

September 2002

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Diane Raab

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The Alaskan Caver

A publication by and for the Glacier Grotto

September 2002 Volume 22 Number 3



Bruce White tags Hank the Cave Dawg Cave on Kosciusko Island, June 2002

photo by Diane Raab

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The Alaskan Caver

Glacier Grotto

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Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

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President's Corner

BY DAVE LOVE, President of the Glacier Grotto

As you all most likely know by now, the cave exploration season in Southeast Alaska is winding down. Early fall rainfall, decreasing daylight (so, what's the problem?...), hungry bears ready for a fall snack before bedding down for the winter. Nonetheless, a caver's work is never done. Although, the Caver has received several trip reports from this past summer's work, this issue will focus primarily on proposed USFS projects currently needing comment. If the caving community and those of us interested in preserving the underground wilderness do not comment, then who will? Often, it seems that our comments do not make a difference, however, they are incorporated into the public record, contributing to the often painfully slow change of paradigm. Citing examples such as erosion, lost soil productivity and water shortages in areas such as southern China, years ago cavers commented on improper logging practices on karst over steep slopes in Southeast Alaska. Flicker Ridge, as example. The end result, an incremental improvement in timber unit layout and logging practices. While small, these are still improvements. Often these changes have been like pulling teeth, but to quit the struggle is to leave the decisions up to those who don't have as clear an understanding, appreciation or dedication to a truly unique resource. We need everyone's comments.

Two projects need comment in the next few weeks: Kosciusko Island Timber Sale (most of you have already received the 25 lbs of document for this...). This Draft Environmental Impact Statement has many flaws in it. The most annoying is that the work that Tongass Cave Project and Glacier Grotto have been doing the past 3 years are not included in the text, and equally unsatisfying is that the more protective methods used in planning and layout are not highlighted, a necessary step if the USFS expects constructive comment and true improvement in the process. Now is the time to get these and other concerns voiced about this project, to get these improvements incorporated into the planning process. Those of you that were involved with the projects especially need to take the time to make comments on this project.

The comment period has been extended until September 27.

The second project currently being planned is the proposed trail on Baker Island. Although the trail would access the outer coast relatively near a culturally very unique and sensitive cave, complete with ocher and charcoal pictographs, the USFS has not as yet discussed any sort of mitigation measures to prevent this cave from being damaged. Currently the USFS claims to be planning a 2-ft wide gravel trail, boat dock or mooring buoy and possibly tent platforms. This trail will bring more visitors to the area, with the increased possibility of and potential for vandalism of a culturally important and sensitive area. Mitigation monies from the construction of the Black Bear Hydroelectric project which supplies Craig, Klawock and other communities on Prince of Wales Island will be used in part to construct this trail. This may not be the most appropriate use of these monies for the majority of rate payers. The USFS likely will solicit public comment this fall.

Again, please take the time to make some thoughtful comments on these projects. Southeast Alaska karst systems, the geological, archeological and paleontological treasures within and our children's opportunity to experience the awe and wonder of these cave systems depend on our active participation in the process. Maybe the TCP proposal to establish karst preserves will become reality. Protection of these unique areas are long overdue. Stay involved, don't give up. Cavers and non-cavers alike must continue to take an active role in this process, educating the managers, demanding more stringent protective measures, volunteering our time to discover and delineate the extent of these systems. If we don't speak up, who will?

Team documents rock art in Pictograph Cave

In June of 2000, a team consisting of archeologists, photographers, local Tlingit tribal members and volunteers documented the rock art in Pictograph Cave on Baker Island. The non-native recorders were not only able to make a complete photographic record of the artwork present at the site, allowing for digital enhancement and description of some of the more weathered ocher and charcoal paintings, but were also able to gain a greater appreciation of, and understanding about, the pictographs from tribal members.

Although the Pictograph Cave art has not been directly dated, these pictures were probably drawn within the last 1,000 years, based on comparisons to similar stylized designs that have been dated elsewhere. Images found in the cave include both mythological representations of Raven, Woodworm and a Sculpin mask as well as images of bull kelp, canoes and anthropomorphs having simple, "stickman" arms, legs and faces. Some of these painted artworks look very similar in design to images and motifs depicted in petroglyphs elsewhere in Southeast Alaska and other paintings appear to be more similar to the Classic Northwest Coast formline designs produced in native artworks of today. Paintings found at the entrance to this cave, and the lack of extensive

cultural materials near the site, may indicate this site to have been associated with shamanism. Local oral tradition suggests that another purpose for this artwork may have been to document mythological events, such as a Tlingit and Haida story about Raven stopping to rest at a cave in the area of Baker Island while on his journey to bring light and water to the world.

