

*Clean Ocean And Safe Tourism*

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**BILL**

**for**

**AN ACT** to make special provisions for a moratorium on the exploration, development, and production of petroleum and natural gas resources in Belize territorial waters and its continental shelf.

**WHEREAS**, Belize's marine ecosystem is essential to the wellbeing of all Belizeans, providing clean air, clean water, food, jobs, medicines, cultural identity and biodiversity of wildlife; and

**WHEREAS**, the Belize Barrier Reef System has been designated a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization; and

**WHEREAS**, the exploration, development, and production of offshore petroleum resources should only be done with strict measures in place to protect Belize's precious marine ecosystem and with the support of Belizeans; therefore,

**BE IT ENACTED**, by and with the advice and consent of the House of Representatives and Senate of Belize and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as the

**CLEAN OCEAN AND SAFE TOURISM ACT, 2015.**

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires -

“petroleum” means all natural organic substances composed of carbon and hydrogen; and includes crude oil and natural gas, and all other mineral substances, products, by-products and derivatives that are found in conjunction with petroleum;

“petroleum operations” means the operations related to the exploration, development, extraction, production, field separation, transportation, storage, sale or disposal of petroleum.

3(1). Notwithstanding anything contained in the Petroleum Act, or any other law to the contrary, a moratorium is hereby imposed on all petroleum operations, except for transportation of petroleum produced on land or outside of Belize, in the territorial waters of Belize and in the areas of the continental shelf in which rights of exploration and exploitation are exercisable by Belize.

3(2). Petroleum operations within (a) each Marine Protected Area, National Park, and National Monument located in the territorial waters of Belize and (b) the Belize Barrier Reef System World Heritage Site are hereby permanently banned.

4. For all other areas of the territorial waters of Belize and the areas of the continental shelf in which rights of exploration and exploitation are exercisable by Belize, the moratorium imposed by section 3(1) above may only be lifted by an Act of the National Assembly upon a finding of the National Assembly that the conditions listed in Schedule 1 hereto are met.

## SCHEDULE 1

### Conditions for Lifting Moratorium

1. The Government of Belize has developed and published as law regulations a comprehensive oil spill response plan and has set aside adequate funds for the implementation of the plan;
2. The Government of Belize has conducted and published a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment of petroleum operations in Belize territorial waters;
3. The Petroleum Regulations have been revised to include detailed requirements regarding the qualifications of companies seeking to conduct offshore petroleum operations and the safety measures that must be taken during those operations;
4. The Petroleum Regulations have been revised to require companies that conduct offshore petroleum operations to contribute to a common fund to be held in trust and managed for the sole purpose of mitigating environmental damage(s) caused during offshore petroleum operations;
5. The Petroleum Act has been amended to authorize the Minister responsible for petroleum to appoint, and he or she has appointed, an environmental pollution control board to ensure that all petroleum operations comply with the requirements of environmental standards and the relevant laws of Belize;
6. The Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations have been amended to add all offshore petroleum operations, including seismic testing, to the list of activities requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment that is set forth in Schedule 1 of those Regulations;
7. An independent economics expert retained by the Government of Belize has conducted a thorough analysis of the costs and benefits of offshore oil development to Belize and concludes that on balance the overall benefits substantially outweigh the costs; and
8. The people of Belize have approved lifting of the moratorium in a referendum conducted pursuant to the Referendum Act.