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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

FROM THE MINISTRY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND THE MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Government of Belize Clarifies Actions on Infractions in the Chiquibul Forest Reserve

Belmopan. August 25, 2021. 1:25 p.m.

In June 2021, a joint inspection was conducted by officers of the Department of the Environment, Forest Department, National Biodiversity Office, the Mining Unit and the Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD) of mining operations by Boiton Minerals Limited (BML) in the Chiquibul Forests.

The visit revealed that several conditions of the Environmental Compliance Plan (ECP) were not being met. A joint report of the inspection was produced and, thereafter, the departments engaged the agents of BML to initiate a process to rectify the issues identified. As a matter of process, a multiagency meeting was subsequently held with representatives of BML to discuss the findings of the inspection and commence the formal process to resolve, rectify, and bring the company into compliance with the ECP. The Government of Belize takes this non-compliance seriously and will be applying the appropriate penalties and fines for these infractions.

The Chiquibul Forest Reserve and National Park is one of the critical protected areas for Belize as it is the source of the headwaters of the Belize River providing water resources for close to 50% of Belize's population as well as home to critical ecosystems unique to Belize and the region. As the reports of illegal settlements, farming, mining, and development within the Chiquibul Forest persists, the government continues to take steps to address the long-standing threats and conflicts in the Maya Mountain Massif. The government continues to strengthen the collaborative management efforts within the massif between public enforcement and management agencies, private sector investments, and civil society.

The government remains committed to sustainable socio-economic development and will continue to take steps to reduce and manage any threats that would destroy the functional integrity of Belize's natural resources. Government continues to uphold its mandates and respective regulations to ensure that the integrity of our resources is maintained and sustainably utilized.

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