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Annual Report  
2019 - 2020







## Annual Report 2019-2020

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## Letter From The VP



Full disclosure: annual reports are due in April of the following year. So, you can imagine that sitting down this April, when it seems like the world has been turned upside down, to recap the events of 2019 feels like time travel into the distant past.

To start at the end, in December, we were disappointed by the Government of Belize's

decision to declare gillnets a destructive fishing gear but then declined to ban its use in Belizean waters. Based on the common commitment that no licensed Belizean fisher should be marginalized by this policy change, Oceana had successfully fundraised a million Belize dollars to support transition efforts. At that point, only 83 persons were potentially eligible to receive financial support. (Spoiler alert: today that figure down dropped to a marked smaller number). Other ally organizations, like the Coalition for Sustainable Fishers, had similarly engaged in fundraising. The combined efforts put the total financial support on the table at an unprecedented figure of two million dollars.

That the Government of Belize would later declare these funds "insufficient" was irreconcilable. But this rejection strengthened our resolve. Throughout the year, several incidents had exposed the sad reality that those most resistant to transitioning away from the gear were using gillnets illegally. A gillnet license is \$25 per year, (or about 5 cents a day). Even more disturbing is the fact that a number of users are not even able to meet the basic requirements for a commercial fisherfolk

license, much less the special permit required for gillnets. The data Oceana was able to obtain through our Freedom of Information Act request continued to prove critical in getting out these data points to the public.

Informed decision making is also at the heart of an exciting pilot project connected to our efforts at promoting sustainable fishing practices. As a part of our role in the Fish Right, Eat Right initiative, and with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank, over the next two years, the Market-Based Incentive for Responsible Fishing project will collect and then apply data related to fin fish supply and demand in Belize. One of the tangible outcomes will be a user-friendly, digital platform that will connect fishers fishing sustainably to seafood buyers interested in buying sustainably sourced seafood. The project will establish baseline data on the finfish species being extracted, reveal who is buying them and highlight the logistical opportunities that would increase national access to fresh seafood.

We closed out 2019 without a ban on single use plastic food items but the Belizean public's growing commitment to the breaking their plastic habit is

a significant comfort. We remain committed to supporting the Government achieve the ban. We will continue to do so through our role as Vice Chair of the Communications and Public Awareness Working Group as well as via the Technical Committee that will establish the standards for the alternatives that will replace banned items. Based on lessons learnt in other jurisdictions, it will be critical to ensure that replacement products are not plastic in another form in order to actually achieve environmental benefits. Plastic made from corn (or any other natural base) is still plastic and is just as harmful to the marine and terrestrial world as plastic made from petroleum.

Our work on all these fronts continues to be bolstered by our two most important assets—our dedicated staff and our unwavering supporters. The leadership and support of the people of Belize to see the implementation of national policies that safeguard and sustainably develop our incredible natural resources has been invaluable. We are grateful beyond words but in celebrating our ten-year anniversary as a non-governmental and not for profit organization in Belize, in 2019, we did our

best to say thank you every way possible and reiterated our continued commitment to loving and protecting our home, our Belize.

As these surreal days of 2020 has taught us, working together to make Belize as strong and independent as possible is paramount to the quality of our collective future; a future that can be bountiful and beautiful if we manage our natural resources sustainably.

Sincerely,

*Janelle Chanona*  
Janelle Chanona  
VP, Oceana in Belize





# Oceana's Approach

## How We Work

OCEANA WAS CREATED TO IDENTIFY PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS AND MAKE THEM HAPPEN.

Our oceans are in trouble. But the good news is that together we can restore the oceans to their former glory. Since its founding, Oceana has won more than 100 victories around the globe and protected more than one million square miles of ocean. Oceana has the tools to win. We are -

### CAMPAIGN-DRIVEN:

We channel our resources towards strategic, directed campaigns to achieve measurable outcomes that will protect and restore our oceans to former levels of abundance.

### FACT-BASED:

We believe in the importance of science in identifying problems and solutions for the oceans.

### MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AND EXPERT:

Our scientists work closely with our teams of economists, lawyers, communicators and advocates to achieve tangible results for the oceans.

### SUPPORTED BY CITIZENS AND ALLIES:

Oceana has a base of close to one million supporters, including 1.2 Million Wavemakers globally. Our Ocean Council is a select group of academic, business, policy and philanthropic leaders who represent and support Oceana's efforts on the global stage. Locally, Oceana is supported by over 2,500 Belizean Wavemakers.







# Campaigns and Victories

Oceana's long-term vision for the Belize Barrier Reef is a thriving ecosystem, capable of producing abundant, healthy marine resources that support a vibrant and sustainable local economy for Belizeans. To this end, in 2019, Oceana in Belize primary focus was to obtain a commitment from the government to phase out and eventually ban the use of gillnets in Belize's marine environment.

Status: In Progress



# On the Ground and in the Water

## RESPONSIBLE FISHING

Belize's marine resources, if managed responsibly, can provide healthy seafood meals, stable income, and fulfilling livelihoods for countless Belizeans in perpetuity. The still-legal use of gillnets in Belize threatens this future.





## GILLNETS

Gillnets are indiscriminate in their catch, and the fishers who use them often find much more than their target species caught in its mesh. This “bycatch,” which is often discarded, can include protected species like sportfish, sea turtles, and even manatees.

