

# *World-Wildlife Fund*

## *president writes*

April 23, 1999

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to register concern over the proposed Macal River Chalillo Dam Project in Belize, having received various press reports and letters which describe disturbing potential impacts, including loss of biologically unique riparian vegetation in the flood plain and of habitat for rare scarlet macaws and jaguars.

As a long-term supporter of Belize's efforts to conserve its wealth of biodiversity and a partner in working to strengthen the capacity of its institutions charged with managing natural resources, WWF urges the Government of Belize to take a careful, comprehensive, and publicly inclusive approach in reviewing the proposed project and analyzing its merits.

As you may know, the WWF Network is actively engaged in the current debate on dams worldwide. While we oppose major projects with adverse impacts on the environment and local communities, WWF recognizes that hydropower can be an

important tool in meeting basic human needs.

In a recent report entitled, "A Place for Dams in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?", WWF argues against a single worldwide strategy on dams. Nonetheless, the belief that every country has the right to develop its hydropower resources does not mean that every country should build big dams. Some sites are so ecologically sensitive that no big dams should ever be built there.

We trust that such an important decision as that represented by the Chalillo Project will be made through a thorough and participatory environmental impact assessment process that considers the full range of options for sustainable energy development. As ever, WWF stands ready to support conservation and sustainable development in Belize.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Kathryn Fuller

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*Amandala Belize May 2, 1999*