

Prince of Wales and Kosciusko Island Exploration

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Project Description:

The karst of the Alexander Archipelago of southeast Alaska is largely unexplored, even after many expeditions and lots of work done by the Glacier Grotto and USFS. Some karst areas are completely unknown and were only recently remotely “discovered” thanks to high-resolution lidar data for the area being published around 2017.

This project aims to begin exploration and documentation of some of the newly discovered karst areas. The primary locations for exploration are the El Cap karst, famous for the 600’ El Cap pit, with hundreds of lidar leads nearby, and North Koscuisko Island, which was not known to have karst until the lidar data was published. These areas are expected to be highly vertical and to require rigging.

Benefits of Project:

This project will directly assist in the protection of the caves and karst in the Tongass National Forest (TNF). The TNF manages their karst through their own form of vulnerability mapping. These maps consider the location of significant caves and karst features. Exploration on north Koscuisko Island would likely lead to an increase in the vulnerability level of the area, which would help to protect the karst by restricting logging and development. Part of this project would consist of submitting documented caves for consideration as “significant caves” under the Cave Protection Act of 1988. All surveys will be published in the Alaskan Caver which can be shared with the NRMG.

Time-frame: Summer 2021

Budget:

Item	Source	Cost	Quantity	Total
Stainless Steel Hanger - ClimbTech	Elevated Climbing	\$ 3.50	20	\$ 70.00
Bolt - Hang FIX SS M10AL	Elevated Climbing	\$ 4.00	20	\$ 80.00
Travel - Gas to El Cap area from Thorne Bay		\$ 25.00	4	\$ 100.00
			Total	\$ 250.00

Stainless bolting gear is requested due to the vertical nature of the area, and the likelihood that not all caves will be surveyed immediately and thus hangers will be left behind. Travel expenses are requested to offset the cost of 4 round trips to the El Cap Area from our lodging.

Christian DeCelle Bio:

Since I began caving as an undergrad at the University of Massachusetts, I have dedicated around 10% of my days to cave trips. I am actively involved in caving efforts in New England and the Southeast, while also attempting at every chance I get to return to the Northern Rockies to cave. I am currently the President of the Green River Grotto and a graduate student at Western Kentucky University studying geosciences with a focus on caves a karst.

I am currently the project leader for the Logsdon Cave Survey with the Southeast Cave Conservancy. This project has involved surveying about 2500' of cave so far, rebolting several drops, rigging a complex traverse, and beginning the cartography. It has also involved the collaboration with the Fisher Ridge team, as these caves are extremely close (our surveys go through each other).

Covid Precautions:

Myself and my project partner Anna Harris are both vaccinated and any trip members coming to the islands will be required to follow the guidelines established by the state of Alaska and the federal government.