

PROGRAMME FOR BELIZE

THE RBCMA SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 TO 2021



View over the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area. (Credit: S. Brewer) 2

SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 TO 2021

**for
The Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area
Orange Walk**

**Programme for Belize
May 2016**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area encompasses part of one of the most productive tropical broadleaf systems in Belize. It has an impressive two century long history of logging, which by all accounts herein will continue well into the future. Especially so if the management of the forest adheres to the systems and prescriptions made for the area and contained in this management plan.

This present sustainable forest management plan (SFMP) is the third plan of its kind that has been prepared for the RBCMA. These SFMPs have taken the approach of planning around a 5 year cycle, by inventorying an area equal to 5 annual cutting compartments and preparing a management plan for same. This approach saves cost and time but lacks a longer term view of resource availability, since year to year maneuvering of harvesting is restricted to the same 5 annual cutting compartments to be worked under the 5 year plan. Therefore, in this latest plan, an area equal to 10 annual cutting compartments was inventoried to aid in planning and yield selection, and allows for wider maneuvering from year to year across cutting compartments to meet market demands and resource management objectives.

In reality, these 5 year plans all fit within a larger forest management framework developed for the RBCMA and contained within the original 5-year plan written by R. Wilson in 2006. Much of the geographical and ecological context of the RBCMA is contained within this original plan and need not be re-written here. For example, the compartmentalization of the RBCMA into cutting blocks is as it was in 2006 and there is no need to re-design the compartments under this new management plan. But for context, several paragraphs of relevant text have been carried over to this new plan and referenced.

This SFMP is a strategic document that provides the planning framework for forest management at the annual unit level. This document will be a reference for the planning of on ground operations and activities and will guide the selection of the sequence of annual cutting compartments. It should be viewed as an integral component of the suite of management tools available to PFB.

The area can sustain a yield of timber that will be very profitable under optimal management and administrative performance. On average, Mahogany is available annually in amounts approaching 190,000 bdft of sawn lumber from a typical logging area of 1,000 hectares. The amount can be adjusted from year to year to meet company preferences and market conditions. Other precious hardwoods are also available in economically viable volumes. Some species will require protection from logging when and where they occur sparsely. The company is encouraged to harvest and utilize as many species as possible according to the sustainable yield models and regulation methods provided.

Paramount to the execution of this management plan will be an intrinsic understanding that the forest, in its present state, affords the production of timber and generation of revenue at levels exceeding those normally associated with timber operations in Belize, but that this will change with the coming of the next hurricane. Therefore, the forest should be utilized as efficiently as possible to maximize economic benefits but without undue harm.

The current management plan represents an innovative advancement in the field of forest management in Belize as it proposes long needed improvements to the yield regulation and silvicultural system for tropical broadleaf forests of Belize. These improvements are data-driven and should therefore as much as possible continue to be informed by relevant data. This 2017-2021 RBCMA management plan will represent a benchmark example for other forest management operations in Belize.

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