Finally, the pictographs in this cave may indicate territorial ownership by the local clans. Although not as rare as previously suspected along the Northwest coast, the rock art within Pictograph Cave, and the cave itself, are unquestionably eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and arguably deserve recognition as an internationally significant site.

For the source of the above information, and more in-depth information about this fascinating cultural site, check out the following references, kindly provided by Terence Fifield, Forest Service Archeologist for the Craig Ranger District.



The pictographs in Pictograph Cave on Baker Island have been vandalized by graffiti

Pictograph Perspectives, Photography, and Photo Electronic Imaging: More Than Just a Pretty Picture by Carolynne L. Merrell, in *American Indian Rock Art*, Volume 28. Alanah Woody, Editor. American Rock Art Research Association, 2002, pp. 73-81.

Pictograph Cave in Southeast Alaska: Expanding our Cultural Understanding of the Rock Art. George Poetschat, James D. Keyser, and Terence E. Fifield, in *American Indian Rock Art*, Volume 28. Alanah Woody, Editor. American Rock Art Research Association, 2002, pp. 83-93.

Pictograph Cave: Rock Art from Southeast Alaska. J. Keyser, G. Poetschat, T. Fifield, and C. Merrell, in *International Newsletter on Rock Art*, No. 31, 2002. Jean Clottes, Editor. pp. 13-22.



TONGASS CAVE PROJECT

A PROJECT OF THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 53 Tenakee Springs, AK 99841
Kevin Allred, Steve Lewis, Pete Smith, Directors

July 14, 2002

Dear Advocate for Karst and Caves:

We at the Tongass Cave Project, a project of the NSS dedicated to the study, exploration, and protection of the caves and karst of Alaska, have drafted the enclosed document for submission to the Tongass National Forest.

We believe that it is time to correct a major omission, and include representative temperate rainforest karstlands within the National Wilderness System.

Forest Service planners are developing a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement that will evaluate Tongass National Forest roadless areas for recommendation as wilderness or for other forms of protection. The current Forest Service preference is to maintain the status quo, and not recommend protection for any additional areas. We do not agree.

We are requesting that you, as experts on karst and caves, read our document, and, if you agree with it, sign it and indicate your title and organization. We urge you to pass this along to colleagues and friends. We will be submitting the document to the Forest Service, along with all signatures we have collected, on August 14th, 2002, so please return your signatures as soon as possible. You can either mail the document back signed, or send us an e-mail with your name, along with your title and organization. We'll collate all the names and submit them as a package with our document. Please send e-mail to tongasscaveproject@yahoo.com

Whether you sign the document, or choose not to, we'd be very interested in hearing your reasons---a couple of sentences would be very useful to us in evaluating other experts' attitudes and perspectives toward protection of karstlands.

If you feel strongly on this issue, we urge you to also draft a short letter to the Forest Service and send it to the address shown on our document. Feel free to e-mail us with questions or for advice on drafting your letter. Whether or not you write a separate letter, we'd still appreciate your signature on our document.

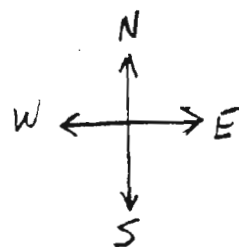
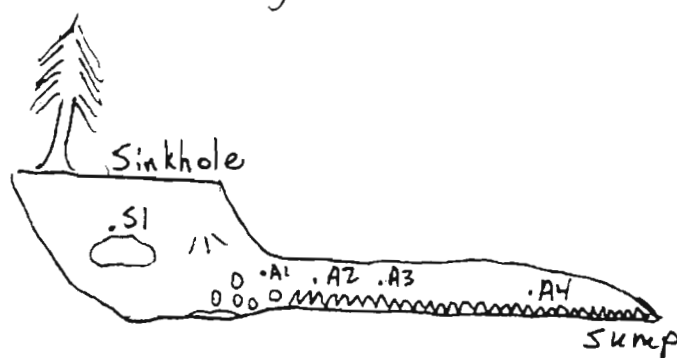
Thanks in advance for your help in protecting Tongass caves and karstlands.

