

CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION IN

BELIZE

AN EXCERPT FROM

The 2015 Global Climate Legislation Study

A Review of Climate Change Legislation in 99 Countries



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Belize

Legislative Process

Belize became an independent commonwealth realm in 1981. Queen Elizabeth II remains Head of State in a parliamentary representative democratic monarchy based upon the Westminster model. The Queen is represented by a Governor-General, and day-to-day executive power is exercised by a Prime Minister and Cabinet. The 1981 constitution is the supreme law of the land.

The National Assembly serves as the parliament and is bi-cameral with an elected House of Representatives of 31 members elected for a maximum five-year term of office via first-past-the-post constituency elections. The Senate consists of 12 appointed Senators and a President elected by the senators. Senators are appointed by the Governor-General, 6 on the advice of the Prime Minister, 3 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, one on the advice of the Belize Council of Churches and the Evangelical Association of Churches, one on the advice of the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Belize Business Bureau and one on the advice of the National Trade Union Congress of Belize and the Civil Society Steering Committee.

Bills can be introduced by members of either House (except those involving budgets, which are the sole purview of the House of Representatives) and must pass both Houses of Parliament with a simple majority of present members and receive the assent of the Governor-General, who acts on the advice of Cabinet. The Senate normally passes measures adopted by the House of Representatives. If a bill is rejected twice by the Senate, but is approved by the House of Representatives, it can be passed to the Governor-General for assent.

Approach to Climate Change

Belize, home to the longest barrier reef (220km) in the Western Hemisphere and characterised as a Mesoamerican biodiversity hotspot, is a small country on the Caribbean coast of Central America with a total land area of 22,960 km². About 5% of Belize's land is distributed over more than 1,060 islands, known as mangrove cayes, and the coastal zones are dominated by mangroves, corals and sea grass beds, while wetlands are particularly prevalent in Northern Belize. Although Belize estimates that its current population of around 340,000 may double within the decade, the country has one of the lowest population densities in Central America. Belize's Second National Communication (SNC) to the UNFCCC estimates that about 40% of the population resides in low-lying coastal areas that are extremely susceptible to natural disasters and climate change impacts.

The climate is tropical, with an annual mean humidity of over 80% and significant seasonal variations in rainfall: roughly 60% of annual precipitation occurs between May-November. The country's history has been marked by numerous devastating tropical depressions, tropical storms, and hurricanes. The former capital, Belize City, was twice destroyed by hurricanes in the 20th century, spurring the capital to relocate to Belmopan City. On average Belize is impacted by a tropical storm or hurricane once every three years.

As Belize is heavily dependent on resources and activities within its low-lying coastal zone – tourism, agriculture, aquaculture, and commercial and recreational fishing – and exports of goods and services account for over 60% of the country's GDP, the country is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change impacts. The tourism industry, which employs one out of every four workers and is the largest contributor to GDP, is “entirely dependent on the integrity of the natural resources” in the country.

Although Belize has conducted a number of climate change vulnerability and adaptation assessments and has engaged in research and capacity building, the country is yet to design and implement climate mitigation projects. The SNC identifies a handful of projects in the energy sector that do today or could reduce GHG emissions – including expanding hydropower generation, introducing a biomass co-generation facility, and a CFL light bulb exchange project conducted in co-operation with Cuba – however, these individual programmes are not part of a co-ordinated mitigation effort. Despite an abundance of overlapping agencies and published policy aims, Belize lacks a significant legal framework for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

The Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development serves as the lead government body responsible for co-ordinating and implementing Belize's climate change adaptation and mitigation policies. In 2012, a National Climate Change Office was institutionalised within this Ministry to assist in the co-ordination of climate change activities across sectors, support Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects, and mainstream mitigation and adaptation strategies into the country's sustainable development agenda. Since 2012, the National Climate Change Office has replaced the National Meteorological Service as the lead government body responsible for providing technical advice to the government relating to climate change, as well as negotiating on the country's behalf at international forums. Subsequently, the following additional government bodies are responsible for integrating climate change goals with land, resource, and energy management plans: (1) the Forest Department within the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development; (2) the Department of Environment within the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development; (3) the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, and Public Utilities, and (4) the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Under the CDM, Belize has issued one host letter of Approval to the Solid Waste Management Authority Landfill Gas project. Registered in 2014, this project will implement a landfill gas capture and flaring system at a landfill and dumpsite, preventing the emission of methane and reducing GHG emissions.