Since December 1997, when more than 200 commercial fishers from Punta Gorda wrote a letter to the Fisheries Department, petitioning to stop the use of gillnets in Belizean waters to “preserve today for tomorrow’s future”, Belizeans have been asking for the nets to be banned. These fishers had personally witnessed the impact of this gear on key marine species and important habitats and they came together to take a stand.

Yet more than two decades later, Belizean fishing-based livelihoods are being threatened daily by this gear. But given the importance of sustainable fishing practices, to safeguard the more than 15,000 beneficiaries of fishing and our national food security, this issue has not fallen to victim to time.

As a trusted voice for ocean conservation and sustainable management in Belize, and an ally of fisherfolk, coastal communities, and

ecotourism representatives throughout the country, Oceana has led the charge for a phase-out of gillnets in Belize’s waters.

In 2019, Oceana took significant steps towards securing a ban on gillnets in Belizean waters.

These include:

1. Compelling the Fisheries Department to publicly release data on the number of licensed gillnet and shark fishers in Belize;
2. Together with our partners in the Coalition for Sustainable Fisheries, announcing the commitment of one million USD to support transition efforts for licensed, Belizean gillnetters;
3. Generating extensive support for our campaign from high-ranking elected officials like the Prime Minister, the Minister of Tourism, both Ministers of Fisheries, and other Cabinet officials; and
4. Winning support from local stakeholders and associations that collectively represent approximately 90% of licensed fishers in Belize. But these accomplishments were not enough to convince the government to announce a ban this year. On December 5th, The Government of Belize did announce intentions to implement

new measures to control gillnets in Belize, including a moratorium on new licenses, a larger mesh size, and regional prohibitions on gillnets, but stopped short of announcing a complete ban on this gear. With this decision, the Government turned down a 2 million BZD financial aid package that would have been disbursed to licensed Belizean fishers as part of their agreement to transition away from this destructive gear. By effectively maintaining the status quo, the Government of Belize has protected illegal and unlicensed users of this gear and has also failed to safeguard the livelihoods of the 97% of commercial fishers who do not use gillnets. They also are ignoring the hundreds of Belizeans who depend on catch and release fishing in the tourism sector.

To complement its efforts against gillnets, Oceana has also partnered with local businesses to increase the awareness of how destructive gillnets are. In September 2019, Oceana facilitated the donation of a 28’ Bradley Pelican marine vessel, Tiburon, powered by two 115 horse power outboard engines, to the Belize Coast Guard. The vessel was donated in an effort to combat illegal fishing, piracy, and drug trafficking in Belizean waters.

The donation was made possible through the kind support of multiple partners.



During the official boat handover ceremony, Vice-Commandant Captain Elton Bennett said that this platform will enable the Coast Guard to execute its mission of enforcing maritime laws at sea, to extend its operational reach and to deter illegal activities from our sea spaces.

“We’re pleased to assist in the expansion of your sea-going fleet as you continue to patrol the nooks and crannies of our country, as you



work to safeguard the marine resources that so many of us depend on. We depend on you and we’re trusting in you to be a meaningful enforcement presence for the nation and this is just a drop in the bucket of our gratitude for you doing that every single day,” stated Janelle Chanona, Vice President of Oceana Belize.

The net worth of the donation is valued at just over BZ\$124,000.

We also continued to prominently feature fishers and their families in Oceana’s social media and public communications campaigns and have continued our annual “Ocean Heroes” awards program, which recognizes two individuals for their exceptional leadership and advocacy on issues impacting Belize’s marine environment. We also gave presentations and held meetings in Corozal, Belize City, Stann Creek, Toledo, and the Cayes with local community members to discuss the importance of protecting Belize’s marine resources.

In 2020, Oceana will continue to campaign alongside the hundreds of fisherfolk, tourism allies, businesses and individuals just like you, for a phase out of gillnets in Belizean waters. Through communication and collaboration, this is entirely possible! Together we can keep fishers fishing and continue to take care of their families with dignity...just without using a destructive gear.

## FISH RIGHT, EAT RIGHT

Oceana originally launched its Fish Right, Eat Right (FRER) program in 2016 to create incentives for fishers to use sustainable gear, as part of our larger gillnet campaign. It is designed to connect fishers not using destructive fishing gear with restaurateurs willing to pay a premium price for sustainably caught fish. To date, 22 restaurants are formally participating in the program. Our efforts in 2020 will support the expansion and growth of FRER through technology development, outreach, engagement, and training workshops with Belizean fisherfolk, restaurateurs, and hoteliers. We will focus much these efforts in Caye Caulker and San Pedro, two of the largest markets for domestic finfish in Belize.

On October 31st, 2019, Oceana’s Vice President, Janelle Chanona, and the Inter-American Development Bank’s President, Luis Alberto Moreno, signed a technical agreement for the project “Market-based Incentives for Responsible Fishing”. The aim of this project is to create a virtual marketplace focused on better connecting consumers with suppliers, key harvesting data like date and location of fish catch, and priority access to the virtual marketplace for participants in Belize’s Fish Right Eat Right program.

