

**Draft Comprehensive Protected Areas
Policy and Framework:
Increasing the Efficiency in the Collection,
Administration and Investment of Protected
Areas Fees in Belize**

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Acronyms Used in this Report

-PA = Protected Area

- PACT = Protected Area Conservation Trust

-PPA = PA Pass Administration Unit

-ISP = Internet Service Provider

-BTIA = Belize Tourism Industry Association

-BHA = Belize Hotel Association

-BTB = Belize Tourism Board

-BTGA = Belize Tour Guides Association

- BNTOA = Belize National Tour Operators Association

-NPAS = National Protected Areas System

-NPAC = National Protected Areas Commission

I. Introduction and Overview

In protected areas management, effective and efficient administration of fees and revenue is often seen as inequitable, and is often contentious. Belize is no exception. Belize's protected areas that collect fees expect to keep the fees, and protected areas that have little opportunity to collect fees feel left out and want some of the revenue collected at other sites. Protected areas systems in other countries have dealt with this problem and have found acceptable solutions. For example, creative approaches have been applied in National Parks in South Australia, and the US National Parks Service has resolved this problem. Learning from the experience of others and determining the applicability for a Belize Protected Areas system is a major part of this project.

The system that is required is one that generates and accounts for revenue equitably, efficiently and cost effectively. Revenue needs to come from fees and a variety of other revenue sources. The system needs to encourage and equitably reward creative fund raising from and for all protected areas, including those managed by the Fisheries Department, the Institute of Archaeology, and the Forest Department. And, while the proposed National Protected Areas System (NPAS) includes Private Protected Areas, the framework is to focus on the public terrestrial, marine and archaeological protected areas. It is crucial that the financial system strengthens and meets the fiscal needs of the public protected areas system and communities of Belize while reducing but not eliminating the entire financial burden on the Government.

Designing such a system requires an understanding of the past and present fee frameworks, their strengths and weaknesses, and their abilities and inabilities to meet the needs of Belize and its protected areas. A report titled "Sustainable Financing Mechanisms Belize's Protected Area System" (Launchpad Consulting, 2005) gives a good review of past fee and revenue production efforts. This report provides a bibliography of 32 fee and revenue related reports and projects that helps with this understanding. Three of these reports are from Aukerman, Haas and Associates. One missing and important report is titled "Revenue Generation Strategy for Protected Areas of Belize, (Aukerman and Haas 1992) which laid out the framework for today's Protected Areas Conservation Trust.

Summarizing from Launchpad's study, PA funding came originally from government allocations and grants from international organizations and NGO's. The establishment of the PACT and the enactment of an environmental fee levied on visitors to Belize led to supplementing funding for protected areas through competitive grants. More recently, because of limited Government revenue, and because there is no national protected area system, individual protected areas have had to generate revenues each on their own to meet their own financial needs. Tourism entrance fees have proven successful in generating revenue for only the most popular tourist areas such as Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Xunantunich Archeological Site and Laughing Bird Caye National Park.

This fractured approach has led to a fee system that favors those PA's that are capable of generating the most revenue, mainly from tourists. This approach is not designed to and is inadequate to sustain a national system of protected areas. This system leaves most PA's with inadequate management funding. According to the TOR for this project, "--there are various barriers that inhibit the system from being sustainable; these include; a) fractured institutional, legal and operational framework of protected areas management, b) ineffective/inefficient financial system that fails to address Protected Areas management needs, and weak institutional and individual management capacity." It was concluded by Launchpad Consulting (2005) that "-- few if any of Belize's protected areas enjoy fully funded status, much less sustainable financial status."

II. Project Objectives

The AHA/PACT team recognizes that the overall objective of this consultancy is to improve the sustainability of Belize's national protected areas system by operationalizing mechanisms aimed at increasing the efficiency in the collection, administration and reinvestment of protected areas fees in Belize. The specific objectives are:

1. Examine and design a protected areas fee framework that meets the national needs of Belize.
2. Develop a revenue accountability system for the NPAS which will improve the efficiency in the collection and administration of fees.

III. Purpose of This Report

Per the contract entered into with the Belize Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in June 2011, and amended on November 23, 2011, the stated purpose of this report is the following:

- A Comprehensive Protected Areas Policy and Framework.

IV. Analysis of Current Situation

The AHA/PACT team initially reviewed a number of reports and studies to build a picture of the current financial and fee collection efforts. There was considerable information available. The team then followed the review of literature and with numerous interviews with a cross-section of officials in Belize to further clarify and understand the current efforts of PA fee collection, administration, and investment/allocation.

Based upon the literature and interviews, a generalized description of the current PA fee effort follows:

1. PA entrance fees are collected at approximately 40% of PAs (40 out of 100 PAs) in the NPAS.
2. The fees are payments for entrance (access) to a PA; there are other special use and tour fees such as activities as camping, sport fishing, and tubing.
3. The range in entrance fees is \$5 to \$30; the average fee is \$10 USD.
4. The \$5 fee being charged is below the acceptable range based on comparables for similar areas/activities that foreign tourists are accustomed to pay, to alternative sites in the region, and on several willingness-to-pay studies conducted in Belize; a \$5 entrance fee undervalues and undermines the tourist perception that there is a nationally significant resource and tourism opportunity worthy of visiting; \$5 is too low for accessing a national protected area by world standards.
5. The fee is a cash transaction between visitor and tour guide, tour operator or ranger (no credit card).
6. Fees are collected at a PA entrance stations, at the Tourism Village, or may be included in an internet purchase of a tour from a tour operator. A one-stop shopping option for PA Passes does not exist.

7. The PA fee is generally paid by the tourists during their visit in Belize; that is, discretionary cash which a visitor brings to Belize is taken out of the tourism economy due to visitors having to pay cash during their trip
8. A fee provides entrance to one PA and use of basic facilities and programs (e.g., trails, interpretive signs and displays, viewing of natural and cultural wonders, contact with rangers, toilet facilities, and parking).
9. A fee is valid for 1 day (some sport fishing licenses are an exception).
10. Management agencies pay for the fee collection program from the fees collected (e.g., tickets, staffing, transportation, accounting).
11. Visitation statistics are not readily available, not regularly reported, not centrally compiled, and of questionable accuracy; there is no coordinated or consistent visitation tracking effort.
12. The duration in time from actual fee collection to deposits in a secure bank account can range from 1 – 7 days.
13. There is a concern for the safety and welfare of visitors and rangers due to the potential of theft and crime; also concern about the potential damage from international media attention to such events.
14. There is little, if any, public education effort or information about why fees are collected, how administered, or how they are used. There is no programmatic effort to thank visitors for supporting the NPAS. There were some anecdotal stories of visitors being confused and irritated by PA fees.
15. There is insufficient web-based information about the NPAS; tour operators provide some information on their websites but there is no central, coordinated and complete information site. One-stop shopping for comprehensive NPAS information does not exist.

16. There exists a significant opportunity and interest in improving the connection between the tourism industry and the NPAS (i.e., PACT, BTB, and BTIA).
17. The fee transaction process does not collect any identification information, home or email contact information, or visitor information such as past visits, length of stay, planned itinerary, etc.
18. The entrance ticket does not include any identification information about the purchaser (thus easily transferred); the ticket is numbered; tour guides typically buy the tickets and retain the stubs.
19. Fraudulent leakage was estimated by several interviewees to be 30% (i.e., three of every \$10 is lost to PA management). Drumm et. al. recently (August 2011) estimated that \$2.1 M (USD) was collected 2010, thus the estimated fraudulent leakage may well be over a half million dollars.
20. Unmanaged or benign leakage exists in that (a) an estimated 60% of the PAs do not have an entrance fee program and (b) there are days when entrance stations are not staffed (e.g., CBO managers). Similar to item #19 above, this unmanned or benign leakage may well be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.
21. PA management is largely a fee collection activity; the cost of fee collection could not be determined, but agency interviewees acknowledged that considerable time, staff and money is expended for fee collection.
22. Multiple agencies, co-managers, and CBOs collect fees using different and uncoordinated programs. They largely operate as an independent and isolated entity.
23. The Protected Areas Conservation Trust was established in 1996 to serve as a conservation trust fund; PACT collects revenue through the airline and cruise ship passenger fees; accounts for these fees; and distributes the revenue through a grants program.

24. There is an unhealthy level of suspicion, mistrust and cynicism among the various managing entities.
25. There is insufficient expertise in financial or revenue generation planning. Relatedly, there is inadequate training.
26. Tourism visitation is becoming the economic engine for PA management; concern was expressed of the narrow-focus that more visitors means more money without due consideration of the costs of fee collection program and issues such as visitor capacity and resource protection.
27. There is no mechanism in the current system to control the number of visitors to a site (ATM is an exception); the potential for crowding and resource damage is of concern.
28. The allocation of fees back to PAs is not transparent, trackable, consistent, standards-based, or coordinated. Some fees go into GOB accounts and some into co-manager accounts. Some fees are used to support programs that may be considered beyond PA management (e.g., archaeology programs).
29. There is no legal financial incentive for local sales agents or tour guides to encourage payment of the entrance fee.
30. Tourism-related concession fees are not in place for private sector operators benefiting from a public PA.
31. Tour operators maintain good websites and accept advanced reservations and bookings for guided tours into PAs; in some cases the PA fee is included in the transaction.
32. It is estimated that the current entrance fee system collected \$2.1M USD in 2010 (Drumm et.al. August 31, 2011).

