

## **REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF INTEREST FOR PROJECT TO BE INITIATED THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM STUDIES UNITS (CESU) NETWORK**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Examining visitor experiences related to cave and karst resources at Carlsbad Caverns National Park and Timpanogos Cave National Monument

Response to this Request for Statements of Interest will be used to identify potential partners for a research project funded by the National Park Service (NPS). This project will be administered through a CESU only upon mutual agreement and official authorization by both parties of the acceptance of the application of the CESU Network IDC rate (17.5%).

Approximately \$90,000 is available to support this project. Funding must be allocated in FY 22 but the project can be multi-year.

### **BACKGROUND**

Caves and karst are geologic resources that provide unique opportunities for visitor experience in numerous park units across the National Park Service (NPS). In the Intermountain Region of the NPS, Carlsbad Caverns National Park (CAVE; New Mexico) and Timpanogos Cave National Monument (TICA; Utah) are outstanding examples of cave and karst resources that experience high levels of visitation. In 2021, TICA and CAVE experienced nearly 500,000 visits combined. Although many visitors come to experience the cave and karst resources of the NPS, very little is known about the visitor experience as it relates to cave and karst resources.

### **OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this project is to identify indicators, thresholds, and other planning-relevant aspects of visitor experience related to cave and karst settings. Limited data exists for visitor use management and planning in cave and karst resources, and specifically for CAVE and TICA. Understanding visitor experience, existing conditions, and associated relationships is essential for visitor use management planning. Specifically for this project, the following objectives are necessary:

- Identify possible indicators of visitor experience through a small sample of visitors using qualitative, semi-structured interviews.
- Inform thresholds of visitor experience, specifically as they relate to soundscapes, using quantitative intercept surveys.
- Evaluate perceptions of cave and karst specific management actions to protect resources and provide quality visitor experiences.
- Identify current conditions in cave and karst areas in the study and evaluate visitor perceptions of those conditions.

**NOTE:** Interpretation and Resource Management staff from CAVE, TICA, and other NPS staff will have significant involvement with the project to ensure the deliverables meet the park needs and provide any background references, documents, research, or other guidance. The success of this project will depend on the collaboration of the cooperator and the NPS.

**DELIVERABLES**

Deliverables shall include: 1) all data, protocols, and survey instruments used in data collection; 2) a report that includes descriptive statistical information from the data, as well as associated statistical analyses and management recommendations; 3) a presentation on the study to the NPS.

**START DATE**

August 1, 2022

**END DATE**

July 31, 2024

**MATERIALS REQUESTED FOR STATEMENT OF INTEREST**

Please prepare a 2-3 page summary of your vision for implementing this project. Include your name, department, university or organization, contact information, CESU affiliation, and a brief biographical sketch. Please include the same information for any collaborators, including staff, faculty, or students who would work on the project. Successful applicants will demonstrate expertise in visitor use management through relevant experience, projects, research, or other examples of their work. We are particularly interested in expertise related to developing evaluative thresholds.

**REVIEW OF STATEMENTS RECEIVED**

All Statements of Interest received will be evaluated by a board comprising one or more people with expertise related to the park unit or subject matter. Based on a review of Statements of Interest Received, an investigator or investigators will be invited to prepare a full study proposal. Statements of Interest will be evaluated based on demonstrated experience and capabilities related to the project requirements.

Please submit Statements of Interest to Zach Miller by 5PM Mountain Time on 05/30/2022.

**PLEASE NOTE: A budget is not requested at this time.**

**Contact Information**

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