



LAS CUEVAS RESEARCH STATION

The Past 10 Years and Its Future



MISSION

Make known the biodiversity of the Maya Forest and contribute practical knowledge to the sustainable development and conservation of the Chiquibul-Maya Mountains Key Biodiversity Area.



- On the 22nd of December 1992 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Forest Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Natural History Museum (NHM) of London.
- By 1994 the NHM had collaborated in the construction of Las Cuevas Research Station. The primary purpose of the Station was to facilitate terrestrial biological and environmental research.
- On the 16th of June, 1997 a MoU concerning Scientific and Educational cooperation was signed between Prime Minister Hon. Manuel Esquivel and Dr. Neil Chalmers, Director of the NHM.



- On December 1997, Chris Minty took the position of Research Station Manager.
- The MoU arrangement ended in October 2004, thereafter Maya Forest Enterprises Limited (MFE) took operations of LCRS up to January 2009.
- By 2012, FCD engages the Government of Belize for management of the LCRS and starts administration of the station in 2014.



- On the 15th September, 2015 a ten-year MoU was signed between the Government of Belize and FCD to continue scientific research and education.
- Other interested parties to the MOU, though not signatories to the agreement included the University of Belize, Royal Botanical Garden of Edinburgh, Virginia Technical University and the University of Florida.



Research

Research conducted at Las Cuevas Research Station is only possible through a research permit provided by the Belize Forest Department.

Specialty Tourism

Specialty tourism is described as low impact tourism which does not under shadow or compromise the role of LCRS nor jeopardizes the natural elements.



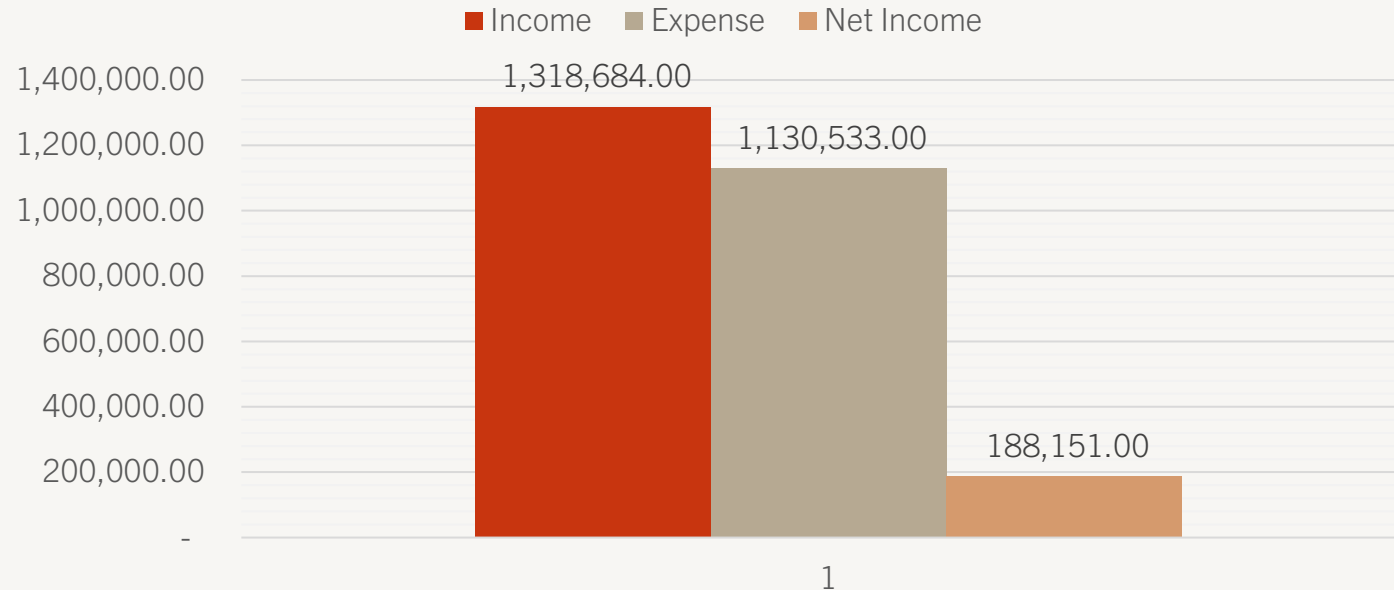




Visitation History at LCRS (2014 - 2024)						
	Guest Total	Students	# Universities	Training	Tourism	Research
2014	226	191	5		35	
2015	205	154			51	
2016	166	?	7			
2017	425	114	10		137	39
2018	485	145	9			3
2019	509	190		42	168	21`
2020	308	Covid-19		122	178	8
2021	375	Covid-19		142	163	1
2022	484					
2023	448	149		94	188	17
2024	501	238		83	114	66

Since 2014, over 4,132 researchers, students and other guests visited Las Cuevas, gaining invaluable experience through field courses and knowledge exchanged by FCD staff.

