping the group alive were the constant outdoor expeditions.

The spirit of the outdoors is the center of the work we still do at FCD. All field personnel must enjoy the outdoors and be fit and healthy to do the rigorous outdoor tasks. All park rangers spend two weeks at a time away from home in the jungles of the Chiquibul Forest and brave the wilderness. The sense for the love of the land is felt among all staff who recognize that FCD does not possess the land we work on but instead we provide a service to Belize. Today, FCD has a conservation influence in over 495,000 acres of forest cover.

The YEAG was started by a group of young boys and girls in the community of San Jose Succotz. The office it occupied then, still remains the same now although the passing of time has taken its toll on members and infrastructure. This 20th year marks an accumulation of lessons learnt and successes and we hope that this foundation will serve as the fortitude in meeting our strategic aims ahead. We also hope to seek the funds to construct our FCD headquarters that will take us into a different era and level of growth.

Historic Joint Protocol Signed



exercise that formalizes our "all of government approach" and our inclusive and respectful posture to FCD who continues to be an exemplary NGO in executing their conservation efforts in the Chiquibul. Without your relentless efforts, the negative impacts on the ecosystems and natural environment of the Chiquibul would become increasingly noticeable and increasingly damaging as the bad practices by illegal offenders' increase."

BNCF Support Game Communities Research



For the third time a game communities research is underway. A total of 1,022 individuals representing 24 species (14 mammal and 10 bird species) were recorded during the 2013 surveys, while in 2016 a total of 1,184 individuals representing 25 game species (16 mammal and 9 bird species) were recorded. There was no significant difference in the mean abundance of species of conservation value from 2013 to 2016 as well as the abundance of Least Concern game species but an increase in observed global abundance of game species of high conservation

concern which are vulnerable, near threatened and endangered was reported in 2016 compared to 2013, such as the Baird's Tapir and White-lipped Peccary. The study also inferred that illegal hunting is happening throughout the Chiquibul Forest as evidence of this is frequently observed along trails and illegal camp sites.

The research conditions at this time are different. FCD personnel report of poachers arriving in the Chiquibul for long durations of time, indicating that this activity requires direct intervention; while extraction of non-timber forest products is low and xatero activity are at an all-time low.

With financial support from the Belize Nature Conservation Foundation, 12 standardized line transect will be surveyed and 30 motion sensitive cameras double stations will be used. Transects are to be established using a stratified-systematic sampling design. The stratification is based on three categories: Severe (Caracol Area), Medium (Millonario to San Pastor Area) and Low (Macal and Raspaculo River) hunting pressure. Four line-transects measuring a distance of two kilometers and oriented East-West are to be placed in each category; located at 2 km from each other. The results will be known by April 2019.

Goal:

FCD aims to conserve the natural and cultural resources of the western Chiquibul-Maya Mountains for the sustainable development of Belize.

Mission:

FCD pioneers adaptive management of the Chiquibul Forest to improve the ecological and cultural integrity of the western Chiquibul-Maya Mountains.

Exchange programs between technicians from Belize and Guatemala does not only serve to develop strategies together but also foments confidence. During the last quarter two exchange sessions were held at the Log Cabins. The first session brought the Environmental Police from Peten and Police Officers from Belize together with the aim of exchanging information about environmental law, regulations and learn from each other on how the police operate in addressing environmental illicit activities. Five police officers from Belize and three from Guatemala were present for the day's activity.

The second activity brought together institutions from Belize and Guatemala to devise strategies that counteract illegal wildlife trade. In past years, there have been marked successes in the capture of poachers, but the need to further strengthen this coordination across borders was seen vital. Institutions including Asociacion Balam, Foro de Justicia Ambiental, Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas, the Forest Department and FCD endorsed the development of a working group that could among other

Police Across Borders Meet



things, act to control and prevent illegal wildlife trafficking of species such as scarlet macaws and timber products.

These exchanges were made possible through the support of the British High Commission Office in Belize under the project, *Mitigating Illegal Wildlife Trafficking In the Chiquibul Forest*.

Full House 19th AGM



FCD's 19th Annual General Meeting was held on the 2nd of December at San Ignacio Resort Hotel with over 80 FCD members and friends present. Like other years, the event was sponsored by the Resort and the Annual Reports were made available in hard copy by BRC of Benque Viejo Town.