Sincerely,

Steve Lewis
Tongass Cave Project

Woodpecker Pucker Cave (K100) 6/6/01
 Cape Pole Area, Kosciusko Island, Alaska
 Sketch, Diane Raab Instruments Dan Monteith
 Lead Simon Dillon Map Dan Monteith

Projected Profile



scale 5 cm = 1 meter

1 meter

Legend

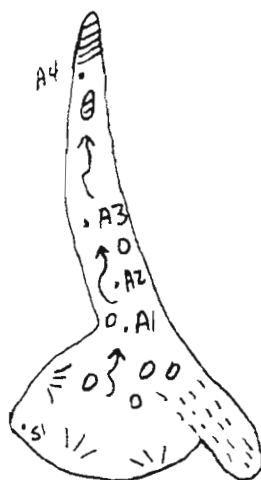
~ Passage Wall
 /// Slope, Splays Downward

oo Rocks

~ water flow

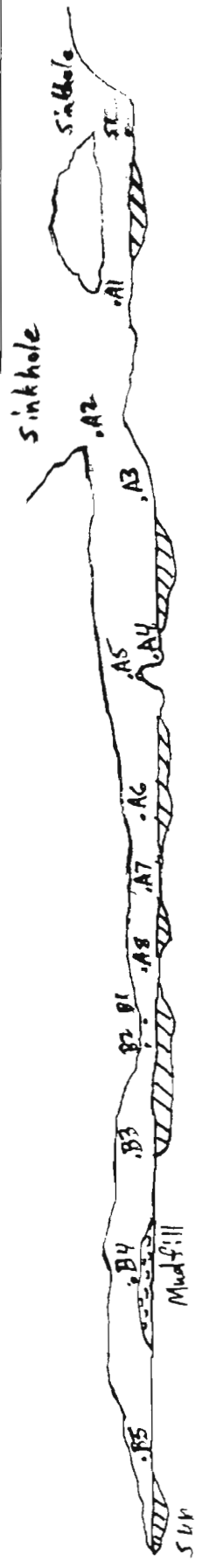
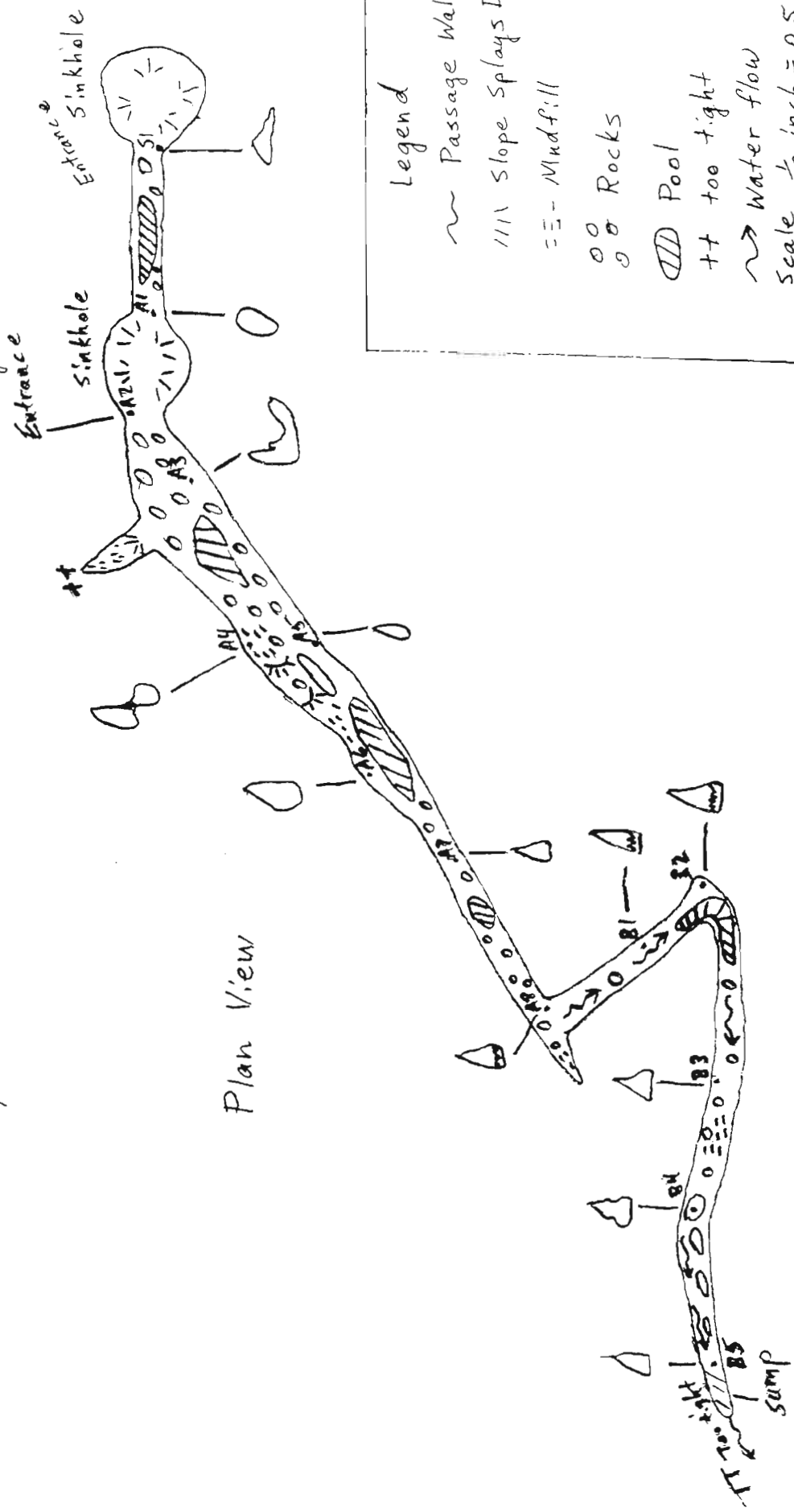
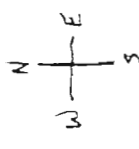
== Mud

