



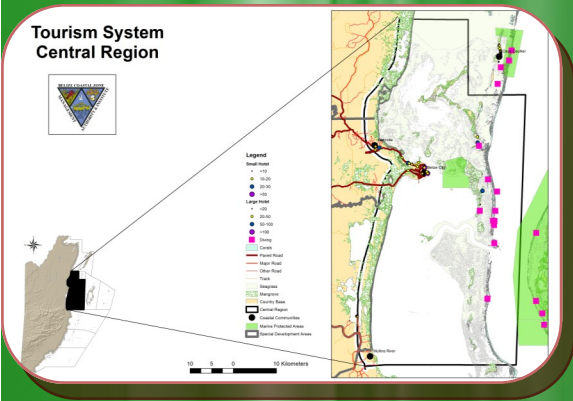
# Identification of climate-compatible tourism development in Belize

## Project Summary

Climate change is affecting coastal ecosystems globally, with severe implications for developing countries heavily reliant on their natural resources for economic growth. In Belize, coral reefs, mangroves and beaches are the cornerstone of the tourism industry and coastal communities rely on mangrove and reef-based fisheries for food security and income. Growth of the tourism industry is viewed as inherent to economic development in Belize but is often accompanied by habitat degradation that directly threatens the resources upon which the industry depends. Our 'Climate-compatible tourism development' project will help to inform this process by assessing the vulnerability of Belize's tourism system to climate change, including the coastal ecosystems on which it depends, and assessing how current policies facilitate or hinder climate-compatible tourism development based on healthy coastal ecosystems. We are also exploring the policy reforms and adaptation strategies required to enhance ecosystem resilience to climate change and foster tourism development, at a local and national scale.

The overarching research question being addressed by this project is 'how can we achieve sustainable growth of Belize's coastal tourism market while maintaining healthy resilient coastal-marine ecosystems?' and more specifically we are trying to address: 1.) which tourism areas are most and least vulnerable to the impacts of climate change? 2.) what are the key policy instruments that are supporting or hindering Belize's ability to make progress in achieving climate-compatible coastal tourism development, and where are the gaps in existing policy? and 3.) what are the key strategies necessary for enhancing Belize's potential for climate-compatible tourism development based on healthy coastal ecosystems?





The overall aim though is to support coastal planners and policy makers in selecting appropriate policies and adaptation strategies for Belize's coastal zone that meet climate adaptation, developmental and environmental goals. The project has a three prong approach with one aspect of the project focusing on identifying coastal tourism areas in Belize vulnerable to climate change that should be prioritized for adaptation actions. Under this, existing research studies and assessments of ecosystem health, sustainable development interventions, and socio-ecological vulnerability linked to tourism is being used to create a vulnerability map of Belize's tourism system that can then be used to target adaptation action.

rent policies or gaps that can allow for mal-adaptive decisions and opportunities for win-wins for climate adaptation and tourism development.

The third aspect is focused on identifying adaptation strategies from case studies and other literature that have relevance for Belize's coastal zone, which can be used to aid filling of policy gaps. Adaptation strategies are being reviewed through a screening process using expert opinion to consider the logistical, technological, cultural and societal practicalities of different adaptation options to produce a shortlist for possible integration into planning. Project outputs will include journal articles, policy briefings, community and tourism stakeholders meetings and a project website will be used to disseminate the findings of this work to a range of audiences.

The second aspect is focused on analyzing the current policy environment to determine whether pertinent public policies support or undermine sustainable tourism development, ecosystem health/function, and climate adaptation. Under this, we are identifying cur-

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### Project Objectives

The project has three main objectives which are:

- 1) Identify coastal tourism areas in Belize vulnerable to climate change that should be prioritized for adaptation actions.
- 2) Identify areas of existing policies in Belize that can support or inhibit climate-compatible tourism development.
- 3) Identify and prioritize adaptation strategies for integration into policy