

## **MINERAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN BELIZE, CENTRAL AMERICA, 1985-1995**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In 1985, the Eagle 1 well was spudded on the outskirts of the new capital of Belize, Belmopan. This well is one of three in the area which have produced light oil (32-40<sup>0</sup> API) in sub-commercial quantities. Since 1990 two more wells have been drilled in Belize, but commercial crude is yet to be found.

Under the Belize Mines and Minerals Act, 1988, exploratory efforts for non-petroleum minerals have accelerated. Previous reconnaissance work of Dixon (1951-1956) and Anschutz Corporation (1976-1982) have identified:

- (i) economic minerals such as tin, lead, zinc and precious minerals;
- (ii) the industrial/construction minerals; dolomite, clay, gypsum and granite have been assessed by Souviron (1990-1991) and Raju (1995). Geochemical anomalies for lead, zinc and mercury are reported by Anschutz and Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) Minerals International Ltd., a subsidiary of BHP Ltd.

Post-1990, two foreign mining companies commenced mining and prospecting work in Belize. BHP Mining International has reported positive results for potential base metal mineralization, under several Prospecting and Reconnaissance licences issued since 1992. Detailed geochemical sampling and analysis have generated correlative as well as additional information to that of Anschutz. The areas of interest to BHP Minerals International include Smokey Branch, Sibun and Quartz Ridge.

Belize Minerals Ltd. commenced mining of dolomite sands in 1992 and has been successful in penetrating the regional market of the Windward Islands Banana Producers. Pink, red and grey granites represent an exciting and highly prospective mineral resource capable of creating a new industry within the fledgling mining sector of Belize, both nationally and regionally. The commitment of the Government of Belize to develop its mineral resources in an environmentally sound manner is manifested in its support for a proposed Belize Mineral Resources Policy (BMRP), 1995.