Biography

Patrick Rohrer is a Ph.D. candidate in the Anthropology Department at UCR. His exploration of the Maya world began at age 9 with a visit to Tikal, and later his first excavation project as an undergraduate was of a rival city, Caracol, Belize. He completed his BS and MA at the University of Central Florida. In addition to projects in the Maya region, he has worked in Peru, Bolivia, and his home state of Florida, both on land and underwater. Now for his dissertation project, Patrick works with the Proyecto de Interacción Política de Yucatán (PIPCY) and the Proyecto Sacbé Yaxuná Cobá (PSYC), both headed by Travis Stanton (UCR) and Traci Ardren (UM). He plans to pursue a career continuing to research the ancient Maya by looking underground and underwater, while also learning and working with the contemporary Maya.

Project Summary

The fundamental goals and themes of Patrick’s research are to explore and explain how cenotes (from the Yukatek Maya dz’onot, a well naturally formed by a sinkhole), lakes, aguadas, reservoirs, and other water features shaped and influenced the settlement, political organization, and water management strategies of the Maya of the northern Yucatán, and likewise how Maya lifeways shaped water features and the environment. Moreover, this research will analyze past climate changes relative to political organization and ask: In what ways did communities of diverse sizes and political complexity along the Yaxuná-Cobá corridor form, build, and live around cenotes and other water bodies of variable sizes, accessibility, and water quality? How did climate and environmental changes impact these Maya communities over time and what role did anthropogenic alterations to the landscape and water features have in such changes? Maya strategies for adapting to droughts, sea level change, hurricanes, and other such environmental catastrophes and stresses can aid us in all-too similar contemporary problems that much of the global population now faces. Industrial poultry and hog farms in the Northern Yucatán, together with the booming tourist industry strain and pollute the aquifer system. Studying both the mistakes and successes of ancient occupants of the Yaxuná-Cobá corridor can inform and guide contemporary strategies for water conservation. These investigations will work with and among local communities and promote sustainability and conservation of water resources, and community heritage of the local populations that permit us to conduct research on their ejidos and aid us with invaluable insight, local knowledge, labor, and wisdom. This applied work will demonstrate that the archaeological analysis of past climates and environments can offer clarifications of contemporary struggles.