Income Statement 2014-2024



- The total income for the period 2014-2024 was US\$659,432.00 and expenses totaling US\$565,266.50. The positive balance of US\$94,075.50 highlighted the station's ability to sustain a stable operation.
- In the opinion of the auditor for all periods starting from 2014 to 2024, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Las Cuevas Research Station Program and its financial performance and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).



The Future of LCRS



On February 27th , 2026 an MoU is signed between the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change, the Forest Department and FCD.

The objectives/goals of this Memorandum are:

- 2.1 To ensure that the management and operation of the Las Cuevas Research Station are conducted in full compliance with the Forest Act, its subsidiary legislation, and all directives issued by the BFD.
- 2.2 To preserve Las Cuevas Research Station strictly as a non-tourism facility dedicated exclusively to scientific research, ecological monitoring, conservation, and forest management support.
- 2.3 To strengthen biodiversity protection within the Chiquibul Forest Reserve through approved research and technical activities.
- 2.4 To provide a clear framework for cooperation, oversight, and accountability between the BFD and FCD in the operation of the Las Cuevas Research Station.

The FCD shall

- 3.7 Operate, manage, and use of the Las Cuevas Research Station, including the access trails and bird cage exclusively for:
- a) Scientific research and ecological monitoring;
 - b) Conservation science and biodiversity assessment;
 - c) Technical training and capacity building related to forest and protected areas management; and
 - d) Academic or environmental education and interpretive activities, including educational tourism activities, that are directly aligned with approved research and forest management objectives.

- 3.10 Implement and carry out educational tourism activities in conformity with approvals obtained from BFD. For clarity, “educational tourism” activities refer to tourism activities focused on environmental education and academic research. No purely tourism-related activities shall be undertaken or carried out at Las Cuevas Field Station, including guided tours, visitor packages, and overnight tourism, stays, marketing, promotion, or advertising of tourism or any revenue-generating tourism activity not directly related to onsite research. For Clarity “Tourism” includes guided or unguided tours, sightseeing, recreational visits, visitor packages, overnight stays for leisure purposes but not including legitimate research activities, marketing or promotion of visitor experiences, or any revenue-generating visitor activity.

4. Commencement, Duration and Amendment

4.1 This Memorandum shall come into force on the date it is executed by the authorized representatives of all the Parties and shall remain in effect for a period of ten (10) years.

4.2 This Memorandum shall renew automatically at the end of the ten (10) - year period unless terminated by either Party.

LCRS ADVISORY COMMISSION



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University of California
Merced



Dr. Jake Snaddon
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Dr. Derek Rosenberger,
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Dr. Scott Solomon,
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LAS CUEVAS EXPLORAR





Our Vision

FCD envisions LCRS as a premier research and educational facility that fosters collaboration, innovation, and conservation.



Our objectives are to:

- Enhance Research Capabilities: Continue to provide cutting-edge infrastructure and support for scientific research that advances our understanding of the Chiquibul Forest's biodiversity.
- Promote Education and Training: Develop and expand educational programs that inspire and train the next generation of conservationists and scientists.
- Strengthen Partnerships: Foster strong relationships with national and international academic institutions, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to support collaborative research and conservation efforts.
- Implement Advanced Monitoring Systems: Utilize advanced technologies for continuous monitoring and assessment of ecological health, ensuring adaptive management practices.



LAS CUEVAS RESEARCH STATION



2014-2024 SUMMARY REPORT



Acknowledgements

- The Natural History Museum of London
- Late Nicodemus *Chapa* Bol
- Chris Minty
- The Royal Botanical Garden of Edinburgh
- University of Belize
- Virginia Technical University
- University of Florida
- Prime Minister John Briceno
- Ministry of Sustainable Development & Climate Change
- Belize Forest Department
- BATSUB
- Protected Areas Conservation Trust
- The European Nature Trust
- The Las Cuevas Staff

Thankyou



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Development



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