

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



1. Name

historic CUEVA LA MORA

and/or common CUEVA LA MORA

2. Location

street & number [redacted]  not for publication

city, town Comerio <sup>vicinity</sup> [redacted]  vicinity of congressional district Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

state Puerto Rico code 72 county Comerio code 00045

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Cave

4. Owner of Property

name Principal - Hon. Gumersindo Carmona Multiple Ownership (Sucesión Carmona)

street & number Casa Alcaaldia

city, town Comerio  vicinity of state Puerto Rico

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Casa Alcaaldia

street & number #13 José de Diego St.

city, town Comerio state Puerto Rico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cueva La Mora is a limestone formation composed basically of two chambers. The smaller chamber measures approximately 23 meters by 16 meters and is located near a tunnel-like entrance to the cave. This smaller chamber contains a series of petroglyphs along the chamber walls depicting anthropomorphic and mythological aboriginal designs.

The principal chamber of the cave is accessible from the tunnel-like entrance or from a large fissure on its far side. This fissure opening on the side of the mountain opens into a series of vaulted areas in a corridor-like fashion. Two smaller alcoves branch off to the left and right of this chamber at the innermost portions of the cave. The dimensions of this principal chamber are approximately 30 meters wide, 120-180 meters deep and over 30 meters high. The interior of the chamber is heavily populated with bats and the floor of this chamber area is composed of wet guano. The cave, within, is still active in that the formation process of stalactites can be observed at the innermost portions of the chamber.

The most outstanding features of this larger chamber are a series of groupings of aboriginal pictographs on the uppermost recesses of the cave walls, near the entrance to the chamber's fissure and in one of the alcoves deep inside the chamber. Groupings of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and mythological figures as well as highly stylized figures and designs can be seen in the principal groups in the upper sections of the cave walls. Lower on the walls, near the entrance to the principal chamber is a pictograph representing a fish and in the interior alcove section, a pictograph which is anthropomorphic in nature. There are approximately 25 pictographs in the cave, and a near equal number of petroglyphs represented in the smaller chamber.

A marked feature of the cave interior is the abundant amount of contemporary graffiti alongside the pictographs and petroglyphs and generally throughout the cave. The limited accessibility of the uppermost pictographs has served to protect them more than those along the lower walls, however evidence exists of individuals having reached near the upper groupings of pictographs.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates N/A Builder/Architect N/A

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Cueva La Mora archaeological site represents one of the few examples of precolumbian pictographs existing in Puerto Rico. Although the existence of petroglyphs is noted throughout the island by researchers, only a handful of sites exist which contain pictographs. The durability of petroglyphs over pictographs may account for the scarcity of these types of sites, however, no studies have been done to attempt to demonstrate any association which may have existed between the occurrence of petroglyphs and pictographs. Cueva La Mora may provide the basis for this and other types of research.

The research potentials of the Cueva La Mora can be enumerated as follows:

1. The possibility of more pictographs within the cave could be revealed by a systematic and intensive study of all the cave's surfaces.
2. It is not clear as to whether the cave was utilized during historic times for the mining of guano (as was common during the earlier centuries). If no mining occurred within the cave, then the existence of potential buried archaeological deposits beneath the present guano level would lend valuable information on the nature of the activities which may have occurred within the cave and a possible time frame.
3. The pictographs of Cueva La Mora are valuable for their research potential through analysis of the chemical composition and/or any organic matter used in their execution. These analyses could provide a method for establishing a date for the production of the pictographs as well as afford a base for comparative stylistic studies with pictograph and petroglyph sites in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.
4. The site also provides an impetus for further archaeological research in the immediate area, as its occurrence near a river system in a fertile valley suggests the existence of additional habitation or activity sites nearby, if not within the cave itself. Further research in the immediate area is under consideration at present and Cueva La Mora could feasibly constitute part of an archaeological district encompassing habitation, activity and ceremonial sites in Comerio.

A final point worth noting herein is the contemporary significance of this site to the public at a time when interest in the precolumbian heritage of the island is geometrically growing and becomes more prevalent in contemporary art, literature and music as well as in the growth of numerous new regional archaeological museums. This enthusiasm is apparently shared by the local residents of the Comerio area.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Archaeological Site Files of the Fundación (Laboratory, Edificio Marítimo, Muelle 10)  
Apartado 2057 - San Juan, Puerto Rico 00904

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property [redacted]  
Quadrangle name [redacted] Quadrangle scale 1:20,000  
UMT References [redacted]

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

### Verbal boundary description and justification

[redacted]

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Agamemnon Gus Pantel

organization State Historic Preservation Office date June 2, 1980

street & number La Fortaleza telephone (809) 723-3012

city or town San Juan state Puerto Rico 00901

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Jesus Fabón de Rocafort*

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date January 31, 1983

[redacted]