Pool



Plan View

Muddy Waters Blues, Cape Pole Area, Kosciusko Island, Alaska
 June 3, 2001 Simon D'Illox and Dan Monteith survey



EXCERPTS FROM LETTER TO FOREST SERVICE PLANNERS

RE: Tongass National Forest Roadless and Wilderness Reevaluation SEIS

Dated August 14, 2002

Signed by Stephen W. Lewis, Pete Smith and Kevin Allred



Karstlands in the Tongass national Forest are a national and international treasure. The karst in the Tongass contains a great diversity of features within a high-latitude temperate rainforest. Worldwide, the occurrence of karst at such a scale in a relatively well-preserved setting is unique to Southeastern Alaska (Aley, et al., 1993). The significance of cultural, paleontological and biological components of the Tongass karst and caves is becoming increasingly important to our understanding of such critical questions as climate change, and human and animal migration into North America. The karstlands and the caves they contain provide valuable habitat and resources not only for such creatures as bats and unique troglobitic invertebrates, but also for salmon, and for the forest ecosystem above. Studies are suggesting that Southeast Alaskan aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities show increased productivity when associated with karst landscapes (Baichtal and Swanston, 1996).

(Timber) harvest on karstlands has continued, with timber harvest completed, approved or in planning on Heceta Island, Kosciusko Island, Tuxekan Island, and on northern, central and southern portions of Prince of Wales Island and Chichagof Island karstlands. Standards and guidelines to regulate timber harvest and other development activities on karstlands in the Tongass, but their implementation has not always been comprehensive or effective.

The Tongass Land Management Plan Revision Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Roadless Area Evaluation for Wilderness Recommendations suggests karst and caves are already adequately protected by extensive Forest-wide standards and guidelines, as well as wilderness and natural setting Land Use Designations (LUD). The authors of the SEIS conclude that karstlands do not need further consideration when wilderness is evaluated. We disagree.

Tongass karst is seriously endangered. We recommend that the Forest Service protect portions of the following roadless areas as wilderness to completely protect the karst and caves and their upland drainage basins.

East Chichagof Biogeographic Province

This province, along with the North Central Prince of Wales Island Province, contain some of the most highly developed karstlands in the Tongass. Freshwater Bay, Game Creek, Tenakee Ridge and Pavlov/East Point Roadless Areas contain massive limestone from ridgetop to shoreline, along with significant remnants of high volume old growth. Neka Mountain contains unexplored karstlands that are almost completely intact.

Central Coast Range Biogeographic Province

Karst is uncommon on the mainland of Southeast Alaska. The Madan Roadless Area's 989 acres of karst and caves are important for their paleontological and biological discoveries that have been made there.

