

INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDS DATA SHEET CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: ISDSC868

Date ISDS Prepared/Updated: 15-Nov-2012

I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country:	Belize	Project ID:	P130474
Project Name:	Management and Protection of Key Biodiversity Areas in Belize (P130474)		
Task Team Leader:	Enos E. Esikuri		
Estimated Appraisal Date:	23-Apr-2013	Estimated Board Date:	02-Jul-2013
Managing Unit:	LCSEN	Lending Instrument:	Specific Investment Loan
Focal Area:	Multi-focal area		
Sector:	General agriculture, fishing and forestry sector (50%), Public administration-Agriculture, fishing and forestry (50%)		
Theme:	Environmental policies and institutions (25%), Climate change (25%), Land administration and management (25%), Natural disaster management (15%), Other environment and natural resources management (10%)		
Financing (In USD Million)			
Financing Source		Amount	
BORROWER/RECIPIENT		1.00	
Global Environment Facility (GEF)		6.09	
Global Environment Facility - Cofinancing Trust Funds		15.00	
Total		22.09	
Environmental Category:	B - Partial Assessment		
Is this a Repeater project?	No		

B. Global Environmental Objective(s)

8. The Global Environment Objective is to strengthen natural resource management and biodiversity conservation through the mitigation of threats to Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in Belize.

9. The Project would achieve this by helping to: reduce deforestation rates and fragmentation pressure in targeted KBAs and enhance sustainable forest management practices (based on geo-

referenced information on forest resources and ecosystem services); improve the protection of Forest Reserves and reduce forest fires; improve local livelihoods through community-based sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services; strengthen legal and administrative frameworks for Protected Areas (PAs); manage Protected Areas (PAs) in the KBAs more effectively (as measured by GEF Tracking Tools); strengthen capacity for compliance monitoring and enforcement of key agencies responsible for environment and enhance the coordination among Government agencies charged with conservation; enhance effectiveness of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) System; and mainstream Climate Change considerations into the National Protected Areas System Plan (NPASP).

C. Project Description

To address the challenges described above and based on the principle of site conservation, the Project would support the forest protection/sustainable forest management and conservation of biodiversity in Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in Belize. Site conservation is among the most effective means to reduce biodiversity loss. Therefore, it is critical to identify those sites where unique biodiversity must be conserved immediately. To this end, the concept of KBAs has been developed by global practitioners, seeking to identify and, ultimately, ensure that networks of globally important sites are safeguarded. This methodology builds up from the identification of species conservation targets (through the IUCN Red List) and nests within larger-scale conservation approaches. Sites selection is driven by the distribution and population of species that require site-level conservation. In 2007, a collaborative effort by the Government of Belize, Belize Tropical Forest Studies, Conservation International, and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund resulted in the definition of the KBAs in Belize as detailed in the report “Establishing a Baseline to Monitor Species and Key Biodiversity Areas in Belize” (Jan C. Meerman, 2007). Ultimately, 39 IUCN listed species counted for the KBAs analysis. The resulting KBAs fall into roughly 2 large blocks (Selva Maya and Maya Mountains block over 250,000 ha) and a number of isolated sites (over 45,000 ha).

The proposed Project will promote environmentally sustainable community development activities for the local population, providing incentives for conservation while strengthening local livelihoods. These activities will be directly implemented by local landholders, fishers, and agriculturalists. Involvement of women will be prioritized within the project. Based on the positive experiences of the WB/GEF MesoAmerican Barrier Reef project and the WB/GEF MSP Community Managed Sarstoon Temash Conservation Project, it is evident that these types of activities have been successful and effective in Belize. The outcomes of these activities are increased incomes, improved land conditions, and sustainable alternative job opportunities.

The Project would support the strengthening of legal framework of PAs in response to the urgent need in the face of rising pressures. For example, the “ministerial discretion” loophole gives ministers discretionary powers to (a) de-reserve PAs without the need for public consultations, and (b) approve projects rejected by the Department of Environment based on recommendations of the Environmental Impact Assessments (i.e., in essence overrule the EIA). Another factor driving deforestation in Belize is the existing land tenure legislation, which requires that leased lands that are forested must be “developed” by the owners or their leases would be revoked. This provides enormous incentive for landowners to clear the land in an effort to meet the requirements of ‘development’. However, it has been observed that many of these lands lie idle after they have been cleared since the landowners lack the capital to engage in alternative land uses. Hence simple amendments to the existing land tenure law could have a significant impact on biodiversity conservation, the deforestation rate and the subsequent fragmentation of Key Biodiversity Areas and forests.