Additionally, the National Climate Change Office, through the EU GCCA project, has spearheaded the development of a national climate change policy, strategy and action plan and a national organisation framework for national climate change management, both of which are being finalised. Furthermore, the National Climate Change Office is currently undertaking the Third National Communication, with continued assistance from GEF and UNDP, including a national inventory of GHGs for 2003 and 2006.

Belize first conducted a GHG inventory in 1998/1999, employing 1994 as the baseline year. The second comprehensive GHG inventory was conducted for the Second National Communication

(supported by GEF and UNDP), employing 1997 and 2000 as baseline years, with a particular focus on energy; industrial processes and solvents; agriculture; LULUCF; and waste. The second inventory revealed that deforestation as a result of logging and active forest management, is the main source of GHG emissions, with LULUCF accounting for 87.3% of total emissions in 1997 and 91.5% in 2000.

Energy supply

Belize's four largest energy sources are fossil fuels (66% of total energy supply, nearly 100% imported), biomass (26%), hydropower (3%), and electricity (5%). Until 1995, when hydropower was introduced into the national grid, Belize was nearly 100% dependent on fossil fuel imports for energy generation. Belize's hydropower generating capacity was further expanded in 2005.

Of the 5% of the energy mix that is electricity, 50% is imported and the other 50% comes from indigenous renewable generation technologies, including: hydropower, biomass and bagasse, solar power, and wind. Approximately 95% of Belize's domestic electricity generation is from renewable sources. Additionally, following the discovery of petroleum reserves in western Belize, in 2006, the country began extracting and is currently exporting about 2,800 barrels of crude oil per day. It does not have the capacity to refine crude oil.

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is responsible for formulating and implementing energy policy and regulating the energy industry. In 2003, the PUC recommended that Belize develop a comprehensive National Energy Policy and Implementation Plan. In 2011, a National Energy Policy Framework was proposed by a 3rd party, on the request of the government, to present research and recommendations for policy-makers and private industry to move away from foreign fossil fuel dependence to more efficient and sustainable energy. In 2012, the Ministry of Energy, Science & Technology and Public Affairs revealed Strategic Plan 2012-2017 that included the National Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012-2033.

Energy demand

Electricity demand, which currently peaks at around 76MW, is projected to increase by 9% per year, making investments in sustainable development policy an even greater priority. One estimate predicts that Belize will need to increase generation levels by 80% over the next 20 years to satisfy future demand. Demand-side management is a focus of the National Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012-2033.

Belize is also a founding member of the Small Island Developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative (SIDS DOCK), established in 2009 to provide members with assistance and to develop financial resources for implementing climate change adaptation measures. SIDS DOCK established collective baseline goals to increase energy efficiency by 25% from 2005 levels, generate 50% of electricity from renewables and decrease conventional transportation fuel-use by 20-30% by 2033.

REDD+ and LULUCF

Until the mid-20th Century, when export-led agricultural production began to expand, the economy was dominated by the forestry industry, particularly mahogany production. Although the timber industry still exists, its contribution to the overall GDP is negligible.

Belize has the highest overall percentage of forest cover of any Central American country (covering 69% of land area), with forests on approximately 15,867 km². Subsequently, LULUCF efforts present the most effective opportunities for GHG emission reductions in the country. Between 1980 and 2010, Belize lost 17.4%, or around 2,934 km² of forest area to deforestation due to unsustainable logging, and slash-and-burn agriculture. Forest conservation is now highlighted by the government as a major priority, and around 1.6 million acres of forests are under the protection of the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development.