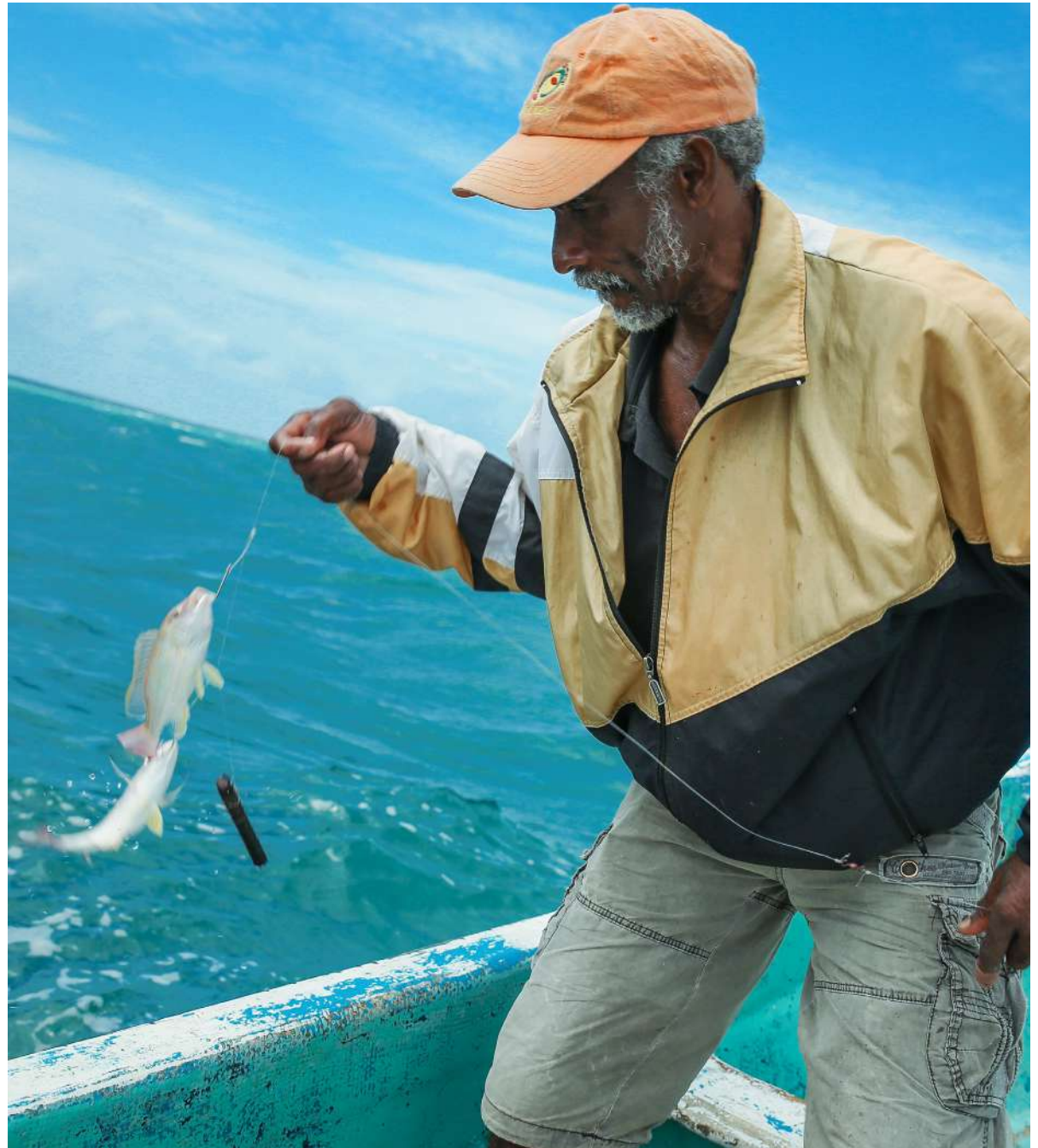


Through this partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank, Oceana will develop a mobile app to digitally connect fisherfolk with restaurants, hotels, and other prospective buyers of domestically sourced finfish in San Pedro and Caye Caulker.

This digital platform will incentivize responsible fishing practices by providing premium visibility and advertising for individuals or organizations that participate in our FRER program.

Oceana will also establish data-sharing partnerships with relevant government agencies to ensure that any data collected on Belize's finfish sector is made available to relevant stakeholders. Such agencies include the Fisheries Department, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Ministry of Fisheries.

Through this project, Oceana will also conduct a market analysis of finfish supply and demand in San Pedro and Caye Caulker to better understand fishing pressure, identify knowledge gaps, and highlight opportunities for improved management of Belize's finfish sector. By compiling and updating such data, Oceana can help inform future government actions to limit overfishing either through public policy or incentives for private businesses.







# On the Ground and in the Water

## REDUCING SINGLE USE PLASTICS

Through our ongoing role as the co-chair of the Communications and Public Awareness Working Group, Oceana continued to increase the public's support for the ban of single use, disposable plastic, and Styrofoam products within the food sector.



We pushed the Government to announce a new deadline to compel local manufacturers and/or distributors of single use items to alter their practices. We have also determined that moving forward, we will have to increase our engagement with the Ministry of Trade to ensure that appropriate work is being done to adjust the relevant tariffs and fees to allow reasonable costs to import/produce environmentally friendly food containers and utensils.

We will continue to advocate for the ban on single use, by championing the food vendors who are using environmentally friendly alternatives and practices ahead of the legal changes. We are also advocating that the approved alternative products will not be plastic based in any way, shape or form.

In late November, as part of Oceana's ten-year anniversary activities, we profiled large local businesses who are committing to plastic reduction.

