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RELEASE DATE:
August 6, 2020

National Speleological Society Announces the Expansion of Nature Preserves

NSS Headquarters, Huntsville, AL—The National Speleological Society (NSS) is excited to announce the expansion of our Preserve holdings with the acceptance of land to create the NSS Myrna Attaway Nature Preserve in Tennessee and to expand the NSS Sims Sink Nature Preserve in Florida. In addition, we have also started a new partnership with the Black Hills Cave and Nature Conservancy (BHCNC) to help manage seven caves at the newly created Dahm Springs Nature Preserve in South Dakota.

The newly created NSS Myrna Attaway Nature Preserve near Pelham, Tennessee, features the mile-long Red Trillium Cave and a rustic camping area located among mature hardwood forests. The NSS Board of Governors voted to accept this generous donation from John Attaway, NSS 16582 RL, a 45-year member of the Society and cave landowner. Upon conferring the donation of 17 acres to the NSS, John requested that the Preserve be named for his daughter, Myrna, who is also a long-time NSS member and one of the original surveyors of the cave. John Attaway was also recognized by the NSS with the prestigious 2020 Outstanding Landowner Award at its annual convention in July.

“John has promoted cave conservation, access, exploration, and education as a member and a landowner. His donation to the NSS reflects a legacy of loyalty and support of the caving community,” states Julie Schenck-Brown, NSS Preserve & Acquisition Co-chair and Landowner Relations Chair. “It is truly an honor to recognize John with this award.”

In accordance with the management plan, access to Red Trillium Cave and the camping area will be handled by Kristine Ebrey, NSS 58439 RL, FE, and Maureen Handler, NSS 23239 RL, CM, CO, FE. These NSS Preserve Managers are area cavers who will be the public face of the NSS working with our members and visitors to coordinate access through a permit system that will include a release and adherence of visitation guidelines.

Kristine and Maureen can be contacted at redtrillium@caves.org to request information, including the Preserve Access Policy, and to schedule a visit to the NSS Myrna Attaway Nature Preserve.

The NSS also accepted a gift donation of land to expand the NSS Sims Sink Nature Preserve in Florida from Buford Pruitt, Jr., NSS 17920 RL, FE, who also serves on the Preserve Management team. The Preserve, which is a significant biological habitat for the Santa Fe Cave Crayfish, *Procambarus erythroptus*, and two species of cave amphipods, *Crangonyx hobbsi* and *Crangonyx grandimanus*, is the site of ongoing research and demonstrates

that our Preserves offer so much more since recreational cave diving is not allowed in Sims Sink Cave. As an additional gift to the Society, Dan Henry, NSS 47794, prepared the legal description of this gift that expands the NSS Sims Sink Nature Preserve by approximately 1 acre.

The NSS is also excited to announce a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Black Hills Cave and Nature Conservancy of South Dakota. The BHCNC completed its first land acquisition in 2020, the Dahm Springs Nature Preserve, which protects 46 acres and seven caves thanks to the kindness of Marilyn Dahm Borgeson. Under the terms of the MOU and the Management Plan for the Dahm Springs Nature Preserve, access will be jointly managed by the BHCNC and the NSS.

“The BHCNC is excited to work with the NSS to make its first preserve an NSS preserve. Our joint mission of access and preservation align so well, that we couldn’t hope for a better partner,” reports Adam Weaver, NSS Administrative Vice-President and Vice-chair of BHCNC, “Marilyn wanted to ensure that these caves would be preserved and cared for, for generations to come. It was her thought that “the cavers” would be the best stewards of the land, and we plan to live up to her expectations.”

Whether it’s a trip to look around, a proposal to explore the caves in new ways, or even if you want to scuba dive the lakes, the first steps to access the Dahm Springs Nature Preserve are to read the Preserve Access Policy and visit blackhillscaves.org to arrange a visit.

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With more than 7,000 members and 250 grottos (chapters), the National Speleological Society is the largest organization in the world working every day to further the exploration, study, and protection of caves and their environments, and foster fellowship among cavers.

For over 75 years, the NSS has promoted safe and responsible caving practices, effective cave and karst management, speleology, and conservation. Our members are bound together by their love of caves and caving and their desire to learn about the underground wilderness and protect it for future generations.

Please consider a [donation](#) to the NSS [Nature Preserves Fund](#) or [Cave Acquisitions Fund](#) to support our commitment to future generations as we ensure cave conservation, as well as access for exploration, recreation, and research.