33. The distribution of entrance fees does not support the NPAS, but rather they support individual sites. Distribution is not coordinated, transparent, or trackable. Fees are largely retained or allocated back to collect fees at PAs with high visitation.
34. All the people interviewed agreed that the nation's protected areas comprise a "system" on paper (i.e., theoretically) but not in reality (i.e., practically); they constitute a virtual system. All the people interviewed also agreed that Belize needs to change from an individual site-based approach to a comprehensive and coordinated national systems-approach. The awareness of a problem and the will to change is a positive and necessary antecedent for effective change in Belize.

In summary, the most pervasive and significant concern learned through the interviews and literature review of the current situation is the lack of coordination, organization, consistency, transparency, trackability, and collaboration necessary to ensure a system of sustainably financed PAs in general, and more specifically, for an effective PA fee system.

V. Development and Evaluation of Alternatives

The AHA/PACT team was very deliberate and systematic in evaluating the current fee collection system of on-site cash transactions versus an internet-based credit card system that would accommodate advance purchases before people arrive in Belize. The merits of the two options are evaluated in Table 1 using 42 evaluation criteria and a 1-3 rating scale. A total rating score is provided at the end of the table.

Table 1. Evaluation Matrix for Assessing the Alternative Fee Systems for the NPAS of Belize.

Rating system to compare options:

1=low, least; weak; 2=modest or moderate; 3=high, best, strong

Evaluation Criteria	Option #1 Current Situation	Option #2 Internet-based PA Pass System	Comments
Visiting Tourists to Belize			
The ease for tourist in using the collection system	2	3	Tourists need to use cash and carry it with them currently
The convenience for tourists to secure PA ticket/pass; pre-pay before arrival	1	3	Advance pre-payment with credit card is a major advantage of Option #2
The convenience of one-stop shopping rather than repeated purchases	1	3	All PAs and passes would be listed at one site
The predictability for tourists to know they have a pass before arriving in country	1	3	Predictability of international travel is very important to tourist
Ability for tourists to pre-pay and avoid cash transactions	1	3	Option #2 is a credit card based system
Reduced danger and inconvenience associated with carrying cash to PAs	1	3	

The level of confidence that fees are controlled and allocated to conserve PAs	1	3	
Ability to pay for multiple sites, days and visits at one time	1	3	
Ability of system to provide more information about all the PAs in the system—thus encouraging longer stays	1	3	Option #2 PA website is greatly needed to help encourage people to visit more PAs and stay in Belize longer
Opportunity for visitors to make donations	1	3	Option #2 website would have both advertising and donation capabilities
Belize Tourism Industry			
Collaboration of tourism industry with management of NPAS.	2	3	
Incentives for local agents to generate revenue from ticket/pass transactions	1	3	
Availability of more discretionary cash for tourists to spend in Belize.	1	3	
Positive image towards Belize (modern, businesslike)	1	3	
Ability of Belize to market internationally and be recognized for innovation and commitment to PA conservation	1	3	

Enhanced quality experiences due to increased PA management	1	3	
Increase in revenue and business for tour guides	1	3	
Belize's National Protected Areas System (NPAS)			
Transparency of system (i.e., revenue generation, accounting, & distribution to PAs)	1	3	
Ease of system on PA managers	1	3	Option #2 would save staff and dollars currently spent on fee collection
Trackability and reporting of finances	1	3	
Consistency and fairness across NPAs	1	3	
Ability to fund the entire system of PAs	1	3	
Level of leakage and loss of revenue from PA management	1	3	
Danger to rangers from collecting and accumulating cash	1	3	
Length of time from fee collection to bank deposit	1	3	
Level of accounting effort of system	1	3	
Time and effort of PA managers to collect fees	1	3	
Management cost to operate system (e.g.,	1	3	

salaries, ravel, communication, infrastructure, printing tickets, accounting			
Potential of international marketing and communications with visitors	1	3	
Ability to fund a NPAS rather than site specific PAs	1	3	
Ability to reduce site- level competition towards conserving a national system of PAs	1	3	
Technical equipment or skills needed in the field	3	1	Bar scanners would be used to monitor visitor passes (battery or electric)
Enforceability---ability to link the person purchasing the ticket/pass; reduction of counterfeit	1	3	
Ability to manage visitor capacity through regulating number of tickets/passes at one time and location	1	3	
Ability to collect visitor contact information for future marketing, education, Facebook, donations, etc.	1	3	
Level of accountability that tourism fees are being used for PA management activities	1	3	
Ability of GOB and co- managers to continue to	2	2	Funds allocated by NP authority for PAs

assess funds to operate			
Financial ability to expand management to currently unmanaged PAs	1	3	
Total revenues collected from visitors	1	3	Currently 2.1M versus projected (BOB)_____
Total revenues distributed to PA managers	1	3	
Overall economic impact to Belize	1	3	
Investment opportunities from system (e.g., endowment, short – term investments)	1	3	PA Management Endowment fund and matching dollars for grants would be greatly increased in option #2
Total Ranking Score	48	123	

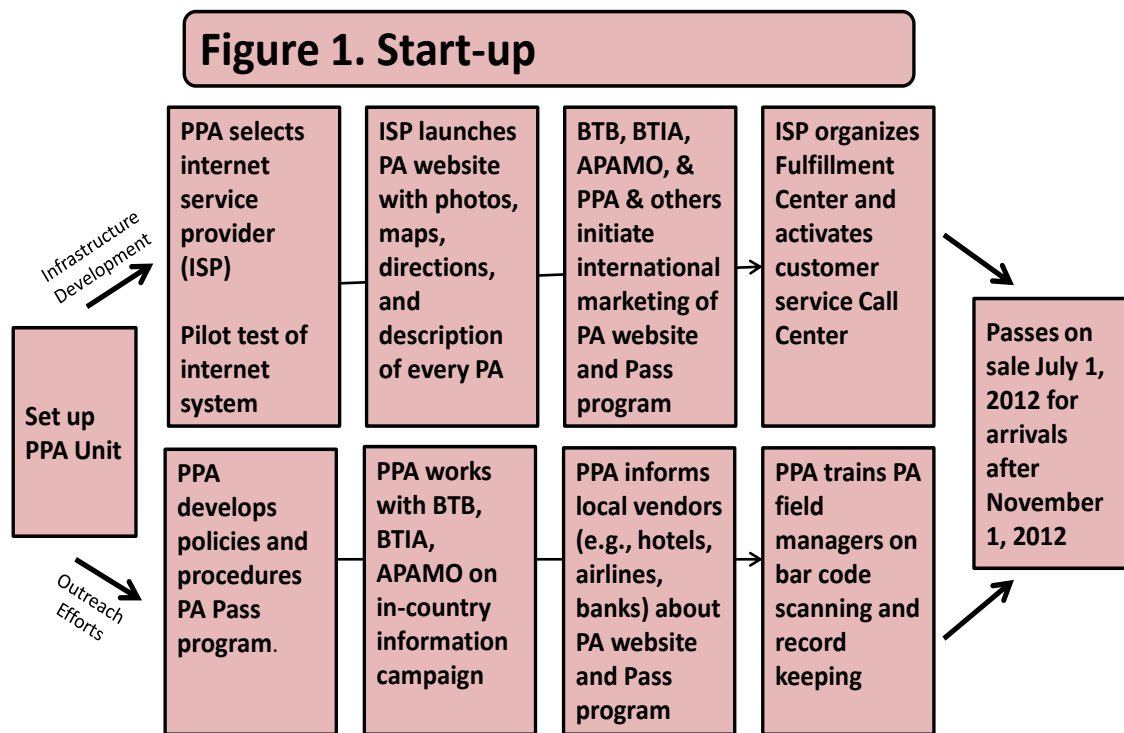
Option #2 is the AHA/PACT team’s preferred and recommended fee collection strategy. The next section outlines the fee system framework in more detail.

VI. Recommended Draft Framework

The AHA/PACT team recommends an internet-based credit card system that would accommodate advance purchases before people arrive in Belize or in-country sales from businesses. The merits and advantages of an internet-based sales system are presented in Table 1 under option #2.

Internet-based credit card systems are common throughout the world for such transactions as airline tickets, hotel reservations, restaurant services, and the purchase of merchandise. They are safe, secure, convenient, and easy to use. The systems are also very popular in the outdoor recreation and ecotourism industry for the purchase of national park passes, campground reservations, fishing licenses, ski lift passes, historic tours, entrance to theme parks like Disneyland, and special events.

The purpose of the section is to outline the framework for this new system. The next four figures and associated text presents the recommended framework for the collection, administration and investment/allocation of the PA fees.



