

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

| Grant Recipient Details | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Your name | Rafael Gonzalo Manzanero |
| Project title | Instituting a Long Term Conservation Program for Belize's Chiquibul Cave System |
| RSG reference | 10166-1 |
| Reporting period | October 2011 – September 2012 |
| Amount of grant | £6,000 |
| Your email address | rmanzanero@fcdbelize.org |
| Date of this report | 30 th September, 2012 |

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

| Objective | Not achieved | Partially achieved | Fully achieved | Comments |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| To document and monitor the actual conditions of Tunkul and Cebada caverns | | | | Based on the three expeditions undertaken, we have understood the actual conditions of three caverns including Kabal, Tunkul and Cebada. Illegal logging is found nearby the surrounding areas of the entrances of caves and in the area of Cebada agricultural activities are seriously affecting the integrity of the cave. Disturbances inside the cave are not prominent since special gear is generally needed to go far inside the cave and thus the human footprint is low. Poachers would go for water inside the cave, but looting has not been obvious far inside the caves. |
| To develop a power-point presentation | | | | A power-point on the Chiquibul Cave System has been developed for presentation to primary and secondary high schools. The power-point describes the features of the cave and the threats. |
| To develop a press release | | | | A press release has been referred to the most popular national newspaper in Belize named <i>Amandala</i> . The article is quarter of a page in size. The story describes the caves, its uniqueness and the threats to its integrity. |
| To produce a brochure | | | | 500 brochures were produced concerning the CCS. These have been distributed among student groups and institutions in Belize. |
| To develop a short 5-minute presentation about the CCS and the national park and its biodiversity | | | | A short 5-minute video has been developed and produced. The video depicts via video footage, camera stills and interviews the importance of the caves, the potential of this natural feature as a World Heritage Site and makes a call to support its protection. Dr. Jaime Awe, Director of the Institute of Archaeology and Rafael Manzanero of FCD are the key characters on the video. |
| To promote public awareness of CCS | | | | The public awareness via the power-point and the video needs to be further |

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|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | promoted. FCD is committed in continuing visiting schools and higher education institutions. |
|--|--|--|--|--|

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

All project activities were undertaken in accordance to plan except the production of the short video. This happened due to the fact that there is limited footage (video and still photography) about this system and obtaining footage for a video production was extremely difficult. This problem was tackled by seeking assistance from multiple sources including local photographers, National Geographic photographer, and FCD camera stills.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

Thanks to the assistance of the Rufford Foundation we have come about with key important outcomes. Firstly, of all we have a better understanding about the present conditions of the CCS which serves us as critical information for better targeted conservation interventions. Secondly, we have for the first-time produced material that is serving us on our outreach and environmental education activities. Our educator is now using these materials in schools and other institutions. Thirdly, and perhaps more important, is the fact that we have instituted, though with small resources, some concise efforts on the ground for the management of this important cave system. Now we need to sustain the efforts in a robust manner.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

The persons involved in the expeditions and rangers from FCD are from the local communities. By employing them on these tasks gives them an opportunity to not only know about the cave system but help them generate small funds. The public outreach and education has built more knowledge among the targeted groups of the rich cultural heritage we have in Belize.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

FCD has a co-management agreement and commitment to pursue the conservation of this national and global heritage. The study helps us understand the situation, and from here the next step is to secure the area and maintain its integrity and stability. Thus, this is just the beginning of a more consistent effort. For the next few weeks, FCD's main aim will be to generate support, and seek additional finances from foundations nationally and abroad to bolster efforts. Our management plan has a lifespan of 5 years (2010-2015) and contains several steps and activities which serve as the roadmap for on ground management. Once finances are available, we are very clear and focused on what needs to be done.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

Essentially, we believe that other individuals particularly decision makers must know about the impacts and threats currently taking place around the Chiquibul Cave System. For us it is appalling to understand that agricultural encroachments are nearby the cave entrances and this is a fact that

others must know. We will, over the next few weeks, conduct individual meetings with the Institute of Archaeology, Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development to urge them that we must secure this area. Over the last 2 years, interest has been raised for the designation of this area as a World Heritage Site and this is our opportunity to further work on this concept. Time is of essence as instability of this system will seriously affect any consideration for world heritage designation. FCD is also sharing results of the expeditions via the use of the media. Already a press release has been made, a 5-minute video is finished for broadcasting and TV interviews are being arranged.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The RFG covered a period of 1 year. The project was aimed at understanding the conditions of the Chiquibul Cave System and to promote awareness of this cave at a national level. The actual length of the project must be multi-year. In fact, now that the RFG project is over, we are certain that a firm conservation effort must be instituted and maintained, and that education and public awareness must be promoted through various targeted audiences including high schools' students, decision makers and researchers. We consider that the medium-term efforts to meet these objectives must range for a period of 3-5 years – there is so much yet to be done.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Exchange rate: 1 £ = \$3.098bz

| Item | Budgeted Amount | Actual Amount | Difference | Comments |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|---|
| Chief Ranger Services | 2,592.34 | \$2,612.77 | -20.87 | Chief ranger services-difference saved from Newspaper release |
| Team Expedition Costs | 1,977.59 | \$1,248.83 | 744.13 | Savings used towards purchase of gears |
| Environmental Education Services | 372.50 | \$372.50 | 0.00 | |
| Brochure | 299.02 | \$273.08 | 26.49 | Savings used towards purchase of gears |
| Video Footage | 645.58 | \$645.58 | 0.00 | |
| Newspaper Release | 112.98 | \$90.78 | 22.66 | Savings used to cover Ranger services |
| Purchase of Gears | 0.00 | \$756.46 | -772.41 | Received authorisation |
| TOTAL | £6,000.00 | £6,000.00 | £0.00 | |

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The most important activity required for the CCS is the composition and activation of a monitoring and enforcement small unit comprised of three persons for the CCS. To do this, the Unit will also require gear and uniforms as well as mobility to reach and make possible their presence in the area.

We estimate at FCD that the costs of this activity will cost us £18,000 annually. Belize Defence Force and police personnel will assist with additional support. From our estimates the problem of agricultural encroachments will increase as survey lines have been observed, indicating that farmers are identifying new lands to farm; and poaching as well as logging have been identified nearby the CCS particularly in the Cebada and Tunkul Caves.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, the logos of the RSGF were used on several materials including the CCS brochure, newspaper press release, power point presentation and video clip. In terms of other publicity, a story on the CCS being subsidized by RSFG was made on our Quarterly Newsletter and on all presentations credit was given to the RSFG for providing support to this project.

11. Any other comments?

The trans-boundary environmental crimes in the Chiquibul/Maya Mountains Key Biodiversity Area continue being the major challenge among environmentalists and the Government of Belize to contend with, as Guatemalan national continue to alter and make use illegally of Belize's natural and cultural resources. To address this problem, which is prone to create further tension and friction between the two countries, we see it vital to have a robust presence in the area. We are thankful to the RSFG for helping us put the first interventions this year. The aim is now to build on this effort.