In December 2019, Oceana launched its "12 Ways to Reduce Plastic Use this Christmas" integrated media campaign, featuring local influencers and celebrities sharing ways they reduce plastic use on social media, television, and radio.

In the coming year, Oceana will launch a public awareness campaign to encourage Belizean businesses and influencers to voluntarily transition to alternative products and environmentally friendly practices ahead of the law. We will also leverage the Reef Week platform to enhance and increase support for the ban on single use plastic and polystyrene products in the food sector by highlighting the positives of other countries' bans on similar products and to drive support for a strong and effective draft Bill of the ban on single use plastic and polystyrene products.

## PRESENTATIONS AND BROWN BAG SESSIONS

In 2019, Oceana's field representatives continued to engage Belizeans across the country on the destructive fishing practices such as the use of gillnets, as well as the benefits of a phase out of single use plastics in Belize. To do this effectively, we reach Belizeans where they are – in the classroom, at the office, and at national events countrywide - through school presentations, brown bag sessions, and information booths. In 2019 a total of 156 school presentations were conducted at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions

across the country. In addition, 173 brown bag sessions were held at various organizations and institutions including banks, telecommunications offices, public utilities offices, hotels, restaurants and other businesses countrywide. Finally, 116 information booths were hosted countrywide at national events, tourism expos, and school fairs to name a few. Through these forums, Oceana continues to raise awareness on our campaigns while cultivating lasting relationships with Belizean supporters.

## COASTAL CLEAN-UP

On Saturday, September 28th, 2019, more than 1,500 of Oceana's wavemakers and volunteers participated in the 29th annual nation-wide cleanup led by the Belize Scouts Association and supported by other organizations and schools to remove trash and debris from riverbanks, waterways and beaches. Wavemakers, equipped with biodegradable garbage bags and gloves, removed trash from coastal areas of Belize City, Punta Gorda, Independence, Hopkins, Corozal, and along river ways in Orange Walk and San Ignacio.

Among the most commonly collected items were plastic bags, Styrofoam products, straws, bottle caps, plastic utensils and aluminum wrappers.



“Beyond having an immediate impact on local waterways, cleanups are an important way of raising awareness”, stated Janelle Chanona, Vice-President of Oceana. “It is entirely possible to break our single-use plastic and Styrofoam habit. These items are hurting the health of everything we depend on economically. By supporting the companies offering reusable and biodegradable options, we can create a cleaner, healthier Belize.”

Belize joins over 100 other countries as part of the Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup, the largest global volunteer effort to collect and document the trash littering coastlines. This year’s theme, “Fighting for Trash Free Seas”, highlights the scale of ocean trash, particularly plastic, which not only pollutes our waterways and coastlines, but negatively impacts marine life and our physical well-being. Every article of trash collected, is recorded and the information sent to the Ocean Conservancy to document the state of marine litter in Belize along with other countries that participated. In 2018, Belize removed over 13,000 lbs of trash from its waterways and coastline.

Oceana thanks all wavemakers and volunteers for doing their part to ensure a clean and healthy ocean free of trash.







# On the Ground and in the Water

## CLEAN ENERGY

The Petroleum Operations (Offshore Zone Moratorium) law, which indefinitely prohibits offshore oil exploration and drilling everywhere Belize exercises maritime jurisdiction, became law on December 31st, 2017. Since it was enacted, Oceana has referred to it as “The People’s Law” because it has been the unwavering position of the Belizean people that the risks associated with offshore oil is simply too great; any “benefit” is short term and the damage to quality of life, job and food security is irrevocable.



In 2019, in the context of international news reports of devastating offshore oil spills, Oceana continued to champion the government and people of Belize for saying no to the inherently dangerous and dirty reality of offshore oil. We continued to observe the anniversary of one of the worse environmental disasters in human history: the BP oil spill which occurred on April 20th 2010.

In 2018, Oceana successfully enhanced national endorsement of the ban and leveraged media coverage to increase international visibility of Belize's leadership. The importance of the moratorium was the main feature of Belize's annual Reef Week. We emphasized how the legislation impacts Belizeans and the importance of the protections for our country and citizens as well as the role of the legislation in climate change mitigation efforts at a national and regional level.

In June 2018, we hosted an award ceremony to promote the moratorium and to honor Prime Minister Dean Barrow for his decision to ban offshore oil drilling in Belize. At the event, the Prime Minister highlighted Oceana's key role in achieving this ban and in "pushing leaders to go further" than they would have ever contemplated. The offshore oil moratorium was also a key factor in the decision by the

United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Center to acknowledge Belize's steps towards meaningful stewardship and safeguarding of its World Heritage Site status. At its meeting in late June, UNESCO announced that Belize is no longer on the Sites in Danger list.

## HANDS ACROSS THE SAND

On Saturday May 18th, 2019 at noon, Belizeans from across the country joined hands on beaches, across bridges, in conference rooms and along seawalls and other public areas to celebrate in OCEANA's 2019 Hands Across the Sand in solidarity against offshore oil development in Belize's economically important marine environment. Over two hundred ocean-lovers from Orange Walk Town, Dangriga, Belize City, Placencia, Corozal Town, San Ignacio, Hopkins, Sarteneja, Punta Gorda, Caye Caulker, San Pedro and Belmopan were a part of this year's event hosted by Oceana Belize.





