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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Government and Conservation Partners Sign Protected Areas Co-Management Agreements**

*Belmopan. December 5, 2022.*

On December 1, 2022, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management officially entered into public-private partnerships (or co-management) for several protected areas across the National Protected Areas System (NPAS) with several conservation partners.

Co-management agreements were signed for the following sites:

- Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD) - Chiquibul National Park
- Belize Audubon Society (BAS) - Guanacaste National Park
- Belize Audubon Society (BAS) - St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park
- Belize Audubon Society (BAS) - Blue Hole Natural Monument
- Belize Audubon Society (BAS) - Half Moon Caye Natural Monument
- Belize Audubon Society (BAS) - Victoria Peak Natural Monument
- Belize Audubon Society (BAS) - Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary
- Belize Audubon Society (BAS) - Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary
- Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD) - Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
- Itzamna Society - Elijo Panti National Park
- Southern Environmental Association (SEA) - Laughing Bird Caye National Park
- Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary – Monkey Bay National Park

These agreements are site-based and entail the necessary scope, coverage, and commitments to comprehensively address gaps related to financial accountability and transparency, reporting and data availability. Furthermore, these agreements allow for greater collaboration between the

Government of Belize and their conservation partners and endeavour to enhance governance of the NPAS for the benefit of Belizeans.

Hon. Orlando Habet, Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, spoke on the process and importance of ensuring that the formalization of the agreements was a collaborative process. Minister Habet remarked that “it is a long-awaited agreement that took the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, catapulting the long-standing partnership into a new era of improved, innovative and transparent management.”

Amanda Acosta, Belize Audubon Society’s Executive Director, highlighted that “this milestone event marks hours of conversation and negotiation on behalf of the government and protected area co-managers. We are pleased to finally get to this point of signing. We are and continue to be committed to working in protected areas. These agreements are a validation of our work.”

Rafael Manzanero, Executive Director of Friends for Conservation and Development, said he hopes that the ministry continues to build on key initiatives like these to strengthen governance across the system.

The ministry and the National Biodiversity Office continue to implement these initiatives geared towards strengthening the governance, management effectiveness and financial sustainability of the NPAS. These initiatives include the launch of the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART), the Biodiversity Impact and Investment Tracking Tool (BITT) and Business and Investment Training, among others.

## **Ends**

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