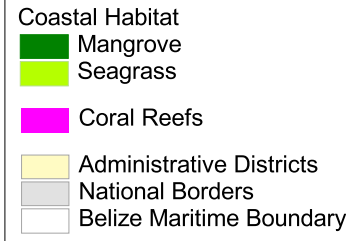
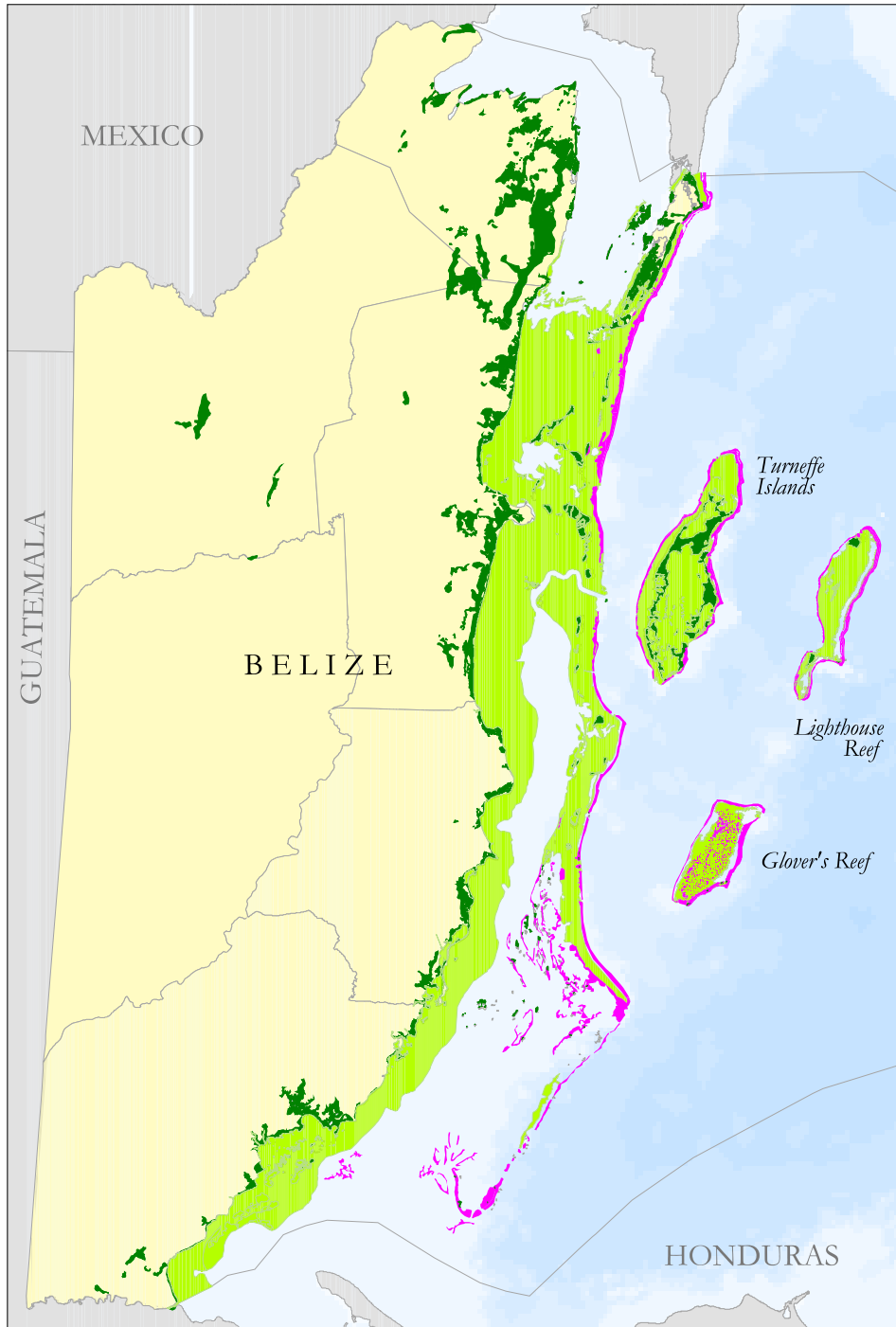


Coastal Habitats of Belize

Coral reefs, mangroves and sea grass all contribute to the rich biological diversity of Belize. Mangrove forests grow in the intertidal range, lining a considerable extent of the coastline of Belize. Further offshore, groups of flowering plants known as seagrasses form extensive "meadows" over soft sediments. Mangroves and seagrasses bind soft sediments, facilitating coral reef development in areas that might otherwise have too much silt for coral growth. All three habitats are very biologically productive and play significant role in the health of many finfish and shellfish fisheries by providing spawning and nursery habitat and nutrients for many species. Seagrass also provides important feeding areas for manatees and sea turtles. Like coral reefs, mangroves protect coastal communities by stabilizing sediments and preventing shoreline erosion. In turn, coral reefs buffer wave impacts, helping to minimize erosion of soft sediments that mangroves and seagrasses need to grow.



Data Sources: Coral reef data from Belize Biodiversity Mapping Service (Belize Ecosystem Map, 2004) and CZMAI, 1997 (for Glover's Reef); Mangrove and seagrass data from Belize Biodiversity Mapping Service (Belize Ecosystem Map, 2004, <http://biological-diversity.info>) 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).