In its ninth year, the celebration was extra special because just over a year ago, Belize made the historic decision to say “NO” to an offshore oil industry by passing an indefinite offshore oil moratorium to safeguard our marine wealth.

“People need clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, food to eat, medicines, a climate we can live in, beauty, inspiration and recreation all of which the ocean provides. Our lives literally depend on this resource”, says Janelle Chanona, Vice-President of Oceana in Belize. “As Belizeans, we are proud custodians of some of the most diverse and productive marine ecosystems in the world and as such, we must continuously act to safeguard those resources for today and future generations. Belize joins eight countries globally who partake in Hands Across the Sand and stands in solidarity with thousands who say “YES” to greener policies and renewable energy sources.”

Held annually across the world, Hands Across the Sand is also a unique platform to promote clean energy alternatives to fossil fuels, saying “NO” to fossil fuels and “YES” to clean energy like solar and wind power. The forming of symbolic barriers against offshore oil began after the BP Oil Spill in 2010, a deadly event of which the effects are still felt today.



## **REEF WEEK 2019:** “STORIES OF OUR REEF, WRITTEN AS ONE... DIS BOND KYAAHN BROK!”

March was one of the busiest Months for Oceana as the team spearheaded the planning of the annual Reef Week! Held between March 8th to March 17th, this week is dedicated to raising awareness on the importance of protecting and preserving our beautiful Barrier Reef. The week is planned in celebration of

Mesoamerican Reef Day on March 10th, each year launching under a different theme. This year’s theme was: Stories of our Reef written as one... dis bond kyaahn brok!” Reef Week activities were especially important as April 22nd is set to be the commencement day of the phase out of single-use plastic and Styrofoam products in Belize. Oceana Belize hosted its annual Ride to the Reef, a cycling ride from Belmopan to Belize City. Our other events included: our Instagram competition, the Paint the Reef night, an Oceana movie night and the introduction of our metal Tiger Grouper Fish used to collect plastic bottles in Punta Gorda.





Oceana also partnered with TASA (this needs to be spelled out) in Corozal to conduct presentations at several schools and to do a poster competition. We had cleanups, a football tournament, and even attended an environmental fair hosted by Nazarene High School in Belize City. Other activities done by our partners included: La Ruta Maya River Challenge from San Ignacio to Belize City; Little Water Caye Clean up in Placencia; the Lionfish Derby and also the annual Reef Fair, which was held in Orange Walk Town on March 15th, with the annual English Caye Reef Swim as the closing event. There were also beach clean ups, presentations at several schools, social media competitions and Fish Right Eat

Right restaurant certifications countrywide. We continue to work diligently and improve our relationships so that next year's Reef Week is an even greater success!

## WORLD OCEANS DAY

As part of national activities commemorating World Oceans Day 2019, hundreds of Oceana Wavemakers across the country observed World Oceans Day with different initiatives including but not limited to:

- Beach Cleanups in Corozal, Caye Caulker, Hopkins, Snake Caye and Punta Negra

- Student Presentation and Art Sessions in Punta Gorda town, along with the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

- School presentation in Belize City with the Belize Scouts Association

- Private Sector Partnerships such as "Turtle Twirl" flavor collaboration with the Ice Cream Shoppe Belize

- Screening of the movie, "A Plastic Ocean" during a family movie night held in partnership with the Embassy of the United States, the Belize Audubon Society and Department of the Environment at the Governor General Field in Belmopan

- Video PSA featuring Belizeans countrywide sharing why they are most thankful for the ocean "While the oceans matter to us every day, World Oceans Day serves as a unique opportunity to not only be reminded of all of the bounty the oceans bestow upon us, but also to be inspired to take action to mitigate threats from plastic pollution and marine litter, unsustainable fishing practices and dirty industries like offshore oil", states Janelle Chanona, Vice-President of Oceana in Belize. "As advocates for our oceans, we believe it's not enough to just say we love our marine resources, we need to start acting like we do."







# Online and In the News

In 2019, Oceana's social media following grew to 41,914 supporters; 22,971 followers on Facebook and 20,460 followers on Instagram.

## CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

Oceana has been and continues to be an unwavering supporter of the Belizean people's call for better stewardship of its natural resources and increased protection for its invaluable marine environments.

Since 2009, Oceana has led efforts to secure a ban on bottom trawling in Belizean waters, the unanimous passing of the Petroleum Operations (Offshore Zone Moratorium) Bill, 2017 which placed an indefinite moratorium on offshore oil in Belize's marine territory, and most recently – the launching of the Fish Right Eat Right Program, a responsible sourcing of seafood certification program, among other milestones.

Following the ban of bottom trawling in 2010,

Belizean fishers with a cast net in hand, can now take a few steps off the coastline and catch wild, fresh shrimp feeding their families and making a dignified living.

Oceana continues to work to ensure that Belizeans will be able to fish for generations to come and continues to advocate for the phase out and eventual ban of gillnet use in Belizean waters. By stopping the use of gillnets, Belize would take a meaningful step in safeguarding the more than 15,000 Belizean that depend on a viable fishing sector.

Gillnets compromise the health of commercial fish stocks, the abundance of protected and/or endangered species and the economic benefits of both commercial and recreational fisheries. The gear also threatens the overall health of the reef system, which is a major source of employment, enjoyment and food for the people of Belize.