Internet Service Provider. AHA/PACT recommends the selection of Active Network, Outdoors as the internet service provider (ISP) for Belize's national protected areas Pass system. Active Network, Outdoors, part of Active Network, provides international and industry-leading centralized park and protected area reservations, facility reservations, hunting and fishing license sales, entrance and other permit sales, and call center solutions and services to assist customers.

Active Network (AN) designed, manages and markets the two largest outdoor recreation sites in North America with 16.5 million annual visits. As well they administer the largest protected areas-related registration site in North America with 6.5 Million visits per week.

- www.recreation.gov
- www.reserveamerica.com
- www.active.com

Active offers innovative marketing solutions such as targeted online advertising, and appealing comprehensive websites to help clients build awareness and attract outdoor enthusiasts to visit and enjoy their sites, facilities, and programs. Active Network simplifies and streamlines operations, provides a flexible and accurate accounting system and data base, and improves customer service and visitor experiences. Much more information is available at

<http://www.activeoutdoorsolutions.com/technology-solutions/campground/pass-and-permit-sales>.

Active Network is the service provider for the U.S. National Park Service, Forest Service, Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies:

- <http://www.recreation.gov/>

Forty of the fifty state park systems in the United States utilize the services of Active Network. Below is a sample of three state park system websites working with Active Network:

- <http://floridastateparks.org/default.cfm>
- <http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/>
- http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1023

National Protected Areas Website. AHA/PACT recommends a central one-stop shopping portal for PA information and passes. Furthermore, AHA/PACT recommends that the PPA, in collaboration with the ISP, PACT, Government, BTB, APAMO and others, builds and maintains the official website for Belize's NPAS.

At full development of the website, each PA would have a section with quality information about the area, pictures, maps, directions, special features and values, rules and regulations, available facilities and services, a listing of tour operators who service the area, and other information deemed important.

During the initial start-up, only those protected areas to be included on the website will be those areas that are reasonably safe and accessible to visitors, have basic visitor facilities, signage, regular maintenance, interpretation, and a management presence. Over time more protected areas will be added to the website.

The website would also be the official site of the internet-based PA pass system. The site would include external public information on how the system works and how the fees collected are used for worthy projects to sustain Belize's protected areas.

It would also be an internal administrative site for posting of various financial reports, allocation plans, budgets, and other official communications of importance. Access to this portion of the website would be secure and controlled.

International Tourism Marketing Program. This internet-based PA pass sales system will require the implementation of a coordinated tourism marketing program at least six months prior to full implementation. The marketing program needs to be formulated and implemented by a team of the major tourism providers in Belize, including but not limited to, organizations such as BTB, BTIA, BTGA, BNTOA, BHA, GOB, NICH, APAMO, cruise ship industry, international and national airline carriers, and other tourism service providers in Belize. BTB has offered considerable expertise and financial resources to ensure a successful marketing program.

The marketing program need not be complex or expensive. What the program will need is for PPA, in collaboration with the aforementioned tourism providers, to

develop a well-crafted statement as to the purpose and advantage of this new internet-based system. It would also serve as a marketing statement to demonstrate Belize's leadership in providing a safe and convenient one-stop shopping platform to experience and protect Belize's protected areas.

This 2-3 page statement would be electronically posted on the national PAs website for all organizations, private businesses, GOB, co-managers and others to link to from their own website and to refer to in their print materials. The statement could also be imported into various magazine articles, promotional literature, special event materials, and into tour operator websites.

It will be vital that all tourism-related websites providing information about Belize--private, public and ngo---insert a highly visible "announcement" on their homepages alerting prospective visitors to the new convenient PA pass system and the link to the national PAs website.

In-Country Education Program. Similar to the aforementioned International Tourism Marketing Program, this internet-based PA pass sales system will require the implementation of a coordinated in-country education program at least six months prior to full implementation.

In addition to the 2-3 page statement developed for the tourism marketing program, AHA/PACT recommends that a member (s) of their team meets with the coordinating/governing Boards of all the key tourism and related associations and providers (e.g., BTB, BTIA, BTGA, BNTOA, BHA, GOB, NICH, APAMO, Tourism Village, airlines, cruise ship industry) to further explain the system and to seek their cooperation in forwarding information to their members.

It will be vital that all tourism-related websites providing information about Belize--private, public and ngo---insert a highly visible "announcement" on their homepages alerting prospective visitors to the new convenient PA pass system and the link to the National PAs website.

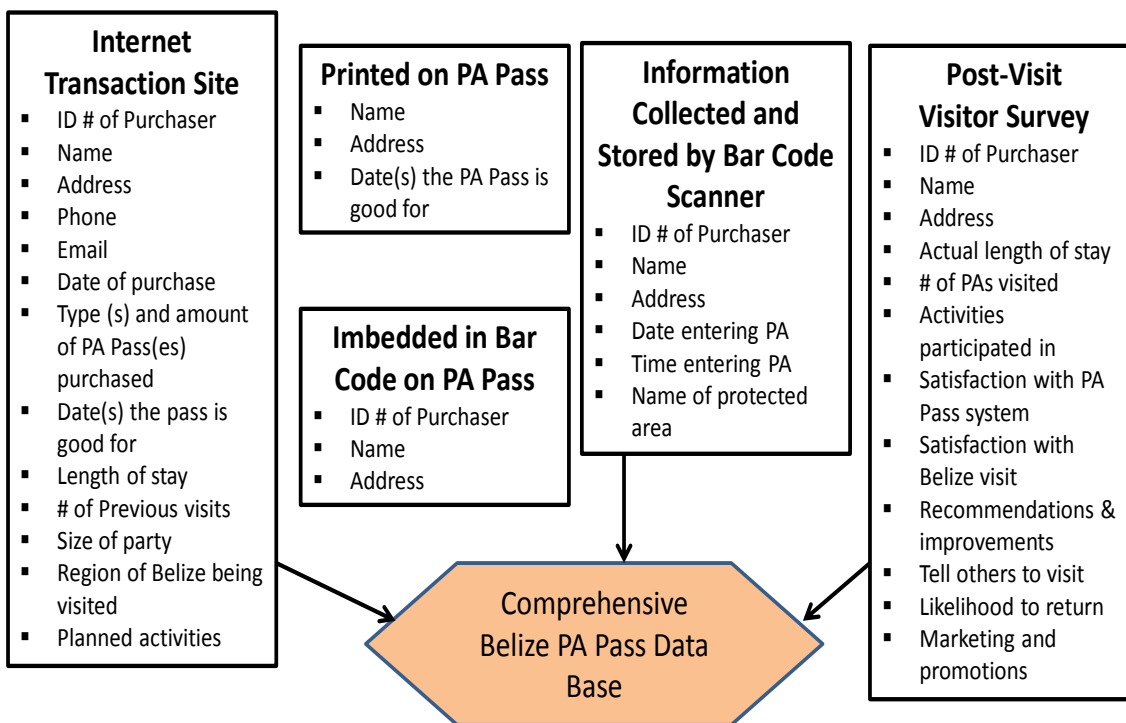
Additionally, some type of national symbol, placard, sign or icon that will inform residents and tourists where they could access the internet to secure a PA pass will be required. Internet services are quickly expanding in Belize and a budding industry of internet cafes and business centers is growing, let alone that many

hotels, restaurants and business now have wireless connections. The notices, informing visitors of the location of “ticket agents” can be included and posted on signs at the locations similar to the ones below.



