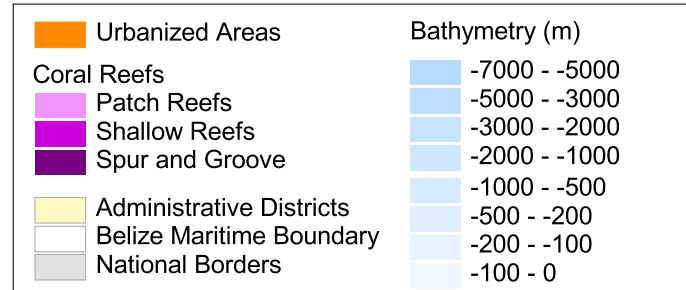
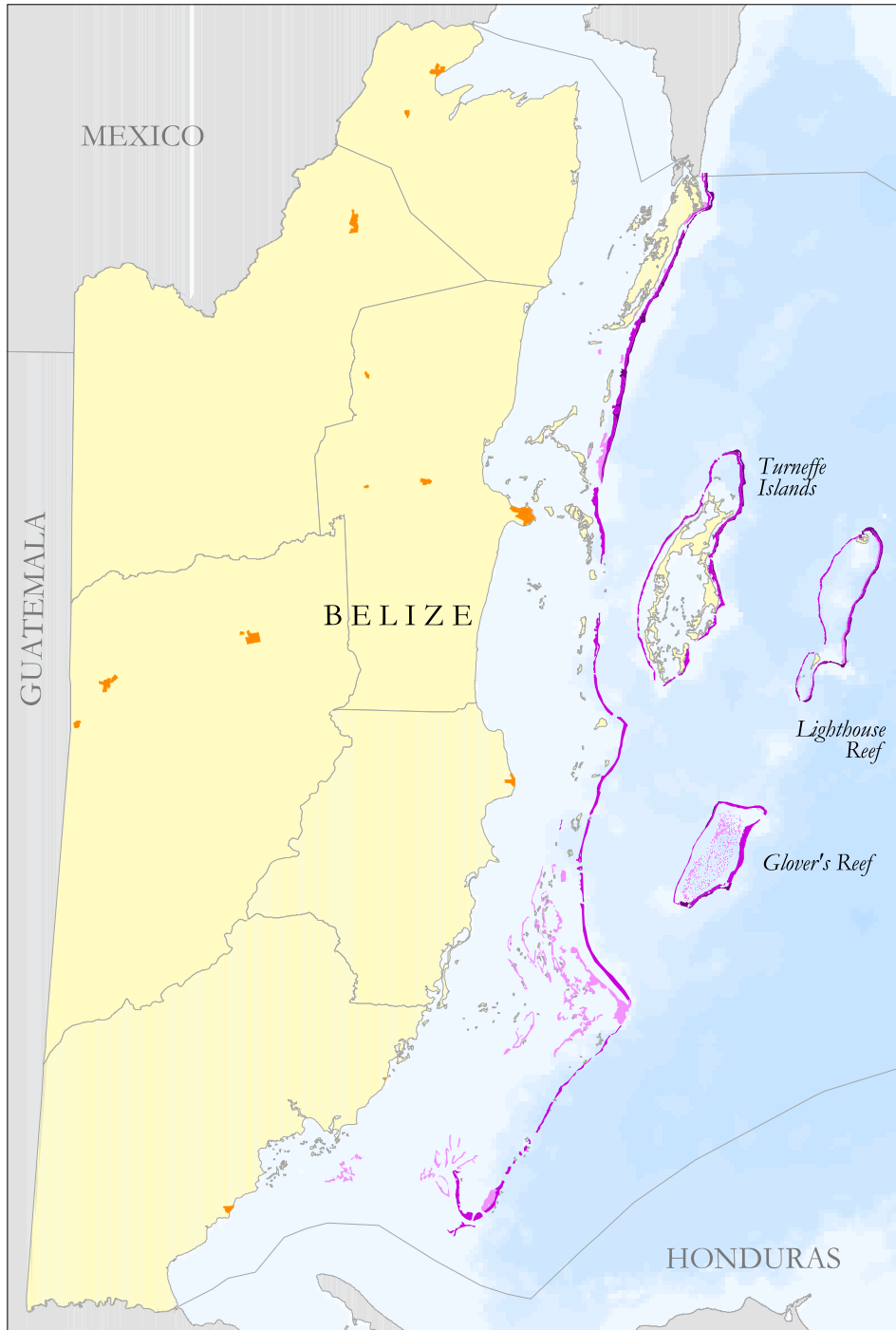


Coastal Bathymetry and Coral Reefs of Belize

Stretching for 250 km along the entire length of the Belize, the country's reef complex is the second largest continuous reef system in the Western Hemisphere, extending from the northern end of Ambergris Cay to the Sapodilla Cays in the south. The barrier reef system encloses approximately 6,000 sq km of lagoon and includes over 1,000 cays. The lagoon is 20 to 40 km wide and only a few meters deep in the north, deepening to 50 m towards the south. Throughout the reef lagoon there are numerous patch reefs. Reef growth along the Belize mainland is limited by fluctuations in salinity and high turbidity and nutrients. Some fringing reefs occur in the far south between Placencia and Punta Ycaos, but have low species richness.

Three atolls lie east of the barrier reef, separated by deep water: Turneffe Islands, Lighthouse Reef, and Glover's Reef. Wave exposure plays a key role in shaping reef communities and development, both between atolls and within the atolls (on windward versus leeward reefs). In addition, a major influence on the barrier reef structure is the wave energy after attenuation by the atolls.



Data Sources: Coral reef data from Belize Biodiversity Mapping Service (Belize Ecosystem Map, 2004) and CZMAI, 1997 (for Glover's Reef); Bathymetry from WRI, 2004; Administrative Districts for Belize from CCAD (www.ccad.ws).

Reefs at Risk in Belize

A collaboration between the World Resources Institute, Belize Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute, and many other partner organisations in Belize. Datasets available on the Belize Coastal Data CD (email datacen@coastalzonebelize.org for more information).