Oceana is proud to work with and support Belizeans, who remain steadfast in their resolve for the safeguarding of their resources and their love for their untold natural wealth. To celebrate, we published a video on all of

our social media outlets thanking Belizeans for their years of leadership and support for the kinds of national policies that make our lives possible; as well as issued at 10-year anniversary commemorative eco-coffee cup.

## RESPONSIBLE FISHING AND PHASING OUT OF GILLNETS IN BELIZE'S WATERS

Oceana's advocacy efforts over the last ten years has shown that the Belizean public is firmly against gillnetting in Belizean waters. Our Communications strategy has always been to remain as transparent as possible with the Belizean public, and this has proven successful in maintaining their engagement and involvement with the responsible fishing campaign.

Our media strategy has consisted of direct calls for transparency to the Fisheries Department, requesting the number and details of gillnet licenses issued to fishers. We have and continue to





utilize broadcast media, specifically television and radio to build visibility and support for the campaign, via strategically placed advertisements, press releases and media interviews, as well as appearances on local morning talk shows.

Top press coverage around this issue includes radio and television interviews featuring Oceana in Belize's Vice-President, Janelle Chanona and Communications Director, Alyssa Carnegie on the destructive nature of the nets and the \$2 Million BZD raised to in support of licensed gillnet fishers who voluntarily give up their nets.

To complement this policy effort, the Fish Right, Eat Right Program (FRER) was created with the goal to have seafood purveyors become part of the solution to managing and protecting Belize's natural resources, by agreeing to purchase only seafood that is legally caught, and follow the best management practices, reducing the market for juvenile seafood products and other unsustainable practices. The program is implemented by the Belize Fisheries Department (BFD) and Belize Tourism Board (BTB), along with the support of Belize Federation of Fishers, Belize Fishermen Cooperative Association, Belize Tourism Industry Association, Oceana Belize, Wildlife

Conservation Society (WCS), and Environmental Defense Fund.

FRER has certified various restaurants on Ambergris Caye for their efforts in promoting sustainable seafood.

Media coverage around Fish Right, Eat Right has included digital and broadcast media hits, in the form of blogs, social media posts, local radio and tv talk show appearances, and interviews.



## EVENTS

### Oceana's 10th Annual General Meeting

On Saturday, October 19th 2019, Belizeans from across the country came out in waves to the Saint Catherine Academy Auditorium in Belize City to participate in Oceana's Annual General Meeting (AGM) of its dedicated volunteers, our "Wavemakers". Over four hundred Wavemakers from Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize, Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo districts, as well as from Caye Caulker and Ambergris Caye attended this year's event.

During the AGM, several Wavemakers were awarded certificates of appreciation for their sensational, above and beyond support for Oceana's campaigns and initiatives over the past year. Among the awardees were Nancy Aguilar from Corozal; Phinehas Sylvania from Orange Walk; Larsha Pascascio from the Belize District; Charlotte Jones from Caye Caulker; the Sacred Heart College Interact Club from San Ignacio; Russel Murray Jr. from Stann Creek and Royoko Kimura from Toledo. Oceana was also proud to recognize Mrs. Yvette Sanker Riverol as the National Wavemaker of the year.

Mrs. Yvette Sanker Riverol is a teacher at the Corozal Junior College (CJC), where she

spearheads environmental activities for both her students and community. She has been volunteering with Oceana for almost ten years, having assisted in the 2011 signature drive that led to the People's Referendum against offshore oil. Mrs. Yvette also helps to recruit volunteers for Oceana by encouraging current and past students to participate in our activities. She is an active advocate for the ban of single use plastics and proudly encourages greener practices around campus. Ms. Yvette is a strong pillar of support for the CJC Wavemaker base and by extension, the entire Corozal community.

Invited guest speaker, Ms. Stacey Alpuche, an Environmental Engineer by training with a passion for water quality analysis, wastewater treatment plants and lake restoration, presented on the sources and harmful effects of water pollution, control methods as well as its relevance in our environment today, specifically the crisis currently affecting parts of the New River.

Keynote speaker, Mrs. Tanya McNab-Fields - Creative Director at McNab Visual Strategies and Green Light Ltd., as well as a founding partner of Plastic Free Reefs. McNab-Fields' highlighted the peril and pervasiveness of plastics and shared that while the scale of use is overwhelming, the response doesn't have to be. She stressed that personal action doesn't need to be drastic to be impactful.





Both presentations were followed by engaging dialogue during the question and answer segment.

Belizean Wavemakers are part of the more than a million Oceana members that support the protection and restoration of the world's oceans.

## OCEANA'S 2019 OCEAN HEROES

On Saturday, October 5th, Oceana formally recognized two extraordinary Belizeans as the 2019 Ocean Heroes: fisherman and sea advocate, Dale Fairweather and fisherwoman and avid diver, Guadalupe Lampella.

President, Janelle Chanona, stated "Our Ocean Hero Award winners have done amazing things, but they didn't start at that level. Many of them came from humble or ordinary beginnings, but along the way, someone or something sparked their interest and their action. Tonight, we are here to honor two Belizeans who are doing extraordinary things to ensure the future is both beautiful and bountiful. They illustrated that progress and change is within our reach. Their action and impact show us what Belize can truly do. Ahead of any laws, they are recognizing that behavior change is not just possible, it's necessary. Our brave ocean has

tried so very hard to take everything we're doing to it but it can only do so much. We aren't crazy for working to ensure that things like clean air, clean water and biodiversity are passed on to next generation. Our loved ones have a right to those things. Like the tide, we rise and fall..."