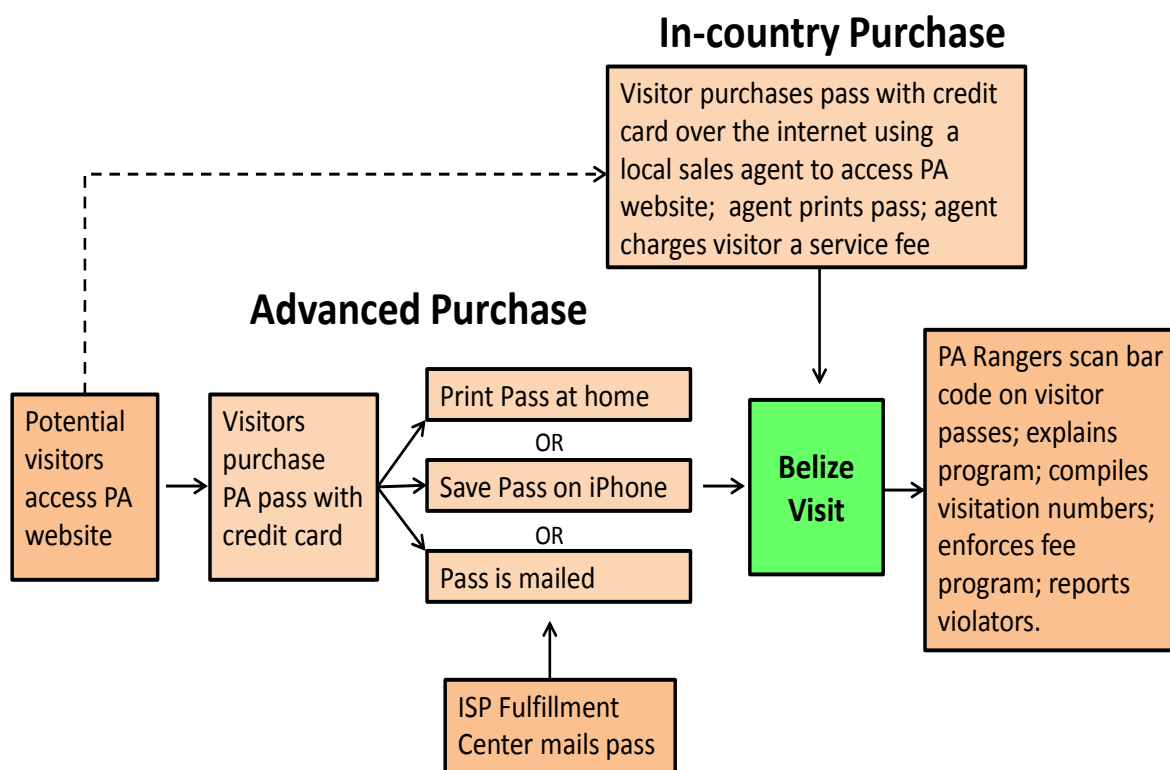
Information Collection and Storage. A very strong advantage of an internet-based PA pass sales system will be (a) the information gained to understand visitation to Belize's protected areas, (b) the greater integrity and efficiency in visitation tracking and measurement, (c) the ability to evaluate and get feedback from visitors about their Belize visit, and (d) the ability to follow-up with future marketing, promotions, and requests for contributions to special Belize projects and programs. The following figure depicts the type of information that would be collected and stored associated with the various components of the system. The data will be compiled into one comprehensive Belize PA Pass data base for ease of cross tabulations.

Information Collected/Stored in Components of PA Pass System



a. Collection

Figure 2. Collection



The primary target market for this recommended internet-based PA pass sales system are visiting tourists and local residents. For the tourists, the primary objective is to provide enough information and encouragement so that 80% of PA pass purchases will be advanced purchases (i.e., prior to arrival in-country). Credit card transactions and advance purchases are standard and expected modes of operation for international travelers.

The primary objective for local residents is an easy-to-access and convenient system to secure a PA pass. Since the use of credit cards in Belize is not commonplace, local residents will pay Belize money to a local sales agent (e.g., tour operator, hotel, internet cafe) who in turn will access the internet PA pass sales site and make a purchase using their business credit card or account number. The local resident would pay the local sales agent for the PA pass plus an agreed upon service fee, although this service could be provided free as well.

The purchase options will be the same for cruise ship passengers. That is, it is recommended that the cruise ship companies clearly indicate on their websites and in printed materials that a PA pass is required for certain in-country excursions. Passengers making a decision about an excursion prior to departure could purchase the PA pass in advance from their homes. The option would also exist for passengers to purchase their PA pass on-board ship. The third option would be to purchase their PA pass in the Tourism Village; that is, the Belize tour guides have expressed interest in being a local sales agent and in maintaining a battery of 4-6 computers/printers in the Village to enable quick and easy purchases. Other businesses in the Village could also act as local sales agents.

The purchase of a PA pass will have three deliver options when the system is fully operational. The initial and most popular delivery method will be for the purchaser, or the local sales agent, to simply print the pass using a standard printer at their home or business. After a start-up period, it will be possible to download the pass on to an iPhone.

In the future, customers will have the option to order special “memorabilia” plastic laminated PA passes with special photos or artwork; “collector” passport booklets for visitors to collect PA stamps from the areas they visit; waterproof PA pass holders; waterproof maps and other items. These optional items would be part of the PA pass credit card transaction and all the costs borne by the customer. The only requirement would be a minimum period of time (e.g., 30 days) to ensure mail delivery. In this case, a fulfillment center administered by the ISP, or other contractor, would process and mail these optional items to customers.

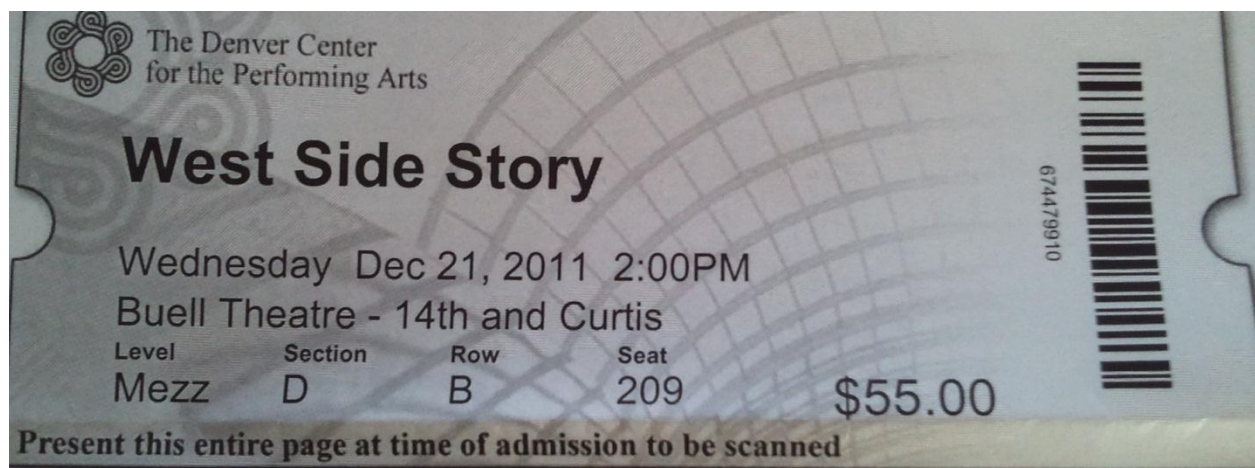
In-country PA pass purchases will be simple and easy. Any business, tour operator, managing agency, tour guide, or establishment may promote the sale of PA passes (e.g., signage, tourism literature). All that is required is a computer with internet access and a printer. Local vendors can charge their own service fee separate and apart of the fees charged with the internet transaction. AHA/PACT recommends that the BTB & BTIA establish a recommended service fee to be charged by local sales agents for providing a service to tourists or local residents, but that the service fee would not be regulated and could essentially operate on what the market is willing to accept.

While the style and format for the PA passes is beyond the scope of this report, they are several general thoughts. Passes would be printed on standard paper of the size that could be easily folded for storing in a person's wallet or passport. Annual passes would be more durable laminated plastic much like a driver's license or credit card. Each pass would display information to ensure the pass holder is the purchaser (e.g., name, nationality, home state of residence). The pass would also clearly display the date the pass expires. If a ranger suspects some fraudulent activity, they would ask to see a person's license or passport to ensure a match with information on the PA pass.

Each pass would include a bar code comprised of a unique number corresponding to the purchaser. Rangers at each protected area would greet the visitors and scan the bar codes. This data would be stored in the bar code scanner and later transferred to a PC data base to help provide a visitation count to the site. This electronic visitation count would take the place of the paper-based entrance pass currently used---saving money and time for counting and processing thousands of forms.

In the near future, the bar code information will permit the PPA to understand how many protected areas a person visits, which protected areas are visited, the date and time, and other important visitation information to help in the planning and management of the PAs.







Bar code scanners are commonly used to read a barcode and obtain, at the point of contact, information about a visitor and their visit. In the case of protected areas in Belize an individualized bar code number would be placed on each person's pass at the time of sale. The bar code would contain basic information on the passes user, such as name, address and passport number or other ID number, date of validity or expiration and type of pass-1 day, 10 day or yearly. A ranger would scan the barcode from a paper/hard printed pass or smart phone, at the visitor point of contact in the protected area.

The main purpose of the scan would be to confirm that the pass is valid, that it is being used for the dates assigned, that it has not expired, that it is being used by the person for whom it was purchased and that the ticket has not already been scanned. If the pass is not valid, the scanner will beep, a light will turn from green to red and a rejection message given. The pass will be rejected with a reason for rejection displayed on the scanner. If there is a problem with the pass, the ranger could also ask for an ID number, such as Passport #, from the visitor and compare the ID, name and address to information displayed on the scanner from the bar code.

Besides using the scanner to check pass validity, other information would be stored on the scanner for future use such as date and time of visitation and name of PA visited. This information would be used to help determine visitation numbers and concentrations. This information would be used to help determining considerations for funding to that particular protected area. All of the information stored in the scanner would be periodically transferred to a computer and uploaded to a central data base in-country.

