

## ECOENTERPRISES FUND

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### *FONDO ECOEMPRESAS, S.A.*

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#### **Belize Lodge and Excursions Limited**

[www.belizelodge.com](http://www.belizelodge.com)

Belize Lodge and Excursions (BLE) operates four travel lodges, located in three different habitats of southern Belize. The company offers a variety of excursions for visitors, including river trips, nature hikes, backcountry expeditions, tours of Mayan ruins and trips to Belize's barrier reef, part of the Meosamerican Reef. With its multi-faceted approach, BLE highlights the differences between ecotourism and other types of nature tourism by emphasizing conservation, education, responsible traveling and active community participation.

Southern Belize, with its clear Caribbean waters and tropical forests, is internationally recognized for its biological riches. With relatively little coastal development in comparison to neighboring countries, the region offers refuge to a diversity of birds, mammals and fish.

To protect these resources, BLE has worked with conservation partners to maintain the long-term ecological integrity of the region. The company signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment (TIDE), a partner of The Nature Conservancy. The agreement is the first of its kind in Belize's Southern Toledo District, laying the groundwork for a productive working relationship between the private sector and a local conservation organization.

BLE also partnered with a British-based conservation group, Flora and Fauna International, and helped establish a local nonprofit organization, the Ya'axche Conservation Trust, to manage its properties. Through these partnerships, BLE provides a model of low-impact tourism that contributes to local economies and local conservation efforts.

BLE has also helped create The Boden Creek Ecological Preserve (BCEP), established in October of 2007 as a not-for profit entity. BCEP now owns 12,600 acres of pristine lowland tropical broad leaf forest in southern Belize. These lands were acquired by BLE and are used to manage BLE's terrestrial hospitality and excursion operations. BCEP focuses on protecting and monitoring the areas rich natural habitats, designing and implementing sound conservation and ecotourism management practices, and returning the flora and fauna of the area to its original context wherever possible.

EcoEnterprises Fund co-financed this investment with the project principal, Root Capital, Conservation International, and Dutch private investors.

Date Invested: May 16, 2003

Current Status as of December 2008: In operation. The company is currently raising additional funds to increase capacity. Loan was repaid in December 2007.