



SCIENTISTS' LETTER TO BELIZEANS

June 30, 2011

We, the undersigned scientists representing 10 nationalities, have studied the diversity of the marine life in Belizean waters over the last three decades.

We gathered in Belize City on June 29-30 2011 at a science conference held at the Belize Biltmore Plaza in Belize City, Belize, to compile and review the knowledge of this biodiversity: the living marine organisms; the plants, animals, fungi, and other species associated with the coral reefs, mangrove forests, seagrass beds, and sand and mud areas that together comprise the Belizean Barrier Reef and Atoll complex.

We have also considered the vulnerability of this biodiversity to threats such as destructive fishing practices, uncontrolled effluent from land, poorly planned development on land, and both chronic and acute oil spills.

Given the enormous importance of the diversity of marine life to the Belizean economy, way of life and national pride, notably through its contributions to fisheries, tourism, and coastal protection, we urge Belizeans to fully acquaint themselves with this wealth of marine life along their coastline, and to protect it when developments- such as oil drilling- are proposed as these endanger this foundation of Belize's natural wealth.

Sincerely Yours,
Scientists:

		
	Melanie McField	Nadia Ford
		
	Janet Orbin	
	Ellen Hoopes	
	Richard B. Aronson	