During the event facilitated by Mr. Aurelio Sho, members of the FCD Youth Environmental Group, Todos Por Un Mundo Verde, Friends of Vaca Forest Reserve, Binational Watershed Alliance and Junior Rangers formed part of the activities. FCD's Executive Director, gave an overview of the 2017-2018

highlights and an audited statement of finances was presented by the Finance Manager. The guest speaker was CEO Mr. Felix Enriquez from the Ministry of National Security (Defence) who noted on his speech, "... I want to give FCD a message of immense appreciation for what you do in the Caracol/Chiquibul and indeed our gratitude that you do this with the required passion and dedication that the task demands. In the latter part of this year the BDF responded decisively with operation dignified border which made a significant indent on the illegal farming and again the FCD was at our side providing guidance and mitigating further damages. We all depend on your leadership in the conservation efforts and we admire that you do so with confidence and with trustworthy capabilities. Through these strategic alliances and efficient coordination with relevant stakeholders, WE and the FCD along with our partners will continue to be successful."

Awards were also given to deserving staff, namely Francisco Galicia, Richard Mena Jr. and Kenney Pech, and thankyou Awards given to departing board members Dr. Isabelle Durand and Mr. Lenney Gentle. Mrs. Hannah St Luce Martinez and Mr. Mick Fleming subsequently were elected as new Board members.

Targeted Investment Launched



In 2009 a Financial and Business Plan for FCD found that the organization required funding of \$4.8 million and 35.64 staff creating a gap of approximately \$4.4 million and approximately 25 staff members that needed to be filled over the next five years. Ten years later, FCD still struggles primarily since it relies fully on Foundations. Since

its inception, FCD has received financial support from the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT). But this has always been a competitive process, until now with a major change from traditional funding to a Targeted Investment System.

On the 28th of December, the Targeted Investment Program was launched by PACT in Belize City. PACT also commemorated at this time their 22 years and committed funds to six organizations including FCD. Nearly Bz\$1.3 million was committed to the proper management of the Chiquibul National Park and Vaca Forest Reserve for the next three years. Essentially it is expected that an average of \$400,000.00 will be used annually. The project titled, *Instituting a Landscape Program for the Chiquibul Forest*, will see to it not only the implementation of activities inside the park limits but also interventions in the Vaca Forest Reserve and the Bald Hills of the Mountain Pine Ridge. The project also seeks to put FCD on its way to generating its own funds through tourism based activities.

2019 River Campaign Starts

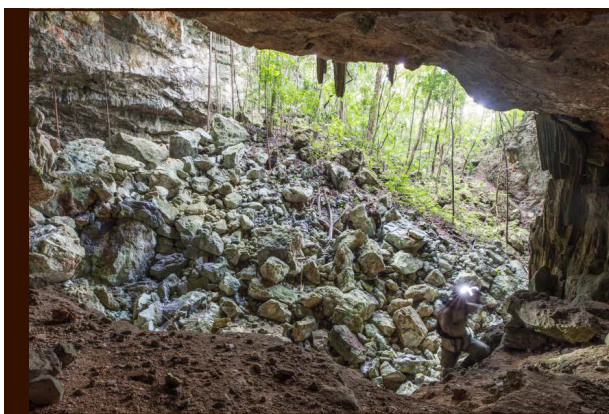
FCD's environmental education campaigns are based on a methodology developed by Rare in the early 1980's in Saint Lucia. These Pride campaigns are organized in four phases, namely developing an action plan, production of materials, community outreach and post evaluation. In this regard, FCD's two environmental educators; Justin Pook Jr and Veronica Avila finalized their action plans by December after having interviewed over 2,000 inhabitants in both Belize and Guatemala regarding river conservation awareness.

By January materials were produced and in February both started their community outreach campaigns. Both campaigns are to enhance understanding of the Greater Belize Watershed and promote community participation in river protection. The targeted rivers include the Chiquibul, Mopan, Macal and Belize Rivers. In Belize 30 communities are being visited covering over 130,000 inhabitants while in Guatemala 15 communities with over 20,000 inhabitants are being addressed.



The Chiquibul Forest is a **Gold Water Reserve**, providing this vital environmental good to over 130,000 inhabitants in Belize and over 100,000 Guatemalans. We hope that the outreach will continuously build community stewardship for the rivers and build further local and international support for the protection of the Chiquibul Forest.