For use by PA's in Belize, a scanner would need to have the following capabilities:

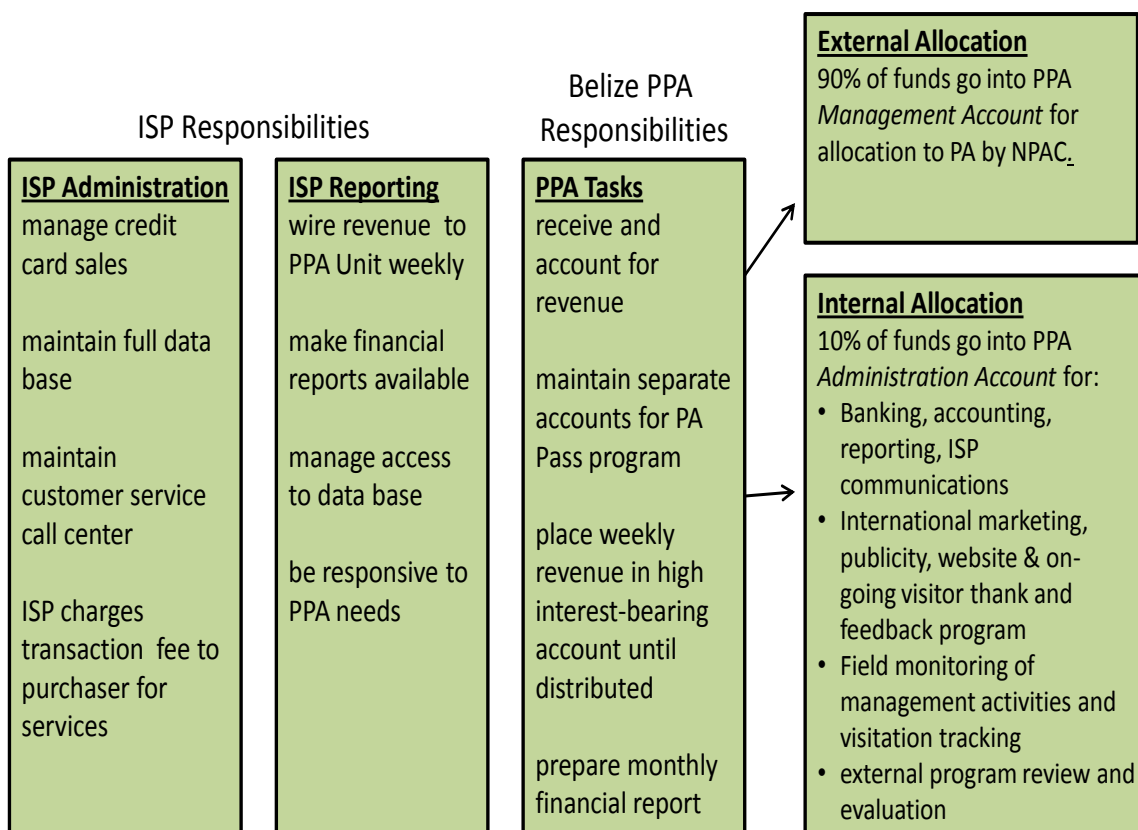
- Cordless (rechargeable battery)
- Hand held
- Scans from a distance up to 40 feet
- Reads from all angles
- Rugged for use in outdoor extreme environments-water sealed and weather resistant and drop proof
- Wireless/cordless technology with radio capability to communicate with other scanners within the PA
- 1D and 2D code reading

Following is one scanner that has all of these requirements--is the Datalogic Power Scan 8000 Series.



b. Administration

Figure 3. Administration



As previously stated, internet-based sales and reservations systems associated with parks and protected areas are common, widespread and a proven technology.

AHA/PACT recommends that people reading this report detour to one or more of the websites developed and maintained by Active Network and listed in the prior section of this report. These websites will illustrate first hand the content, layout, steps, and ease by which a person will be able to purchase a PA pass. The purchasing process has been well tested on millions of customers and only take a few minutes.

The internet service provider (ISP) would create and manage the site in cooperation and under contract with the GOB. This contract would specify important decisions about content and layout of the website, PA pass fees and ISP transaction fees, data storage and reporting requirements, time and location for revenue transfers, person of contact with ISP and PPA (GOB), and other operational details beyond the scope of this report.

AHA/PACT recommends that the revenue received from the ISP goes into a separate bank account managed by the PACT Trust; that is, the monies would not go into the general treasury of the GOB. This recommendation may be controversial, but it is consistent with the mission and intent of why the PACT was created in 1995, and will also give some co-managers and tourism service providers a greater sense of confidence in the system.

The PA pass account would have two sub-accounts: (1) a PPA internal operations account to pay for all the operational aspects of the program, and (2) a NPAC holding account for subsequent distribution by NPAC to protected areas and managing agencies. It is expected that up to 10% of the revenue would be needed for PPA internal operations, with the balance of 90% or more being dedicated to the NPAC.

It should be noted that in the initial two year start-up period, the internal operational costs may be closer to 15-20% of the revenue generated. For example, there would be considerable time and effort needed to put in place the international marketing program, build the national PA website, implement a public education program, train PA rangers, secure bar code scanners, set up local sales agents,

prepare a visitor thank you and evaluation program, and other details beyond the scope of this report.

NOTE TO PROJECT BOARD: AHA/PACT has submitted a proposed contract amendment that will be considered by the Board in January 2012. The contract amendment will allow for our consultancy team to focus more on these start-up tasks than what was listed in the original contract.

c. Investment/Allocation

Figure 4. Allocation/Investment)

Fund Allocation Process by NPAC

NPAC develops process and criteria for allocating funds to PAs.

Allocation should consider, at a minimum:

- support for entire system
- core management costs (facilities, travel, equipment, staff, communications)
- condition of resources
- special and unique values
- type and amount of visitation
- other support from government, grants, communities, NGOs, and industry

Fund Request Process for Managing Agencies

Managing Agencies submit annual PA management work plan for each PA needing funds.

Request should include:

- planned activities and programs
- expected accomplishments
- budget requirements by line item
- visitation monitoring activities
- accomplishments from previous year
- Visitation
- Matching dollars

Decision Process by NPAC

NPAC evaluates funding requests with accompanying annual work plans

NPA authorizes PPA to disburse funds. Any unallocated funds are rolled-over to next year

NPA may allocate some monies to administration and monies (e.g., 5%) to PA Management Endowment Fund

NPA publishes an annual allocation report with PA project accomplishments

The keystone in the investment/allocation stage of this recommended system will be the National Protected Areas Commission (NPAC). AHA/PACT understands this recommendation is conditional based upon the other corollary consultancies working on the legal, policy and procedural aspects to implement the NPAC.

Figure 4 does recommend that NPAC develop a transparent process and clear criteria to allocate monies across the NPAS in Belize. The left hand column includes allocation criteria deemed minimal by AHA/PACT.

Similarly, the center column layouts the requirement for a standards & outcomes-based allocation based upon the submission of an annual work plan for each PA. NPAC would develop a simple but comprehensive outline for submitting the annual PA work plans. In reality these work plans are brief and concise business plans (e.g., 3-5 pages) containing at a minimum the information listed in the center column of Figure 4. Protected areas whose managing agencies do not prepare an acceptable annual work plan would be not receive funding.

NPAC would carefully review each work plan and make allocation decisions. NPAC would then direct the PPA to distribute funds to the managing agencies and programs (e.g., GOB, SEA, Belize Audubon, NICH).

AHA/PACT recognizes that the initial start-up and transition period from the current fee collection system will require patience, transparency, and cooperation. There may be a need for “bridge monies” so as to not disrupt current management programs.

The economic projections in the following section of this report are favorable. That is, this internet-based system for PA passes will significantly increase revenue for the NPAS. Stated otherwise, it is highly probable that the current GOB managing agencies and co-managers currently collecting fees will have access to more money by being part of this integrated collaborative national fee system.

AHA/PACT recognizes that some staff support may be necessary for NPAC to efficiently and effectively function.

Lastly, all work plans, financial statements, allocation decisions, and other key administrative documents should be posted on the National Protected Areas website for access by NPAC members, staff and interested publics.

VII. Economic Projections

• Number of visitors

The primary source of the number of visitors to Belize and its protected areas were reported by the BTB and by Andy Drumm (August 31st, 2011) who summarized a number of previous studies and reports. These estimates will be revised as better data or assumptions become available from other consultants, GOB, tourism industry, and others.