### Guadalupe Lampella, Ocean Hero 2019

Mrs. Guadalupe Lampella has been diving for conch, lobster and fish since childhood, quickly realizing that the sea and its bounty would become her lifeline. Growing up fishing in Southern Belize, Guadalupe has seen the depletion of fish stock throughout the years, motivating her to be an advocate for the health of our marine resources. In 2016, Lampella was recognized as the "Outstanding Fisher Folk" of that year. She has been an active advocate in her fishing community of Riversdale, often expressing the importance of women in fisheries and their role in sustainable fishing. Even today, Lampella urges us to do our part, to have that love for our country and to preserve it so that we can have it for tomorrow. Guadalupe Lampella's son, Alex Mendoza, accepted the award on her behalf.

### Dale Fairweather, Ocean Hero 2019

Dale Fairweather grew up in the quaint coastal village of Placencia, an upbringing that inevitably



tied him to the sea for life. A fisherman at Turneffe for over two decades, Fairweather has traversed the entire Turneffe Atoll in search of conch, lobster and finfish using a variety of fishing methods



that he has continuously expanded with the changing times. Throughout his career, he has been an advocate for the fisherfolk community, holding positions on the board of the Belize Federation of Fishers as well as the Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association. In 2012, Dale played a critical role in the Turneffe Atoll receiving its protection status in the Marine Protected Area System. Fairweather also offers his personal time to educating students on the need for responsible management of our natural resources, specifically as it relates to the fisheries sector in Belize. Within his community and across the country, Dale continues to be regarded as a voice for the fishers.

“I think that everyone should be aware of sustainable fishing practices so that whenever they see that seafood on their plate, they’ll know how it got there, by sustainable fishing and not by just taking everything and just killing everything – the big ones, the small ones, everything – it’s a form of economic benefit for the country also that people know about sustainable fishing”, shared Fairweather.

The Oceana Ocean Hero Awards began in 2009. Past award recipients are Lionel “Chocolate” Heredia, Dr. Melanie McField, former Fisheries Minister Rene Montero, Lisa Carne, Jamal Galves, Miguel Alamilla, Captain Romauldo

Badillo Sr., Janet Gibson, Wil Maheia, Luz Hunter, Madison Edwards, Michael Heusner and Captain Earl David Jr.

Prime Minister of Belize, Rt. Hon. Dean O. Barrow is the sole recipient of Oceana’s Ocean Champion Award, which was presented in 2018 in recognition of Belize’s indefinite moratorium on offshore oil.

The stained-glass awards were made by Belizean artist, Leisa Carr-Caceres of Leisa’s One of a Kind.

## Fish School for Local Media Professionals

Twenty journalists and communication professionals from all around the country attended the one-day training workshop entitled “Fish School”, hosted by Oceana in Belize City on Saturday, February 23, 2019 at the Radisson Fort George Hotel and Marina.

During the workshop, participants heard presentations from Margot Stiles, Marine Scientist and Chief of Strategy and Philip Chou - Senior Advisor, Science and Strategy, both from Oceana. Among the topics the workshop covered, were overfishing and illegal fishing, the impact of climate-related changes, seafood sustainability, fish and habitat, fisheries management, fishing methods

## ADDITIONAL PRESS





and transparency. The training also allowed those in attendance to share information and their experience, including some of the challenges they face when covering fisheries related stories.

“Fishing is part of the Belizean DNA. It’s a valued cultural tradition and an important source of food and income for many coastal communities, yet it remains a complex theme for journalists to cover. Effective communication and a strong, informed media are necessary to not only build awareness but also, a more complete understanding of the importance and urgency of sustainable fisheries management by the public”, stated Janelle Chanona, Vice-President of Oceana in Belize. “In this regard, Oceana is pleased to build and develop a network of journalists who will not only promote sustainable fisheries, but also produce factual, insightful reporting on fisheries issues in Belize.”

Participants of the workshop, all received certificates of completion at the end of the course.

Oceana supports the North in efforts to ensure the health of the New River and Corozal Bay. Several of Belize’s rivers empty into the Caribbean Sea. Alongside the Friends of New River group, Oceana in Belize continued to

closely monitor the condition of the New River in September. This was a result of very low water levels that created a highly polluted environment in the part of the river that runs adjacent to Orange Walk Town and several villages. Drought conditions exacerbated health concerns emanating from the stench. We commended the citizen led action that garnered national attention of this long-standing issue. Oceana is committed to supporting the right of residents to embrace their role in ensuring that the health of their environment. The health of the river continues to be a national priority given the importance of clean, safe water to residents of Orange Walk and Corozal districts, especially for those who depend daily on the New River and Corozal Bay.

“As the polluted waters begin to move towards Corozal Bay and the Caribbean Sea, we ask all residents to immediately report any incident such as fish or mammal mortalities to all relevant authorities,” asks Ryan Rivera, Oceana’s Corozal Field Representative. “Corozaleños are all too aware of the number of stressors already impacting Corozal Bay. As a community, we need to prepare for potential impacts so that appropriate mitigation measures can be planned and deployed if necessary.”

