September 28, 2026

Mayor Wally Nunez
Mayor of San Pedro Town

The Honourable Minister Andre Perez
Area Representative for Belize Rural South and Minister of the Blue Economy and Marine Conservation

The Honourable Minister Anthony Mahler
Minister of Tourism, Youth, Sports & Diaspora Relations

The Honourable Minister Orlando Habet
Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Solid Waste Management

Mr. Anthony Mai
Chief Environmental Officer, Department of the Environment

Re: A Call for Immediate Action on Waste, Infrastructure and Responsible Development on North Ambergris Caye

Dear Mayor Nunez, Minister Perez, Minister Mahler, Minister Habet and Mr. Mai,

North Ambergris Caye is growing faster than the infrastructure and public services needed to support that growth.

For the past two years, the Ambergris North Alliance (ANA) has worked hard to address some of these problems on our own. What began as a community effort to clean roadside trash has grown into a much broader effort because the problems facing North Ambergris Caye have grown with it.

We are writing now because we have reached a point where volunteer effort alone is no longer enough. We need the agencies and leaders responsible for this island's infrastructure, environment, tourism and development to work together, and we need that work to result in action. ANA was formed in September 2024 by a group of very concerned residents on North Ambergris Caye, who came together to address the roadside trash along one of the busiest tourism corridors in the country. Since then, we have organized monthly community-volunteer clean-ups drawing anywhere from 15 to 75 volunteers - including Coast Guard, Police and police cadets, school groups, neighbors, and hotel and resort staff - fundraised to pay hourly workers to

clean our roadsides, and led community outreach, including our first environmentally-focused summer camp for North Ambergris kids. We regularly meet with government and non-government representatives advocating for Ambergris Caye, including the San Pedro Mayor, Area Representative, and the Department of the Environment, in an effort to find solutions.

We are proud of what our community has accomplished. But a volunteer organization should not have to substitute for basic public services.

The concerns we are seeing are increasingly interconnected.

North Ambergris is experiencing rapid development, including land clearing and filling, mangrove removal, quarrying and a dramatic increase in heavy truck traffic. At the same time, basic services and infrastructure have not kept pace.

Residents are dealing with:

- Illegal dumping, roadside litter and insufficient or nonexistent household waste collection;
- Roads that are increasingly deteriorated and difficult to maintain, particularly during the rainy season;
- Heavy trucks using already-deteriorated and unpaved roads, creating safety, noise and infrastructure concerns;
- Land clearing, mangrove removal and lagoon filling associated with ongoing development;
- Sargassum accumulation and the lack of an appropriate, sustainable disposal solution; and
- Growing pressure on the natural environment and tourism product that support the island's economy.

These are not separate problems. Poor waste management affects public health, the tourism product and the quality of life of residents. Unplanned development affects drainage, roads and the natural systems that protect the island. Heavy truck traffic places additional pressure on

infrastructure that is already inadequate. Environmental degradation ultimately threatens the tourism economy on which so many island residents depend.

We are particularly concerned that development and extraction activities are proceeding without sufficient transparency about applicable environmental approvals, mitigation measures,

infrastructure impacts and enforcement. We believe residents should be able to understand what is being approved, by whom, and what safeguards are in place.

Under Belize's Town Councils Act, local government is responsible for making and enforcing by-laws, and our town council is specifically responsible for street maintenance and lighting, drains, and refuse collection. On April 1, 2025, San Pedro's township boundaries officially doubled - a huge increase in the area under municipal responsibility. Yet vital services like trash collection have not increased at all, and this is not a matter of hard-to-reach rural areas - these are fast-growing subdivisions with no proper trash disposal whatsoever. Despite this clear legal mandate, our roads remain unmaintained, and drainage - particularly on the unpaved roads of busy North Ambergris Caye - fails us every rainy season.

We have met with our local leaders, including our Mayor and Area Representative, to raise these concerns directly, and while we were met with assurances of action, none have materialized. This is why we are asking for a coordinated response rather than another series of individual conversations.

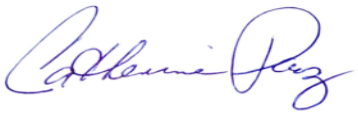
Help We Need

1. **Regular household trash collection.** We need twice-weekly household trash collection on North Ambergris Caye for all households up to Mile 10 (Cayo Frances Subdivision), or, until that can be enacted, a viable interim plan that includes more public waste collection areas.
2. **Immediate action on existing dump sites.** Multiple large-scale dump sites have been documented, and no action has been taken. We understand that the current legislation may not be sufficient to force certain legal compliance, but surely the Mayor and Town Council have the authority to make this clean-up happen - trash on this island is an emergency, negatively affecting both our tourism economy and the health of our residents.

3. **Government action, not only volunteer labor, to maintain this island.** Right now, this busy tourism corridor depends on volunteers who love and care for this community to try to keep it clean - but the job is overwhelming, and volunteer effort alone cannot keep pace with it. Trash is an urgent matter on this island - and it is squarely within the mandate of our local government. It can no longer be ignored.
4. **Clear accountability and real enforcement.** We need clear, transparent information about who is responsible for what when it comes to dumping - roles and responsibilities that currently feel unclear, with the Town Council too often appearing to be where progress stalls. Existing by-laws against public and private dumping need to be enforced at the local level - tickets and fines that are actually issued and followed through on - which will require coordination between the DOE and local government.
5. **New or updated by-laws for businesses.** We need new by-laws - or updates to existing ones - that give businesses clear requirements when it comes to trash and dumping: proper bins and receptacles, proper disposal, and keeping roadsides free from litter. Whether this is part of the Trade License process or another mechanism, laws need to be clear and enforced. We note that some relevant national laws already exist - for example, the Returnable Containers Act, in effect since 2010, which the DOE only reminded the public about via a September 1, 2026 notice, establishing deposit and refund values for cans and bottles - glass and plastic. So many of these are polluting our roadsides and lagoons, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the timing of enforcement for laws like this one, as getting mechanisms like this fully up and running on our island would make a tremendous difference for our efforts and for our island.
6. **A single table, not separate conversations.** We need leadership from the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), the Ministry of Blue Economy, the Department of the Environment (DOE), and our local representatives to sit down together with ANA to address these issues - not in isolation, but as the interconnected crises they are.

We share this letter with you directly, in good faith, and with the hope that it leads to real dialogue and action. Before bringing these concerns to our community publicly through media, we wanted to give you the opportunity to respond and engage with us first. We hope to hear from you in the next two weeks, by October 12th, and look forward to working together on practical solutions our island urgently needs.

Sincerely,



Catherine Paz
President, Ambergris North Alliance

cc:
CEO Milagro Matus - Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Solid Waste Management
CEO Beverly Wade - Ministry of Blue Economy and Marine Conservation
CEO Nicole Usher - Ministry of Tourism, Youth, Sports & Diaspora Relations

Enclosure:

Appendix A: Photographic examples of dump sites on North Ambergris Caye (2 pages)

Appendix A:

Here are some examples of dump sites visible from the main road north of San Pedro - between town and the turnoff to Secret Beach. They are all within a one-mile stretch.

	Along our main road north - construction debris dumped - across the street from Capricorn Resort and Belizean Coves Resort, Mile 2.5
	Large-scale dumpsite - across from the old Essene Way, Mile 3

	Large-scale dumpsite - mainly kitchen and household trash along easement from main road, Mile 3
	Sargassum dumped in lagoon - rotting in our lagoon system and eroding main road.