The Forest Department, with financial and technical assistance from the German Technical Co-operation Agency (GTZ), is building capacity for participation in voluntary regional REDD+ schemes. In 2011, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment formally expressed interest in joining the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) as an observer and to get help to design and implement pilot REDD+ projects. On June 9th 2014, the Forest Department, which has subsequently moved to the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development, submitted a Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) for further support from the FCPF and the UN-REDD for assistance with the construction and implementation of a national REDD+ strategy.

Adaptation

The most recent climate change vulnerability and adaptation assessments conducted for and reported in the SNC were focused on six priority sectors: agriculture, coastal zones, fisheries and aquaculture, health, tourism, and water resources. The focus of previous climate change vulnerability assessments was limited to the low-lying coastline. The SNC concluded that adaptation measures in the agriculture sector could be implemented with government supported market assistance and should include: adapting cultivars to future environmental conditions, implementing more effective drainage mechanisms, and improved harvesting practices. The SNC also said the Coastal Zone Management Authority should be revitalized, strengthened and charged with: developing an incentive programme to encourage private sector participation in adaptation measures and revising, updating, and strengthening coastal zone management legislation. In tourism, the vulnerability assessments concluded that there is a very limited capacity to adapt to climate change; however, possible adaptation strategies might include sea wall construction, mangrove swamp restoration, and beach nourishment.

Adaptation initiatives are largely limited to research and capacity building projects. These have included the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change Project, completed in 2001, and the Mainstream Adaptation to Climate Change Project, completed in 2008. These projects involved developing a draft national adaptation policy, installing tide gauges, formulating a coral reef climate change impact-monitoring programme, and evaluating coastal zone resources. The draft policy was never adopted; however, a comprehensive national climate change policy is being developed.

Since 2005, Belize has been the home for the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), responsible for co-ordinating a regional climate change management and adaptation response throughout the region. In 2014, the CCCCC adopted an initiative with the backing of the European Union's Global Climate Change Alliance Caribbean Support Project, to continue deploying a Coral Reef Early Warning System buoy to help monitor climate change impacts on the coral reefs.

In 2013, Belize partnered with the UNDP and the EU Global Climate Change Alliance to launch the Enhancing Belize's Resilience to Adapt to the Effects of Climate Change project to build capacity for both a national response to climate change threats and, specifically, applied forest and watershed management.

Belize: Executive Portfolio

Name of policy	National Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012-2033 in the Ministry of Energy, Science & Technology and Public Affairs Strategic Plan 2012-2017
Date	26 September 2012
Summary	<p>The Strategy outlines a framework of programmes to increase the economy's resilience to climate change by encouraging a transition to low carbon development and replacing imported fossil fuels with indigenous renewable sources.</p> <p>Strategic goals include: (1) increase energy efficiency by 30% by 2033 (2011 base year); (2) reduce dependence on fossil fuels by 50% by 2020; (3) triple the amount of energy derived from waste materials; (4) become a net electricity exporter by 2020; and (5) build the Ministry's institutional capacity to accomplish these mandates.</p> <p>The Strategy articulates the need to develop an Energy-Efficiency and Conservation Policy after collecting end-use data from relevant sectors that includes: revised building codes, energy efficient appliance standards, and energy audits of commercial and high-use buildings.</p>

Name of policy	National Adaptation Strategy to Address Climate Change in the Water Sector of Belize
Date	March 2009
Summary	<p>Undertaken by the government and contracted out to consultants from the Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST) with help from the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, this Strategy seeks to promulgate efficient and effective water resource management policy recommendations. The goal is to simultaneously reduce the vulnerability of Belize's water resources to climate change impacts and meet its obligations under the Millennium Development Goals.</p> <p>Policy recommendations presented include: (i) establish an agency to oversee integrated water resource management; (ii) strengthen human resource capabilities; (iii) formalise a legal mandate for the National Climate Change Committee; (iv) strengthen trans-boundary co-ordination of climate change efforts; and (v) increase public awareness and education on climate change. Outlines a 10-year policy implementation schedule (between 2009 and 2019).</p>

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