Table 2. Annual Estimated Number of Visitors and Visits to Belize Protected Areas				
Type of Visitor	Estimated Number of Annual Visitors to PAs	Explanation	Estimated Number of Annual Visits to PAs	Explanation
Non-Belizean Visitors				
Day-visitors from cruise ships going to PAs	450,000 visitors	60% of 750,000 total cruise ship passengers to Belize visit at least one Belize PA	495,000 visits	10% of the 450,000 cruise ship visitors visit 2 PAs (e.g., Cahal Pech & Xuna.)
Multi-day/Overnight visitors to Belize				
• Airport arrivals	149,500 visitors	65% of 230,000 total non-Belizean tourists visit a PA	373,750 visits	The average number of PAs visited by multi-day visitors is 2.5 (or the same PA is visited 2.5 times)
• Border crossing arrivals	20,000 visitors	Need to confirm int'l arrival of non-Belizeans.	50,000 visits	
Subtotal of Non-Belizean Tourists	619,500 visitors		918,750 visits	
Belizean Visitors				
Belizeans (exclusive of Sundays and Holidays)	2,000 visitors	Difficult to estimate	5,000 visits	Belizeans who visit PAs visit an average of 2.5 times. Difficult to estimate
TOTALS	621,500 VISITORS		923,750 VISITS	

• Recommended fees

Table 3. Fee Structure and Amounts for Non-Belizeans Visiting to Belize Protected Areas (\$USD)			
Type of Passes	1-day PA Pass	10-day vacation pass	Annual pass for calendar year
General Belize Protected Areas Pass ---entrance to a PA for such activities such as hiking, nature study, swimming, tubing, canoeing, boating, kayaking, wildlife viewing, picnicking, interpretation, diving, snorkeling, and ranger contacts.	\$10 per person	\$50 per person	\$100 per person
Protected Areas Overnight Pass for camping or boat mooring ---- this charge is in addition to the General Belize Protected Areas Pass listed above.	\$15 per person per night		
Special World-class Opportunity Protected Areas Pass ----these passes replace the general protected areas pass listed above			
• Blue Hole Natural Monument	\$30 per person per day; \$100 per person for 10 day vacation pass		
• Actun Tunichil Muknal Natural Monument	\$30 per person per day		
• Whale shark migration at Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve	\$30 per person per day		
• Caracol Archaeological Reserve	\$30 per person per day; \$100 per person for 10 day vacation pass		
• Sport Fishing License	\$20 per person per day; \$100 for 10 day vacation pass; \$200 annual pass		

Comparables were used as a basis for the recommended fees. Comparables were judged to be fees that tourists are accustomed to paying locally in their home state and fees charged at other alternatives sites near Belize. What follows is a sample of PA fees (USD) from the main visitor origination countries to Belize, and from countries that are Belize's major competitors.

Visitor Origination Countries to Belize

United States

Grand Canyon NP-No Refunds = \$12 per person one day/one site;
\$25 per car one day/one site; \$80 Annual Pass all Federal lands

Yellowstone National Park = \$12 per person

United Kingdom

Blenham Palace and Grounds = \$30 adult single site visit;
\$23 child single site visit

Lyme National Park = \$16 per park visit

Parks Canada

Banff National Park = \$9.80 per single park visit
\$67.70 annual pass to visit 27 parks and 77 National historic sites

Major Belize Tourism Competing Countries

Mexico

XCaret Park = \$40 per visit

Xel Ha Park (snorkeling) = \$15 per visit

Xpu Ha = \$40 per visit

Tikal National Park = \$20 per person per day

Chitchen Itza = \$12 per person

Tres Rios = \$20 per person

Chakanub National Park = \$21 per person

Chankanaab National Park - \$21 per person

Costa Rica

\$10 per PA visit

Peru

Machu Picchu = \$39 per person

Ecuador

Galapagos National Park = \$100 for foreign tourist per day

• Projected Revenue

Table 4. Estimated Annual Revenue for Internet-Based/Credit Card PA Pass System at Full Implementation (year 3).

Estimated annual number of people visiting a Belize Protected Area	Non-Belizean cruise ship arrivals visiting PAs	Non-Belizean airport arrivals visiting PAs	Non-Belizean border crossing arrivals visiting PAs	Belizeans visiting PAs (exclusive of Sundays and Holidays)	Total US Dollars
	450,000 (60% of 750,000 arrivals)	149,500 (65% of 230,000 arrivals)	20,000	2,000	NA
One 1-day PA Pass @ \$10 per person per pass	450,000 * 10 = \$4,500,000	29,900 (20%) of 149,500 visitors purchase one 1-day PA Pass 29,900 @ \$10 = \$299,000	4,000 (20%) of 20,000 visitors purchase 1 1-day PA Pass 4,000 @ \$10 = \$40,000	1,500 @ \$10 = \$15,000	\$4,854,000
Two 1-day PA Passes @ \$20 per person	0	44,850 (30%) of 149,500 visitors purchase two 1-day PA Passes 44,850 @ \$20 = \$897,000	8,000 (40%) of 20,000 visitors purchase 2 1-day PA Passes 8,000 @ \$20 = \$160,000	500 @ \$20 = \$10,000	\$1,067,000
Three 1-day PA Passes @ \$30 per person	0	44,850 (30%) of 149,500 visitors purchase three 1-day PA Passes 44,850 @ \$30 = \$1,345,500	8,000 (40%) of 20,000 visitors purchase three 1-day PA Passes 8,000 @ \$30 = \$240,000	0	\$1,585,500
10-day PA Pass @ \$50 per person	0	10,000 @ \$50 = \$500,000	0	0	\$500,000
Annual PA Pass @ \$100 per person	0	2,500 @ \$100 = \$250,000	0	0	\$250,000
Blue Hole 1-day pass @ \$30 per person	0	10,000 @ \$30 = \$300,000	0	0	\$300,000

Blue Hole 10-day pass @ \$100 per person	0	2,000 @ \$100 = \$200,000	0	0	\$200,000
ATM 1 day pass @ \$30 per person	0	5,000 @ \$30 = \$150,000	200 @ \$30 = \$6,000	0	\$156,000
Whale shark 1 day pass @ \$30 per person	0	3,000 @ \$30 = \$90,000	200 @ \$30 = \$6,000	0	\$96,000
Overnight camping or boat/kayak mooring at \$15 per person	0	5,000 @ \$15 = \$75,000	4,000 @ \$15 = \$60,000	0	\$135,000
Caracol 1 day pass @ \$30 per person	0	5,000 @ \$30 = \$150,000	200 @ \$30 = \$6,000	0	\$156,000
Sport fishing 1-day license at \$20 per person (Belizeans = \$5 per day)	0	5,000 @ \$20 = \$100,000	200 @ \$20 = \$4,000	200 @ \$5 = \$1,000	\$105,000
Sport fishing for two 1-day licenses at \$40 per person	0	1,500 @ \$40 = \$60,000	0	0	\$60,000
Sport fishing 10-day license at \$100 per person	0	3,000 @ \$100 = \$300,000	0	0	\$300,000
Sport fishing annual license at \$200 per person	0	1,000 @ \$200 = \$200,000	0	0	\$200,000
Totals	\$4,500,000	\$4,916,500	\$522,000	\$26,000	\$9,964,500

Note A: The primary source of the number of visitors to Belize and its protected areas were reported by the BTB and by Andy Drumm (August 31st, 2011) who summarized a number of previous studies and reports. These estimates will be revised as better data or assumptions become available from other consultants, the GOB, tourism industry, and others.

Note B: The number of passes purchased exceeds the number of visitors because of multiple passes being purchased by some people (e.g., sport fishing and PA Pass; Blue Hole and ATM).

Note C: These revenues do not take into account advertising revenue or donations that would be generated from the PA Pass internet-sales website.

• Projected Allocations

Table 5. Projected Allocations in First Three Years of PA Pass Implementation				
Years	Gross Revenue (USD)	PPA --10% to PPA for program administration	NPAC --90% to PAs & administration	Comments
Year 1—60% of full implementation	\$5,978,700	\$597,870	\$6,576,570**	During the first three years international marketing will be critical----recommend increasing PPA to 15% for first two years
Year 2---80% of full implementation	\$7,971,600	\$797,160	\$7,768,760**	
Year 3---100% of full implementation	\$9,964,500	\$996,450	\$8,968,050**	

**In 2010, a total of \$2,100,000 USD was collected by the current PA fee system (Drumm et. al, 2011).

Note A: These estimates will be revised as better data or assumptions become available from other consultants, GOB, tourism industry, and others.

Note B: These revenues do not take into account advertising revenue or donations that would be generated from the PA Pass internet-sales website

VIII. Recommended Protected Areas Fee Policy

In order to successfully increase the efficiency and effectiveness of collecting, administering and investing/allocating protected area fees, a number of policy additions or changes would need to be implemented.

A. Collection

1. **Fee transparency**---the goal is for all non-Belizeans and Belizeans purchasing a PA Pass to understand and appreciate that 100% of the fees paid will be dedicated to administering the PA Pass program and to sustaining the protected areas of Belize. Marketing and a public education program is vital to success of the PA Pass program.
2. **ISP Transaction fee**---the cost of the internet service system will be covered by a transaction fee charged to the purchaser. Transaction fees will be mutually agreed upon by the ISP and NPAC (or GOB). (See additional guidance in Administration section).
3. **Standardized PA Pass fees**---visitor fees will be standardized across the system unless there is compelling special circumstances and the NPAC (or GOB) approves the variation. Variances should be an unusual exception since there will be consequences to accounting, distribution, compliance, and public understanding.
4. **Standards-based Inclusion in the PA Pass System**---NPAC will develop minimum standards for which protected areas will be included in the PA pass system. Protected areas included in this pass system must meet minimum operational and management standards related to public safety, facilities, personnel, signage, entrance parking, interpretation, resource and visitor monitoring, maps, management plan, and business plan. (See item #43).