Forecastle Foundation Supports CCS



Every year Forecastle Foundation (FF) undertakes several events in Kentucky, U.S as fundraising drives for the

protection of key hot spot areas. FF has selected a handful of efforts globally and the Chiquibul Forest has made it to that list since three years ago. Since that time, FF has supported ranger mobilization efforts and community outreach.

This year we were elated to learn that FF accepted to support the management of the Chiquibul Cave System. This will do a great match for the agreement that FCD undertook with the Western Kentucky University (WKU) in 2016. That agreement was aimed at facilitating specialized training for our karst management team in areas of cave inventory and mapping. With the financial support from FF we will be able to acquire necessary equipment and secure staff services that will lead to a more robust inventorying and management presence in the Chiquibul Caverns. We also hope that through this partnership the WKU will strengthen their support to our ground team in analyzing the data so far obtained and help build the capability of our staff in karst management.

FCD Programs

Protection & Enforcement

Community Development

Bi-national Relations

Education & Public Awareness

Karst Management

Research & Monitoring

Landscape Management

Monitoring & Evaluation

Financial Sustainability

Resilience Landscape Award



For the last 8 years FCD has been avidly working with farmers in the Vaca Forest Reserve. The work is based on a Landscape Management Strategy which prescribed landscape and farm level activities. At the farm level, FCD field technicians have worked with over 20 farmers in farm

planning and development of integrated farming systems. The formalization of Friends of Vaca Forest Reserve in 2015 marked the creation of a community platform with the potential of managing and utilizing the Vaca plateau resources. At the landscape level, FCD worked with cattle ranchers and farmers to promote forest corridors and connectivity. The main funder of this community to forest management and utilization approach has been championed by the Global Environment Facility-Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP).

It was our honour, therefore, that on the 20th of November, the GEF SGP awarded FCD for its Landscape efforts in the Vaca Forest Reserve. The award was given by the CEO Dr. Percival Cho of the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries, Environment and Sustainable Development. Other awardees were present at the event which commemorated 25 Years of GEF SGP in Belize.

1SCOTS Certify Rangers

After two weeks of Jungle Training aimed at enhancing the capability of park rangers to address poaching in the Chiquibul, the cohort of FCD Park Rangers were certified by the 1SCOTS of the British Army. Annually Park Rangers have to undergo training to test their leadership and fortitude to withstand the rigors of ranger duties.

FCD had previously known of the Anti-Poaching Unit of the British Army who provide training to park rangers in Africa. This time, the 1SCOT training came to be a reality for us through the support from the British High Commission and the British Army Training Support Unit in Belize (BATSUB).

Eighteen rangers undertook the theory and practical training at New Maria Camp in the Chiquibul. To do this, the area was prepared, sheds built and classroom cleaned. Two units comprised of over 25 soldiers of the British Army administered the training. In exchange, park rangers also shared knowledge on bush craft, medicinal plants and survival skills in the jungle.



BATSUB works with other conservation organizations in an effort to safeguard the environment. Their story of support can be found on an article at: <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/0c8371a6#/0c8371a6/34> that appeared on the December issue of SOLDIER Magazine.

Testing Drone Technology



Drones are used globally for a diverse set of applications. In Africa, park administrators have developed systems to monitor and protect wildlife such as elephants and rhinos. In Belize, fisheries administrators have also tested drones, but

not much work has been done in tropical forest ecosystems. Five years ago, we first tested drones but it did not appear practical. This time, thanks to Mark Wilkins, Founder of The Nature Trust of the Americas (NTOTA), we obtained technical expertise from Paul Dragos. Paul is an ex US Navy F16 fighter pilot and Director of flight training at UxvUniversity.

The training comprised of both theory and practicals for park rangers and a Belize Defence Force personnel who attended the course. The aim was for staff to sufficiently feel confident in flying a drone and test different maneuvers. After this training the FCD staff have tested the drone in the Chiquibul and are finding applications for monitoring and conducting surveillance. This technology, using more advanced drones, may possibly be used at Conservation Posts to understand movement of encroachers and help determine hotspots as well as improve effective deployment of patrol units.

For more information contact:

Friends for Conservation and Development
Chi-Hah Street
San José Succotz
Cayo District

Tel: 823-2657
Email: fcd@btl.net
website: www.fcdbelize.org

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