

Sustainability within the Waitomo Caves

Maintaining sustainability inside a cave can be difficult enough without the direct impact of humans within a cave. The task is made more difficult by all the things previously mentioned that accelerate the decay of the cave and destruction of its formations (Carbon dioxide, Light pollution, silt build up, Vandalism, mining). But measures are being taken by the Department of Conservation and the managers at Waitomo to try and sustain the caves while at the same time making them completely accessible to the public. Some caves are even accessible by wheel chair and have elevated walkways to minimise the effect of footprints on the cave floors. The actions that they have taken like monitoring the Carbon dioxide levels within the cave and the glow worm population are beneficial but I believe it's not enough to truly sustain the caves. I think that a few more extra measurements ne having farmers put shrubs around their farms to stop silt build up as well as flooding should be put into practice....

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...cave but if the owner merely wants to exploit it then there is no benefit. Some of the caves that were under Maori ownership and that were considered sacred have been kept that way.

Back then the Maori believed that leaving caves alone was what should have been done. Even though humans back then were at lack of knowledge about caves the Maori had already found the best form of sustaining the environment within the cave. This way of sustaining it of course meant that we couldn't appreciate the caves themselves. If we truly want to leave something for future generations to appreciate we have to add few more precautions so that caves aren't just decaying at a slower rate these could restricting the access to commercial caves a little bit more. The only down side is that profits form the cave may decrease and affect the local economy.

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As humans we have to take responsibility for the damage and actions that we do within an environment that isn't ours to destroy. Although we are doing a pretty good job of managing the impact that we have on the caves there is little bit more that could be done for it to be truly sustainable....

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The environmental impact of human activity has been recognised and mitigated to ensure that the cave are sustained at a level whereby they are still a tourist attraction. Mitigation such as closing cave down in order to allow them to recover could affect employment and hence the economy of the Waitomo district.

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Ownership of the caves and the associated cultural values could also impact upon the sustainability of the cave environment. Traditional Maori ownership saw the caves essentially being left alone. Modern Maori ownership will involve a balance between the need to provide economically for the local iwi through job opportunities and the need to respect the natural environment (mother earth – Papatuanuku) and the associated cultural values