5. **Fees for Belizeans and Non-Belizeans**---fees will be based upon prevailing fees at comparables sites in the Caribbean region. Fees for Belizeans may be less than for non-Belizeans. Fees may be waived for Belizean school groups.
6. **PA Pass customers**---PA passes are sold directly to the person planning to visit a protected area(s). One lead person (e.g., parent) may purchase up to four other passes for members in their party. Blocks of tickets will not be sold to tour operators, or other entities, for subsequent distribution to customers. Each pass must have the name and other identifying information for the person holding the pass.
7. **Cash-based PA Pass sales**---there will be no cash-based transactions by the managing agencies or at the entrances of the protected areas. People arriving without a pass will be directed to one or more local sales agents and informed of the new system. The may be rare, compelling and unusual circumstances (e.g., late hour, no available agents, website malfunction) when people will be allowed to access a protected area without a pass, but rangers must impress upon them and their tour guide this is a one-time exception and ask for compliance in the future.
8. **Types of Fees**---fees may be implemented for any service or opportunity being provided in a protected area, including but not limited to, entrance, camping, mooring, boating, parking, fishing, navigation, unique activity, or for the facilities. Fees may vary by time of week and time of year. (See item # 57 for Concession fee policy).
9. **Advanced sales**---the goal at full implementation in year three is to have 80% of the PA Passes purchased in advance by non-Belizeans (i.e., prior to arrival in Belize).

- 10. Market-based incentives for local sales agents**---local sales agents may charge a reasonable market-based service fee for assisting people to purchase a PA Pass. Assistance would involve providing internet access to PA Pass website, directions to purchase pass, and printing of the pass. Reasonable service fees would be recommended by a consortium of the BTIA, BTB and Belize Tour Guides Association. Negative publicity or reports of exorbitant service fees will be monitored by the program's compliance officer and acted upon.
- 11. PA Pass marketing**---the tourism industry (i.e., BTB, BTIA, BHA, BTGA, PACT, GOB, APAMO, airline and cruise ship industry, and others) is a partner in ensuring full and high quality information about the protected areas of Belize and about the PA Pass Program. The PA Pass program provides a significant international marketing message and compelling story about the shared importance of sustaining Belize's natural and cultural wonders.
- 12. Local sales agent**---any willing person, business, or organization may act as a local (in-country) sales agent by displaying a PA Pass program sign/placard and providing a purchaser access to an internet connection and printer. The sales agent may directly assist the purchaser in the transaction or indirectly by setting up a computer/printer station (e.g., business center, kiosk, and counter location) so the purchaser can process the transaction. The local sales agent may charge a reasonable service fee to incentivize the fee system. Reasonable service fees would be recommended by a consortium of the BTIA, BTB, BHA, BTGA, and BNTOA.
- 13. Tour operators and guide incentive**---tour operators and guides may serve as a local sales agent if they have access to an internet connection and printer, and may charge a reasonable service fee. Tour guides may also partner with a local sales agent and share in the service fee based upon an agreement reached between the tour guide or operator and local sales agent.

14. **National PA Pass website**--- the PPA will develop and maintain a complete and high quality website with information about (a) all the PAs including descriptions, maps, directions, photos, and special notices, and (b) the PA Pass system including the types, costs and procedures on how to purchase. Each PA will be provided equal space on the website to encourage visitation.
15. **Advertising**---advertising space on the PA Pass website may be leased to private businesses and corporations to financially support the operations of the PPA. PPA will approve all advertisements and be sure that the professional appearance and focus on the PAs is not compromised by the advertisements. Revenue generated through advertising will be tracked and included as a revenue stream for the PA Pass program
16. **PA donations**---the PA Pass website may contain a section of special programs, resources or needs that may have appeal to donors. Donations will be deposited into a special account that is managed by a 501 C (3) tax-deductible non-profit corporation in the US in order to incentivize people to make donations. 100% of all donations will be allocated in accordance with the donor wishes to the programs, PA, resource or need so listed in the PA Pass website.
17. **Links**---the PA Pass website may include links to the BTB website, to other sources of information about Belize's protected areas, and to tour operators in their support in the PA Pass program.
18. **Enforcement**---GOB managing agencies, co-managers and CBOs will be expected to monitor visitation during normal visitation hours by using an approved bar code scanner to scan the PA passes. The bar code scanner data will be electronically transferred to PPA on an agreed upon regular schedule. All visitors should have their passes with their person.

In the event a person does not have their PA pass they would be directed to one or more local sales agents for purchase. Tour guides will be reminded of the internet pass system and the financial advantage to them (i.e., incentive) to ensure visitors have their pass before arrival. If tour guides

repeatedly bring visitors without passes, they may be fined or barred from accessing the PA for a period of time. Rangers may ask for additional identification to validate that a PA pass belongs to the person.

19.Bar code Scanning---PA visitation will be monitored by using bar code scanners. In the event of a technical problem, rangers should contact the PPA office and should maintain a daily log of the number of visitors. Visitation is one among other factors that is used to make financial allocation decisions by the NPAC.

20.Signage---signage and information about the PA pass system should be displayed in public places near the entrance of the protected areas or along major corridors that access the site. The objective is that 100% of all visitors are aware of the PA Pass system before their arrival at a protected area.

B. Administration

21.Internet Service Provider (ISP) contract---the ISP contract and any proposed changes must be approved and signed by the NPAC (or GOB).

22.ISP fees---The ISP and the NPAC (or GOB) will mutually agree to a transaction fee to be paid by purchaser as part of the PA Pass purchase (i.e., integrated into the internet transaction and paid by credit card). The amount of the transaction fee is intended to pay for the services provided by the ISP and a reasonable profit to the ISP, and the fees may vary by the different types of PA Passes. The transaction fee will be clearly displayed on the billing page so that the purchaser understands that they are paying for this service and convenience. There will be no ISP start-up, development or program costs charged to the NPAC (or GOB).

- 23. Program administration---**the administering unit for the PA Pass Program (PPA) will be housed within the Belize Protected Areas Conservation Trust under the direction of the PACT Executive Director and Board of Directors. The administrative unit (PPA) will be responsible for implementing the contract with the ISP, receiving and accounting for all funds, international marketing, visitor evaluation, compliance checking, PA website maintenance, public education, record keeping and reporting, and other duties specified in the operations plan or otherwise approved by the NPAC (or GOB).
- 24. Program transparency---**the PPA will maintain a section of the National Protected Areas website to post all relevant information about the PA Pass program including program policies, rules, procedures, financial reports, annual reports, program operating costs, dispersals to NPAC (or GOB), and other information of public interest.
- 25. PA Pass overhead---**up to 10% of the PA Pass fees, at the time of full implementation in year three, may be allocated to support the operations of the PPA. Up to 10% of the revenue might be used to cover the real operational costs of the PPA and pass program. In the initial 2-3 start-up years the overhead percentage may be higher to cover real program costs. Of major importance in the first few years is funding for an adequate public education and international marketing effort.
- 26. Program operations plan---** the PPA will be responsible for developing a PA Pass operations plan at least every two years. The plan should detail staffing roles and responsibilities, programs for marketing and compliance, ISP contract, financial accounting and reporting strategy, and other operational details as requested by the NPAC (or GOB).
- 27. Policies and procedures---** the PPA, in collaboration with the ISP, will develop and maintain a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for the collections and administration of the PA Pass program. The NPAC (or GOB) should approve the initial policies and procedures prior to program implementation and all changes or additions thereafter.

- 28. Financial oversight---**a financial report will be prepared each month for review and approval by the NPAC (or GOB) showing type and number of purchases, monies received from ISP, monies dispersed to NPAC (or GOB), current balances, and other records requested by the NPAC (or GOB). The NPAC (or GOB) should review and approve the monthly financial report. The report should be part of the public record.
- 29. Revenue investment---** the PPA may establish various holding accounts to place monies received from the ISP. Monies will be placed into a high interest-bearing account(s) (e.g., 6+ %) and will be retained in these accounts until authorized for disbursement. Interest generated will be added back to the account from which it was generated.
- 30. Revenue disbursement---**the PPA will disburse monies from the PA Management account at the direction of NPAC (or GOB) upon completion of their review of PA annual work plans and allocation decisions. NPAC (or GOB) will direct when and where the PA management monies should be allocated.
- 31. Visitor thank you and evaluation program---**the PA Pass program will utilize email communications via the ISP to contact each purchaser within 3 months of their visit to Belize. The communication will be coordinated with BTB for the purpose of expressing appreciation for their support in protecting Belize's natural and cultural wonders. At least 20% of the PA Pass purchasers would be invited to participate in an electronic visitor survey via the ISP in order to evaluate the experience in using the PA Pass website, confirm when and where they visited, and gather more general information about their visit to Belize. The PPA will be responsible for monitoring the content of the survey.
- 32. Visitor privacy---**the internet-based system will collect and store the name, home address and email address of each PA Pass purchaser. This information shall be treated as strictly confidential and only available to senior program staff. The contact information should not be released, sold, exchanged, shared, or in any way allowed to be accessible to anyone beyond the designated senior staff. The contact information can be used by the PPA

and BTB for well-organized and professional Belize tourism marketing promotions. The PPA is responsible to monitor and control the number and timing of contacts that are made with past visitors.

