

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- Greg Martin

Greetings to you all. This year seems to have zoomed by, and the Waitomo Conference in April is now a distant memory. Congratulations to ASF's Dr Julia James upon her election as President of the International Union of Speleology (IUS) and to ACKMA's Ernie Holland for his election as Chairman of the IUS Commission on Show Caves of the World.

BLACK WATER RAFTING CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

On Saturday 22 November the Black Water Cafe hosts an event to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Black Water Rafting. From humble beginnings this venture has grown to be a very successful adventure tourism enterprise. Surviving a decade is a major milestone and will be celebrated with an attempt at creating the world's longest human eel, and a BBQ dinner followed by a major party. Congratulations to John Ash and Peter Chandler and good luck for the next decade.

RUAKURI CAVE

A new Company, New Zealand Glowworm Caves Ltd has reportedly signed a joint venture deal with Ruakuri Cave landowner and Trustee, Clare Holden, of Waitomo. The marketing of the cave will focus on developing it as a "cultural experience". The next step will be a resource consent approval to carry out the cave's \$3.7 million development. The application will be considered by the regional council, Environment Waikato, the Waitomo District Council and the Department of Conservation within the next month in consultation with the local Maori people. Director for the new Company, Mike Gibbons, said the cave was expected to open early next year with a 30 year licence and would employ 16 staff.

TE ANA-AU CAVES UPDATE

1998 marks 50 years since the rediscovery of the caves by founders of the original Fiordland Travel company. The company has been responsible for the development and operation of the cave throughout this time and 50 years on, planning

for the cave's redevelopment is in the final stages. It has been a lengthy process finalising the plan, involving consultation with several parties. Local Iwi (Maori), Department of Conservation, Southland District and Regional Councils have all been involved. Neil Collinson, the Senior Cave Guide reports that they are currently in the final stages of gaining the necessary consents for the work to begin.

Along with the underground work, several above ground projects also require consents, including two new viewing platforms, one shelter and an extension to Cavern House. This addition will house new toilet facilities and include a complete sewage treatment plant. Work is first likely to begin above ground, moving into the cave next winter to coincide with the colder months and subsequent lower water flows through the cave.

This January the guiding team will once again be involved in the Department of Conservation Summer Nature Programme, leading six small groups into Aurora Cave above the tourist operation. Fiordland Travel have again employed a Mandarin speaking guide to provide interpretation for visitors from some Asian nations. This greatly assists in group management and visitor satisfaction.

Neil also reports that all guides have recently been involved in an interpretation workshop. Following on from this, Fiordland Travel have published an interpretation plan for the lake cruise, Cavern House talk and cave tour segments of the trip. The plan not only provides the theme and messages for the trip, but includes resource notes relevant to their cave operation. The plan will be of great help to new guides and provides a structure for appraisal of all guides in the future. Noel Walker and Neil Collinson are looking forward to a busy season and would like to wish everyone all the best for both Christmas and the New Year.