Other areas:

Icefields Biogeographic Province, Etolin Island -- Keku Roadless Area includes arches, small caves, sea stacks, cliffs and fossils. Kuiu Island contains moderately to highly developed karst. North Central Prince of Wales contains the most celebrated and explored caves and karstlands in the Tongass. Kosciusko and Calder Roadless Areas include limestone massifs, caves and remnants of high volume old growth karstlands forest. The Karst Waters Institute considers Kosciusko Island karst to be one of the 10 most endangered karst areas worldwide. Calder and El Capitan Roadless Areas contain internationally significant caves, including the deepest limestone pit in the United States. By connecting these areas and contiguous karstlands in the Salmon Bay Roadless Area, the Forest Service could create a karst reserve/wilderness that would be renowned throughout the world. It would include Mt. Calder, Mt. Francis, Flicker Ridge, Perue Peak, El Capitan Peak and the Bridal Veil/Dragon's Breath Cave Complex. The Sarkar Roadless Area was once considered for a Research Nature Area. South Prince of Wales Island contains extensive karst. Both the North Revilla and South Revilla Roadless Areas on Revillagigedo Island contain significant karstlands. Dall Island contains numerous blocks of highly developed karst. Caves discovered within these blocks include nationally significant depths, as well as important cultural, geological and paleontological components.

We are asking for formal recognition of the above listed karst areas important enough to warrant full and complete protection as wilderness. Because of the intricate nature of karst systems, and the many unknown factors relating to both past and future management of karstlands, we believe that such protection is essential. These national treasures deserve no less.

Baker Island Trail Project comments should be directed to:

Chad Van Ormer
Recreation & Wilderness
Prince of Wales Districts
Tongass National Forest
(907) 826-1613 cvanormer@fs.fed.us

Tongass Cave Project comments on Kosciusko Island Timber Sale EIS

To: David E. Schmid, District Ranger
Attn: Kosciusko Island DEIS
August 25, 2002

Dear Mr. Schmid,

This letter is my comments on the Kosciusko Island Timber sale Draft Environmental Impact Statement of 2002. As a director of the Tongass Cave Project, I participated in two privately funded expeditions to Kosciusko Island in the summers of 2000 and 2001. Our primary objectives were to field-check the quality of the Forest Service contractor preparing the proposed sale.

On both years we randomly chose proposed units still being considered for timber harvest. Many of these units were "islands" of standing timber surrounded by vast clearcuts. Most of the units were underlain by karst topography.

We found that the interdisciplinary team (contractor) did not properly identify a large portion of the karst according to the standards and guidelines set forth by the Forest Service. Much High Vulnerability karst had not been removed from units, and we found several more times "significant" karst features and caves than had been identified by the contractor. I strongly disagree with the statement in the DEIS planning participant letter that our findings showed "over 90 percent agreement" with the contractor.

After doing our work, we were informed that the upcoming draft EIS was due out very soon, so our findings would not make it to the draft EIS in time, but would be considered later on. However, it was a year before the draft EIS came out, and our findings have not been incorporated into the document for evaluation, planning, and public comment. Your staff or your contractor have had plenty of time to look over the proposed units based on our findings and make the necessary changes on not only the units we did, but preferably the whole sale. In my opinion, our findings brought forth significant new information in a timely manner. Yet this information has been willfully withheld from public review in violation of 40CFR 1502.9 (c)(1)(ii). Based on the amount of karst concerns in those units which we happened to look at, most if not all of the other units not covered by us also have serious problems. This should have been corrected the first year we reported serious flaws with the karst evaluation.

A list of exact locations of the caves and significant features we located were on the summary report we gave you last year. Below are some examples of poor karst management in the DEIS:

•Unit 543-546. The unit card does not protect the recharge area for Playpen cave, which was located by the contractor. Playpen Cave is a resurgence cave which our team entered, but were unable to explore fully for want of rope. The cave might also be within the unit according the Unit card map. There is not even any sign of any forested buffer for the cave. The unit should have been deleted.

•Unit 543-558. Broken Marble Cave is just outside the Northeast corner of the unit. Considering the delicate nature of the karst on the unit, it should have been deleted.

•Unit 543-559. There is an resurgence cave either on or near the southern boundary of this unit. No protection of any kind was given, even though the cave had been flagged by the Contractor. Just north of the cave all along the eastern half of the unit is extensive windfall. Considering the intensity of the karst and sinkholes on the unit, the cave, and windthrow tendency the unit should have been deleted.

