



# CTA-002-Coral Reef-Belize

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Vic Ferguson

The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation

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## Belize Coral Reef Interpretive Center

I would like to develop a Coral Reef Interpretive Center or Aquarium in Belize to educate visitors and natives about the amazing Mesoamerican Reef System. Belize has the largest barrier reef in the western hemisphere – a marine area rich in biodiversity, and a strong attraction for tourists from around the world. Belize's rainforests also support amazing creatures and are an exciting destination for Belizeans and visitors.

For fifty years Belize has been establishing protected areas. The designation of these protected areas has made Belize one of the most environmentally advanced countries in the world, with extensive areas of the national territory now designated as protected areas. There are quite a few NGOs working on Conservation and Research, but I have found few opportunities for Education and Interpretation. I think that they could use some sort of Environmental Learning Center. I have 2 sites in mind and estimate it will cost about US \$30Million to build the facility.

I am a marine biologist, master naturalist and certified interpretive guide and have worked in public aquariums and museums for more than 30 years. My role is to connect people with nature. I have set up a LinkedIn group "Belize Aquarium Supporters" and encourage people to join and comment about the proposal. <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Belize-Aquarium-Supporters-4598556/about>



**David Gross** shared this idea · Sep 22, 2012 · [Flag idea as inappropriate...](#)

## 11 comments

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-  **Padraic Mangan** commented · September 27, 2012 8:34 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

What a great Project. I know Rockscapes of Canada Inc. Would love to become part of this project. Should you need any Artificial Rock, Theming or Coral please make sure you give us a call to help.

-  **Dr. Harold K. "Harry" McGinnis** commented · September 27, 2012 8:09 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

Dr. Earle:

We both are FSU-educated. Please seriously consider this man's request. I worked for the Florida CZM program, including some work with policy experts at Woods Hole near my hometown of New Bedford, and conducted studies of the coral reef systems in the Keys, including involvement in the creation of marine sanctuaries at Looe Key and Key Largo and estuarine sanctuaries at Apalachicola Bay and Rookery Bay. Belize is a pristine ocean wonderland that needs protecting!

-  **Anonymous** commented · September 25, 2012 6:36 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

Great project concept in a beautiful corner of the ocean!

-  **CV May** commented · September 24, 2012 12:50 p.m. · Flag as inappropriate

This is a great initiative from dedicated naturalist with great credentials. Those of us with Belizean interests should support it 100%.

-  **David Gross** commented · September 24, 2012 8:55 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

To answer the \$30Million question. The first step would be to have a feasibility study done to see how large a facility could be sustainably supported. ConsultEcon did a pretty accurate job of projecting Wild Center visitation, and they have also done quite a few of these studies for National Marine Sanctuary Visitor Centers.

[http://www.consultecon.com/sectors/museums/visitor\\_centers/default.cfm](http://www.consultecon.com/sectors/museums/visitor_centers/default.cfm)



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\$30M would build a sufficient first phase of 50,000 square feet. Cruise ships bring about 800,000 passengers a year to Belize currently, and there are about 250,000 overnight visitors. I don't expect much more than 100,000 visitors a year to start.



- **Marcelo Shei** commented · September 24, 2012 5:54 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

Very nice David,

Let me know if you need something related to structures development, operations or other assistance



- **tacogirl** commented · September 24, 2012 5:16 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

Done and facebooked it too, keep up the good work. I had the chance to twitter RB once about saving our oceans when he was looking for brainstorming before a meeting.



- **Matthew Aldrich** commented · September 24, 2012 2:22 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

Bravo and best wishes on such a worthy and timely project! As an avid SCUBA diver for years, it was The Great Blue Hole of Belize that brought me to the Reef and the consortium of committed countries to its preservation which will bring me back often in years to come! Please let me know how I could help your cause moving forward? All the best!



- **Anonymous** commented · September 24, 2012 2:11 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

\$30 million??



- **Ahsaas Lone** commented · September 24, 2012 12:32 a.m. · Flag as inappropriate

Sir, its really a nice idea where people from globe can explore the facility and try to learn much more about the subject, i strongly agree and support for the present cause.



- **David Gross** commented · September 22, 2012 3:59 p.m. · Flag as inappropriate



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No cetaceans will be displayed in this center, and one site is adjacent to Swallow Caye Wildlife Refuge, so manatees may be seen in the wild. A manatee and sea turtle hospital would be a component.

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## Feedback and Knowledge Base