

# PRESS RELEASE

## *Audubon's Position on Chalillo*

After an extensive process of review and consultation, the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) conditionally accepts the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Macal River Upstream Storage Facility (MRUSF), otherwise known as the Chalillo Dam.

When the final EIA became available in September of this year, BAS commissioned a number of reviews by specialists. From those reviews and the input of BAS Staff and Board it was initially decided that the Society could not support the Chalillo project because of important information gaps in the EIA.

As the Association of National Development Agencies (ANDA) representative on the National Environmental Appraisal Committee (NEAC), BAS became part of the team of technical experts who analysed in depth each section of the EIA. The developers (BEL, BECOL, and Fortis) were cooperative in supplying the technical information requested by NEAC members, and as a consequence BAS was satisfied that its initial concerns had been addressed sufficiently to support environmental clearance.

However, BAS still considers that the consultation process was not extensive enough as it was largely restricted to the Cayo district. The Society is in full support of NEAC's recommendation for BEL to pursue a program of public hearings countrywide.

In order to ensure that the developers take the necessary measures to reduce environmental impacts, BAS through ANDA, will be fully involved in the formulation of the Environmental Compliance Plan for the project. This plan is a legally binding document that incorporates the environmental mitigation measures identified in the EIA, as well as others recommended by the NEAC.

BAS has a long tradition of supporting the sustainable development of Belize and remains committed to the environmental clearance process, which strives to ensure responsible development in the best interest of all Belizeans.

The Belize Audubon Society,  
Belize City  
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