•Unit 543-580. Some springs were found in this unit which did not receive consideration. Also, there is a lot of high vulnerability karst on the northeastern part. I do not agree with logging the slopes as high as 75 percent. Those slopes were definitely not "stable" as stated in the unit card. I was one of those who actually combed those slopes. Sorry, the cutting and pasting technique to fill in a form just does not work on this one. Considering the slope problems, high vulnerability karst, and springs, this unit should have been deleted.

•Unit 543-581. A lot of high vulnerability karst was discovered by our team, although some was removed from harvest, the remainder is underlain by extreme karst and should have been deleted. Humpback Hole, a cave, is still in the harvest area.

•Unit 543-582. This unit has a density of karstification making it unsuitable for timber harvest and should have been deleted.

•Unit 543-583. We found some caves in this unit that are still in the harvest area. The unit should have been deleted for these and the well developed karstification.

•Unit 546-549. There are a bunch of insurgences and caves along the north boundary and in the center portion of this unit. Only the karsted portion of the original proposed unit was chosen to harvest, which is totally unacceptable. This carbonate body receives runoff from non carbonates above it, and has numerous open atmospheric/water inputs. From looking at the unit card, it appears that a tiny buffer was put around "Find Me Cave" which was found by the contractor. After clearcutting, this buffer would, of course blow down, and the rest of the insurgences and karst would also be negatively impacted. The entire unit should have been deleted, since the non-carbonate slopes to the south are too steep to harvest, and the non-carbonate above the carbonates act as a recharge.

•Unit 546-566. This unit is part of the watershed for Carwash Spring which is an important spring for the community of Edna Bay. The unit is karsted, and it is wrong to ignore the needs of people who would have to live with degraded drinking water and outright pollution to their water supply. If you look at the huge amount of karst already impacted by clearcutting off the natural buffering forest in this area, the cumulative effect is resurgence flooding during rain and rain on snow events accompanied by high levels of suspended sediment and damage to the karst system. During dry periods, the resurgence experiences very low water episodes. The hydrologic report done for the contractor concluded that this spring already experiences an increase of about 13 fold between medium and big storm events (see Aley's hydrologic study for the area). They also said because it was used as a drinking water supply, it "may warrant special management consideration". The Glacier Grotto discovered some caves just south of this unit, which would also be affected by timber harvest with windthrow and hydrologic problems. This unit should have been deleted.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

GLACIER GROTTA comments on Kosciusko Island DEIS

The following are a few comments on the Kosciusko Island DEIS provided by Barbara Morgan, project leader for the Glacier Grotto/USFS cave expedition to Kosciusko Island during the past two summers:

- Why are the karst and watershed sections of the DEIS together? I understand that karst lands have watershed implications but it is confusing having these two issues in the same section. It makes it difficult to understand what is being done to mitigate damage to karst lands. It also obscures the fact that watershed issues are not the only issues affecting karst.
- Even though the karst section and the watershed section are together there is little in the way of any real information on the water aspect of karst. There were a number of dye trace studies done on Kosciusko Island by Tom Aley and Ozark Underground but there is no word of what those studies found. The dye trace findings should be part of this document. It should also cover the details of how the karst and water issues are going to be addressed and how damage to these systems will be mitigated, as well as how the mitigation measures will be monitored.
- There is no mention on the relationship between logging near karst and the increased water load put into the karst system. I would like to see this issue addressed as the effect of increased water through karst features changes the sediment load in these features. This could have a serious adverse affect on not only the karst feature itself but also the connected systems. For example an increased sediment load in a cave or karst system that contributes a significant amount of water into a fish stream can seriously affect the productivity of that stream by blocking cave and karst passages and reducing water flow to the fish stream.
- I found in no place in the DEIS a specific proscription for buffers around caves and other karst features. I understand that buffers are being set up that are 100 ft plus two tree lengths around caves and karst features but there is not mention of this. It should be put into the Final EIS.
- There is no mention as to the effectiveness of mitigation or how this will be monitored. There needs to be accountability for the actions that are taken and ongoing monitoring to make sure that the actions taken are effective in mitigating damage to the karst resources on Kosciusko.
- There is no mention in this document as to the contribution or role of the Glacier Grotto cavers who have volunteered their time, funds and expertise in the effort to locate, survey and map more than 100 caves and karst features found thus far on Kosciusko Island. It also made no mention of the cavers who have worked with the Tongass Cave Project that have also contributed to our knowledge of the caves and karst on Kosciusko Island.
- Timber management on Kosciusko should focus on the extensive second growth. Second growth stands 40+ years old are close to if not already large enough for harvest. Huge second growth even-age stands need to be commercially thinned so as to diversify the age of the trees in the stands. This needs to be done though in such a way as to not be a detriment to the karst or the wildlife.
- The preferred option, option 3, is **not** my preferred option. This option maximizes timber harvest on Kosciusko but does not fully consider other resources in this area.