- 33.**Program compliance**---a compliance officer will be part of the PA Pass program staff whose responsibilities would be to ensure that managing agencies are contacting visitors and scanning the bar code of their passes, working with tour guides and local sales agents to ensure proper procedures, and investigating reports of fraud and non-compliance.
- 34.**Enforcement**---the NPAC (or GOB) will establish rules, regulations, and procedures for warning, penalizing, fining, or barring from PAs the people or businesses that deliberately violate, abuse, misrepresent, or in some way circumvent the PA Pass program. All managing agencies will be expected to enforce the rules and regulations.
- 35.**Fee increases**---the PA Pass fee will automatically increase 10% every three years to reflect historic increases in economic inflation and management costs. Fee increases should be rounded off to the next highest whole dollar number (i.e., no cents) for ease of accounting and public understanding. Variations from this policy would be approved by the NPAC (or GOB).
- 36.**Initial financial support**--- the PPA may authorize the allocation of internal PPA monies and in-kind service support to help initiate the PA Pass program, with the expectation that these monies would be reimbursed over a number of years.
- 37.**PA Pass advisory committee**---the PPA will establish and financially support a PA Pass program advisory team to help develop and fully implement the program. PA Pass program revenues may be allocated to support this effort. The advisory team should include external experts with expertise in internet sales systems, visitor evaluation surveys, financial management, revenue generation and protected areas planning and management.

- 38.**External evaluation**---the NPAC (or GOB) and PPA will cost-share an external evaluation by a team of financial and protected area management experts in the third year of implementation and every five years thereafter. The findings of the external evaluation will be publicly available and acted upon by the PPA and NPAC (or GOB).
- 39.**Refunds and Cancellations**---there will be no refunds or cancellations of PA passes, no exchanges, and no transfers to another time, location, person, or activity. All sales are final at time of purchase. People may appeal to the PPA for what they might consider rare, compelling and unusual circumstances. All decisions of the PPA are final.
- 40.**ISP Transaction errors**---in the event a mistake is made during the internet transaction (e.g., wrong date, wrong pass), the policies and procedures of the ISP will prevail. PPA will not be responsible for remedying transaction errors. (Note: In the case of Active Network as the ISP, they provide a toll-free call center for people to contact with problems).

C. Investment/Allocation

- 41.**A System-wide focus**---the primary overarching focus and goal of NPAC (or GOB) is to ensure the integrity of the entire national protected areas system,.
- 42.**National Protected Areas Commission (NPAC)** ---a centralized commission or authority should be established to provide for the coordinated management and planning of the Belize NPAS. The Commission may have a director, staff and modest operations budget from the PA Pass program to ensure the development and implementation of coordinated and consistent policies, procedures, rules and regulations, planning, visitor and resource management, financial budgeting and tracking, public transparency and reporting, and other functions typical of a system of protected areas.

- 43. Standards-based protected areas management---**the NPAC (or GOB) will establish a standards-based investment/allocation strategy for developing, funding, and managing each protected area or cluster of protected areas. Basic and optimal standards should be developed for staffing, organization structure, responsibilities, transport, entrance and interpretive signage, visitor information (print and web), facilities, programs, law enforcement, communications, boundary demarcation, monitoring (visitor and resource), management planning, financial budgeting and tracking, visitation tracking, uniforms, personnel skills and training, concession agreements and fees, and other functions typical of a system of protected areas.
- 44. PA Funding Eligibility & Seed Grants---** Protected areas who do not meet the minimum operational standards as referred to in item #43, will not be part of the PA pass system or eligible to receive funds generated by the PA pass program. NPAC may allocate some revenues to serve as “seed” or “incentive” grants for PAs that currently have little or no management or visitor infrastructure. These monies would encourage managing agencies and communities to become more active.
- 45. PA regionalization---**Due to size, proximity, similar resources, shared staffing and equipment, or other reasons, there may be benefit for NPAC (or GOB) to fund regional service and visitor centers that would serve a number of PAs rather than assigning resources to each PA.
- 46. Financial accounting/audit---**NPAC (or GOB) will set up a financial reporting and audit system to ensure monies are allocated and expended for the purposes agreed to in the PA annual work plans and to validate accomplishments. The system should display proposed budget items, NPAC (or GOB) allocation decisions, actual expended funds by line item, and actual accomplishments.

- 47. PA annual work or business plan**---allocations to a PA will be made by NPAC (or GOB) based on the merits and needs specified in an annual work or business plan for each PA, or clusters of PAs in close proximity. The managing agency should prepare an annual work plan that would include but not be limited to (a) planned management activities and programs, (b) expected accomplishments, (c) basic and optimal levels of budget requirements for staffing, transport, equipment, communications, signage, facilities, programs, planning, monitoring, and operations, (d) visitation tracking strategy, (e) unique or special circumstances, (f) matching dollars from the GOB, donations, grants or other sources, and (f) accomplishments of the previous year. A standard template will be used to help ensure brevity and for easy contrast and comparison across the submitted work plans.
- 48. Work plan consolidation**---managing agencies may consolidate annual work plans for units in close proximity, when resources (e.g., staffing, transport, facility, programs) will be shared, or for other reasons of efficiency and effectiveness. It would still be expected that the relative dollars for each PA within a consolidated plan would be transparent.
- 49. NPAC presentation**---agencies and organizations submitting work plans may be provided the opportunity to make a presentation to NPAC (or GOB).
- 50. Decision criteria**---NPAC (or GOB) will develop a set of standard decision criteria that will be used to evaluate each submitted work plan. A standard set of decision criteria would make the allocations decisions more fair, systematic, analytical and defensible. The decision criteria scores/ratings by each judge will be part of the public record.
- 51. Visitation and allocations**---NPAC (or GOB) should maintain a position that more visitors does not mean more funding. Visitation has a real cost, but it alone should not drive the financial allocations. Visitation should be one of many decision factors considered in an allocation decision.

52.Full and partial funding allocations---NPAC (or GOB) may choose to give full, partial or no funding for a PA with written justification.

53.Money allocations---NPAC (or GOB) may allocate monies to managing agencies, may use up to 10% of monies received from PPA for administration; or roll unallocated funds over to the next allocation time.

54.Disbursement/Allocation decisions---financial allocation decisions will be made once per year; proposed annual work plans should be received no later than eight weeks prior; NPAC (or GOB) will make decisions by a majority vote; all votes and voting members will be recorded as part of the public record.

55.Multi-year commitments---NPAC (or GOB) may make multi-year commitments for projects or programs (e.g., restoration, facility design and development) that would reasonably need more than a one year commitment to reach the expected accomplishments.

56.Transparency---NPAC (or GOB) will maintain a website for public information and transparency that would include allocation decisions, votes and voting members, annual work plans submitted, annual reports, and other important information.

57.Concession operations---managing agencies will charge separate fees beyond the PA Pass fees for special services, conveniences and programs such as guided tours, food sales, research permits, interpretive programs, educational classes, resource extraction, and special events. The procedures and fees will be developed by the managing agency, retained by the managing agency, and not integrated into the PA Pass program. All concession arrangements should be detailed in a contract with performance specifications, a cancellation clause, and approved by the managing agency.

58.PA management plans---managing agencies should prepare and submit to NPAC (or GOB) a five-year management plan from which the annual budgets will be derived. Each plan will address management goals/objectives, current resource and visitor conditions, desired future resource and future conditions, indicators of acceptable resource and visitor conditions, organization and staffing, proposed facility development, revenue generations activities, resource and visitor monitoring activities, visitor capacity, concession operations, and other aspects important to the PA.

IX. Recommended Timetable

The recommended timetable is largely based upon the belief that the internet-based PA pass sales system (a) cannot be implemented in the middle of a tourist season, (g) that the tourism service providers need information and time to make changes on their websites, literature, and operations, and (c) and that there is a considerable amount of work and decisions to be made.

Below are target dates to complete critical steps:

March 1, 2012---GOB makes decision to move forward with the AHA/PACT recommendation.

April 1, 2012---ISP contract in place; international marketing plan and local public education plan, including 2-3 page PA Pass executive summary, is in place.

May 1, 2012---PPA unit activated within PACT; PA Pass Advisory Committee activated; banking, accounting financial reporting mechanisms put into place.

June 1, 2012---PA pass website details (e.g., content and style of pass, layout and design of pages and links) are 90% complete; system is ready for internal testing.

June 1, 2012---all major tourism service providers are well informed and details in place (e.g., BTB, BTIA, BTGA, BNTOA, BHA, GOB, NICH, APAMO, Tourism Village, airlines, cruise ship industry). Organizations and associations will have forwarded important information to their members.

July 1, 2012---National Protected Areas website completed and publically available. Internet-based PA pass transactions will begin for those people planning visits after December 1, 2012

July 1, 2012---international marketing program launched in collaboration with BTB.

December 1, 2012---cash-based entrance fee transactions ceased; bar code scanning of PA passes begins

END of the AHA/PACT December 21, 2011, report.