The Project would contribute to addressing inadequate implementation and enforcement of environmental and natural resources management actions through training of staff in the key agencies and equipping them with the necessary tools and capacities. While EIA exists as a legal requirement, its implementation has been affected by various reasons. For example, while the National Environmental Assessment Committee (NEAC) is charged with reviewing EIAs, the minister can use discretionary powers to overrule the decisions of the NEAC. The institutions that are directly responsible for the management of Belize's environment and natural resources (e.g., Department of Environment, Forest Department, Fisheries Department, Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute) are under-funded, understaffed and in many cases lack the capacity to perform their basic functions. For example, the Department of Environment (DoE) currently has about 15 staff that can scarcely cover the mandate given to the DoE under the Environmental Protection Act. The Forest Department has just under 40 staff charged with managing protected areas (PAs), licensing, monitoring and enforcement within and outside PAs.

The project would be financed by a US\$6.085 million GEF grant and US \$16 million in co-financing through a mixture of loan and grants. The proposed project design includes four components:

Component 1: Supporting Forest Protection and Sustainable Forest Management Activities in Key Biodiversity Areas (GEF US\$2.18 million; co-financing US\$8 million): This component will evaluate current forest assets within the KBAs in order to prioritize areas of high conservation value. Once these areas have been identified, the project will seek to develop a host of activities with and around these areas. These include: training of agency officials and local communities to reduce the incidence of anthropogenic forest fires, reduce illegal logging, and increase monitoring of the protected areas (e.g., Forest Reserves). This component will leverage extensively a number of innovative Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) applications, both for evaluation and prioritization of KBAs as well as for monitoring of protected areas. Mapping tools, such as a Geographic Information System (GIS), will be used for identification and evaluation of key forest assets in KBAs. An interactive citizen web portal will allow local communities to report geo-coded information on threats to those areas, both online and via text messaging, and will aid in monitoring of protected areas. In addition, this component will establish sustainable development activities with local communities in the targeted areas in order to reduce the encroachment pressure on forest resources. The component would also support simple amendments to the existing land tenure law to remove the requirement that leased forested land needs to be cleared in order to demonstrate 'development' of the same.

Component 2: Promoting Effective Management of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) (GEF US\$2.598 million; co-financing US\$5 million): This component seeks to enhance effective management of the KBAs through strengthening the legal framework for PAs and taking measures to control encroachment and illegal farming, hunting, logging and harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in targeted areas. Specifically, the component would support the (a) establishment or upgrading of a functioning management system in the targeted protected areas (including management plans and the capacity and resources to implement the plans to achieve the areas' biodiversity protection goals), and (b) review and amendment of the relevant laws with a view to removing the ministerial discretion to de-reserve PAs without public consultations. In addition, specific measures would be undertaken to delineate and mark PA boundaries where this is deemed critical to supporting enforcement efforts. Where necessary, surveyors equipped with GPS-enabled devices will capture the exact coordinates of the boundaries of the PAs, and will upload them to the main GIS database. Once verified, the updated maps of the PAs will be made available to the public on an open platform. The component will also support rehabilitation/restoration of critical areas (e.g.,

watersheds) through community-based activities, which will be reported to the GIS as Project-specific data. Where appropriate, it will promote market-based actions, such as sustainable harvesting and marketing of NTFPs and payments for ecosystem services, to foster local benefits that justify continued high level protection of PAs and help to reduce pressure on KBAs. An intensive awareness raising campaign would be also carried out to increase the understanding of the local stakeholders including local fishermen, tourism business owners, and NGOs. The component would support targeted livelihood options that enhance the socio economic existence between protected areas, natural resource management, and local communities. Some of the critical habitats in the KBAs have current uses and are indeed on private land. Some of the protected areas are indeed Private Reserves. Thus, creating management regimes, in conjunction with private landowners where needed, may in such cases be sufficient. The Belize Association of Private Protected Areas would be fully involved in project preparation and implementation as this greatly complements public efforts while increasing the areas (ha) outside PAs that are managed in a biodiversity-friendly manner.