Tongass Cave Project comments on Kosciusko Timber Sale, cont. from page 6

•Unit 546-562. This unit still includes an insurgence cave we discovered in the western lobe of the harvest area. A spider of unknown species was discovered in the cave. The cave and its recharge area should have been protected. A high density of sinkholes and solution channels were also found in this unit. In addition, part of the unit may drain into two caves we discovered to the south 600 and 1500 feet across road 1520500. The unit should have been deleted.

•Unit 546-557. Our field work findings for this unit were personally reported to the Forest Service Geologist and contractor geologist in the summer of 2000 as an example of problems with the contractor's evaluation. We also reported the summary of findings in our 2001 report to you. Lost Geopus Cave is still in the harvest unit, as are some significant karst features and high vulnerability karst. The unit is underlain by a highly developed karst and should have been deleted two years ago.

•Unit 546-665. This unit was covered in second growth and was karsted. Parts of the unit had deep soils. It has already been heavily damaged from dragging logs. The unit should never again be logged to avoid more damage to the underground karst hydrology.

In the course of our field work we also noted some biological concerns such as ensnared, dead birds in the nylon hipchain thread the contractors used, an eagle nest on a road

route, raptors in or near harvest areas, fresh bear dens in proposed units, and at least one beach set-back violation. This alludes there has also been poor biological evaluation and layout work.

Our findings indicate that all or nearly all of the proposed harvest units in the DEIS action alternatives should have been deleted because of significant impacts to the remaining karst hydrology, soils, and general health of the already fragmented ecosystem. Kosciusko Island has been listed as one of the ten most endangered karst areas of the world by the Karst Waters Institute. I urge you to choose the no action alternative for the Kosciusko Timber Sale.

Sincerely,
Kevin Allred
Tongass Cave Project Director

cc:
SEACC
Glacier Grotto, NSS
Pete Smith, Tongass Cave Project Director, NSS
Steve Lewis, Tongass Cave Project Director, NSS
Jim Werker, Conservation Committee, NSS
Dr. David Culver, Karst Waters Institute

The Rope Cutter

Dear Rope Cutter:

I heard about a new ascending system that is supposed to be the best ever. I even heard that Cavers like in the IMAX film all use it. The problem is that I can't seem to find anyone who has actually used the system, but I know it involves using a Penn fishing reel. Do you know about this system or know anyone who could tell me about it? I'm new to caving and I can't seem to get the hang of those other systems, like the lizard, the stand down and the rope runner.

Signed, Reely Confused.

Dear Reely & Truly Confused:

No wonder you can't find anyone who has used this system. Dead Men don't do endorsements. Or perhaps I should restate that- Dead Men only do an endorsement once, right before they acknowledge their situation with two universal words.

Geez, wouldn't we all like a system to get up rope that would just involve strapping on our Marlin gear, adjusting the drag, and hauling one big bottom fish (read caver) to the top. Especially as we age. But, the important thing to remember is that if caving was easy we would have more people like the guys in the NSS accident report that were lost in a cave and managed to convince their girlfriends that the only way to stay warm was to burn their clothes. Rope work can also provide future archeologists more job security than just finding shards of pottery. So get out there and practice your rope skills. Just a mild hint, do some research or get a good book and look up the frogger, the sit/stand and rope walker. You might have more luck finding those techniques.

Yours,

Phreada Phreatic

Dark Humor

How many cavers
does it take to
change a lightbulb?*

Where do cavers go on
Saturday night?**

What do cavers
order?***

* None. They have two other sources of light

**To the Powerbar

***Beer and Petzls

The Alaskan Caver

P.O. Box 9062
Ketchikan, AK 99901



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LOVE, DAVID
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PETERSBURG AK 99833



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