Oceana is committed to providing all assistance

possible to help to ensure the health and integrity of Belize’s marine resources. Several rivers flow directly into the Caribbean Sea, highlighting the impact that inland activities pose to marine resources. In the context of multiple non-governmental groups working on these issues, we call on the Department of the Environment to publicly disclose a list of the technical and professional resources required to adequately execute their responsibilities. Oceana endorses the call for increased budgetary allowance to the Department of the Environment given the importance of their role in safeguarding the health of the country’s natural resources.

“It is clear that water quality testing is required in multiple locations,” says Oceana’s Vice President, Janelle Chanona. “We should see the situation of the New River as a flashing neon sign, a preview of coming attractions to other parts of the country. Mother Nature is not happy. And if we aren’t proactive in taking the necessary steps to address those situations, we will move from environmental crisis to environmental crisis. And the economic price tag will always be costly given the dependence of tens of thousands of Belizeans on our natural resources.”



## Caribbean Culture and Lifestyle

Oceana is committed to partnering with allies to reach a wide national audience as well as visitors to our shores. Caribbean Culture and Lifestyle (CC+L) magazine launched its first edition in January 2018. As the official inflight magazine of local airline, Maya Island Air, the magazine aims to share inspiring travel, culture and lifestyle content within and throughout the Caribbean region.

In August 2019, Oceana contributed an article entitled, To Love & Protect: Belize, An Eco Conscious Destination as well as an ad encouraging readers to move away from single-use plastics and Styrofoam products. The article was part of their conservation issue formally launched at the Belize Biltmore Plaza in Belize City, which was supported by an Eco-Expo featuring conservation minded organizations and their products/services.

## Twig + Pearl

To help bring attention to the impact of single-use plastics at a time when many Belizeans flock to the coast and islands, Easter, Oceana partnered with Twig + Pearl – a local, sustainable fashion brand on a social media video highlighting simple tips on how we can each conserve the ocean, beaches and marine life while having fun.

The video got over 1.7K views on Facebook.

## Born to Fish

*It's a Way of Life*

WRITTEN BY MARTINIQUE FABRO



PHOTOS: JIM KLUG

**G**rowing up in Southern Belize with the Caribbean Sea as their own personal playground, it's no surprise that the Garbutt brothers have become heavyweights in all things fish, flats and fun in Belize.

Born and bred Belizean fishermen, Dennis, Eworth, Scully and Oliver come from a long line of fisherfolk, with the Garbutt name being no stranger to the world of fishing. The brothers were raised in the quaint village of Punta Negra in Belize's most southern district, Toledo.

*"It's the most beautiful life, I wouldn't change it for anything."*

- Eworth

For this family, fishing wasn't just a hobby, it was their livelihood, a differentiation unbeknownst to the brothers growing up, for whom it was a way of life. At a young age, the Garbutt brothers were introduced to handline fishing and gillnets, eventually finding their way to a life of fly fishing in the early 90s.

After years of working for other local lodges, the brothers decided to branch out and create a legacy of their own. Their journey from commercial fishing to sports fishing didn't always go as planned, but they can all agree that it's been worthwhile. Now owners of Garbutt's Marine Investment Company Limited, the umbrella company for Garbutt's Fishing Lodge and their family lodge at Lime Caye, the brothers' success is a testament to the value of sustainable fishing methods. With business operations in both Placencia and Punta Gorda, they are helping propel Belize to the top of the flats fishing industry as both beneficiaries and custodians of some of the world's finest flats fishing.

As fly fishers with plenty of experience on our waters, the Garbutt men found a way to first diversify their streams of income, and then completely transitioned from commercial to sports fishing – all while earning more and doing their part to protect our ecologically and economically important marine resources. When discussing defining moments in their journey to sustainable fishing, their most prominent memory was seeing the damage to the coral and fish stock in the areas of Punta Negra and Monkey River caused by fishermen who were setting "lobster nets" that caught and destroyed everything in their path.



# Engage with Oceana

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## Please Give Today to Help us Rebuild Ocean Abundance

Each of us has the power to help save the oceans and feed the world. The support of people like you allows Oceana to carry out targeted campaigns to end overfishing, limit bycatch, protect habitats and curb ocean pollution.

With your help, Oceana can win victories that will help to restore the ocean's biodiversity and abundance for generations to come. Become part of a growing circle of ocean advocates by joining Oceana today.

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## Take Action

Become a Wavemaker and join more than 1.2 Million Oceana supporters from around the world who have signed up with Oceana to save our oceans. Being a Wavemaker means you won't stand by while shrimp nets drown sea turtles and airgun blasts deafen dolphins to enable offshore drilling. With you by our side, we can fight these and other threats.

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## Follow Oceana

Follow Oceana on social media for breaking news from all over the world and insights into our research and campaigns.



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## By the Numbers

Facebook Followers:

**22K+**

Twitter Followers:

**700+**

Instagram Followers:

**20K+**

Wavemakers

**2500**



# Financial Statements

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Oceana's contributors provide the support that is essential to our campaigns to preserve and rebuild ocean life.

*\*See attached financial statements document*





# Staff

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Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation. Oceana is rebuilding abundant and biodiverse oceans by winning science-based policies in countries that control one third of the world's wild fish catch. With more than 200 victories that stop overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution and the killing of threatened species like turtles and sharks, Oceana's campaigns are delivering results. A restored ocean means that one billion people can enjoy a healthy seafood meal, every day, forever. Together, we can save the oceans and help feed the world. Visit [www.oceana.org](http://www.oceana.org) to learn more.