Component 3: Institutional Strengthening & Capacity Building for Enhanced Enforcement of Environmental Regulations (GEF US\$1 million; co-financing US\$2 million): This component will support the various designated agencies charged with safeguarding Belize's natural resources (e.g., Forest Department, Department of Environment, Geology and Petroleum, Lands and Survey, Fisheries Department, Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute, Belize Agricultural Health Authority, etc) to enhance their enforcement and coordination capacity for environmental regulations. Training of staff in the key agencies and equipping them with the necessary assessment and compliance monitoring tools and capacities would be supported. Specialized ICT tools for compliance monitoring will be developed, to a large extent leveraging the GIS platform developed above, as well as applications designed to automate workflows and registries (including KBAs, PAs, and forest licensing, among others) and to assist in improving communication with local communities, e.g. for tracking of reports and provision of timely feedback about agency response. Specialized training will be provided to agency staff on the use of these tools. While EIA exists as a legal requirement, its implementation has been affected by various issues. For example, while the National Environmental Assessment Committee (NEAC) is charged with reviewing EIAs, the minister can use discretionary powers to review the decisions of the NEAC. Hence the component would support capacity enhancement in this area by: (a) establishing EIA certification process under the Department of Environment (DoE), (b) strengthening the NEAC by establishing clear TORs, (c) increasing NEAC autonomy and transparency of procedures by regular update and publication of the Committee's decisions (on publicly accessible websites), (d) removing the discretionary power of the Minister from the Act and the EIA Regulations. Because of Belize's vulnerability to climate change and the related need for ecosystem-based adaptation measures, the NPASP would be reviewed and updated in order to capture climate change considerations especially in its implementation.

The component will also support enhancing capacity of the key departments in the MNRE through: (a) training of in-house staff, (b) targeted partnerships with the private sector to improve the monitoring of natural resource use, (c) strengthening of civil society collaboration in natural resource management, (d) improving forest licensing mechanisms to foster the use of forests in a sustainable manner, and, (e) enhancing and modernizing the co-management agreements for PAs.

Component 4: Project management, monitoring and assessment: This component will provide administrative, financial, and technical support to the Project, and to the design and implementation of a monitoring, assessment, and systematization program. Training and promotion of third-party monitoring mechanisms of overall project implementation will be explored. An impact evaluation based on the social and environmental effects of the sustainable economic activities is envisioned.

D. Project location and salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

The Project would support the forest protection/sustainable forest management and conservation of biodiversity in Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in Belize, which fall into roughly 2 large blocks (over 250,000 ha) and a number of isolated sites (over 45,000 ha) including:

- Selva Maya with Rio Bravo Conservation Area (104,897 ha), Aguas Turbias National Park (3,541 ha) and Gallon Jug Private Management Area (54,154 ha);
- Maya Mountains block including Vaca Plateau (14,118 ha), Mountain Pine Ridge (43,372 ha) and Manatee River forest Reserve (36,621 ha); and
- A number of smaller, discrete areas including Sartoon Temash National Park (16,938 ha), Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary (2,213 ha), Golden Stream (6,085 ha) and Rio Grande Private Protected Areas, Peccary Hills (including Runaway Creek Nature Preserve (6,547 ha)) and Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (15,372 ha).

Specific locations to be targeted by the Project will be identified during the preparation through inclusive consultations with relevant stakeholders and relevant assessments.

E. Borrowers Institutional Capacity for Safeguard Policies

The Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development (MFFSD) will be responsible for the overall implementation of the project, including environmental and social safeguards, financial management and procurement. MFFSD has staff specifically trained to administer and monitor GEF projects –including capacity to adhere to Bank environmental and social safeguard policies.

F. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Anjali Acharya (EASVS)

Kimberly Vilar (LCSSO)

II. SAFEGUARD POLICIES THAT MIGHT APPLY

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/ BP 4.01	Yes	Components 1 and 2 include financing of sustainable development activities with local communities (to reduce the encroachment pressure on forest resources); community-based activities (to support rehabilitation/restoration of critical areas); and targeted livelihood options (to enhance the socio economic existence between protected areas, natural resource management, and local communities). This project is classified as Category B, as the potential adverse environmental impacts on human populations or environmentally important areas are site-specific, reversible and can be readily mitigated. Since the exact location and/or nature of potential small investments to be financed under this project have not yet been determined, an Environmental

		Management Framework will be prepared to conform to Bank safeguard policies. This will provide the framework within which EMPs will eventually be developed. EMP(s) will be prepared prior to appraisal for any project activities fully identified by the appraisal date.
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	Yes	This project would not support or lead to the conversion of natural habitats. In fact, it would help rehabilitate, restore, and protect degraded critical ecosystems, which are important to preserve local biodiversity and the quality of water resources. While the EMF will explicitly forbid any project activities in areas supporting critical natural habitats or inducing significant conversion or degradation of critical natural habitats, this policy is triggered as a precaution.
Forests OP/BP 4.36	Yes	This project will not lead to the destruction of forests and forest ecosystems, and in fact will support rehabilitation/restoration of critical areas (e.g., watersheds) through community-based activities. Similar to the natural habitats, the EMF will explicitly forbid any project activities in areas supporting destruction or conversion of forests and forest ecosystems. However, considering that the project will support sustainable forest management, that it includes activities around management of non-timber forest products, and that it aims to improve forest licensing mechanisms to foster the use of forests in a sustainable manner, this safeguard policy is triggered. The ESMF will stipulate that any commercial harvesting activities undertaken as part of the project will be carried out in accordance with this policy.
Pest Management OP 4.09	No	The Project will not support the procurement or use of pesticides or other agricultural chemicals, or lead to the increased use of such chemicals. The ESMF will include guidance to this effect.
Physical Cultural Resources OP/ BP 4.11	TBD	The project is not expected to have negative impacts on cultural property, including movable or immovable objects, sites, structures, groups of structures or natural features or landscapes with archaeological, paleontological, historical, architectural, religious, aesthetic or other cultural significance. However, "chance findings" during implementation of activities

		could be possible. During preparation, possibility that the Project in the context of potential sub-project affect known archaeological sites or chance finds will be assessed. In the event that such sub-projects are contemplated, project preparation should include an archaeological survey of all potentially affected area by qualified archaeologists and the local authorities responsible for the protection of Belize's cultural heritage should be involved.
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	Yes	An Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework will be prepared by Appraisal to establish guidelines for the preparation of Indigenous Peoples Plans to address the project's effects on the Mayan populations in the project areas once the Key Biodiversity Areas are clearly defined.
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	Yes	A social assessment will be prepared by Appraisal with particular emphasis on a thorough stakeholder analysis to determine potential impacts on current livelihoods within and around Key Biodiversity Areas and those areas' formal and informal governance structures. Once the social assessment is complete and has informed project design, the team will determine whether a Process Framework will be required. Given that the creation of key biodiversity areas are very likely to restrict access to newly established protected areas and therefore affect the livelihoods of those currently conducting subsistence or income-generating activities in the area, a draft process framework will most likely be needed and prepared by Appraisal, in accordance with OP 4.12.
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	The project will not finance the construction or rehabilitation of dams. And no project investments will rely on the operation of existing dams.
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	The project will not support activities which affect international waterways as defined under the policy.
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	TBD	While project activities will not be undertaken in disputed areas, this policy has been triggered in earlier Bank financed projects in Belize. During the preparation, guidance from Bank's

		legal department will be sought to determine whether to trigger this policy under this project.
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III. SAFEGUARD PREPARATION PLAN

A. Tentative target date for preparing the PAD Stage ISDS: 19-Apr-2013

B. Time frame for launching and completing the safeguard-related studies that may be needed. The specific studies and their timing¹ should be specified in the PAD-stage ISDS:

Launch: October 24, 2012

Completion: February 1, 2013

IV. APPROVALS

Task Team Leader:	Name: Enos E. Esikuri	
<i>Approved By:</i>		
Regional Safeguards Coordinator:	Name: Glenn S. Morgan (RSA)	Date: 24-Nov-2012
Sector Manager:	Name: Karin Erika Kemper (SM)	Date: 15-Nov-2012

¹ Reminder: The Bank's Disclosure Policy requires that safeguard-related documents be disclosed before appraisal (i) at the InfoShop and (ii) in country, at publicly accessible locations and in a form and language that are accessible to potentially affected persons.