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National Speleological Society Signs Management Plan for New Cave Preserve: Thunderhole Cave, Cookeville, TN

NSS Headquarters, Huntsville, AL — The National Speleological Society (NSS) announces the official management of Thunderhole Cave in Cookeville, TN; creating a new NSS Preserve. This cave management plan addresses visitation, access, liability releases and permits and is renewed on an annual basis. Since June 2019, Julie Schenck-Brown, NSS Preserve & Acquisition Co-Chair & Landowner Relations Chair and Jay Clark, NSS General Counsel, have been working diligently to draft and execute this plan with the landowner, Jason Cathey to reopen Thunderhole Cave to caver visitation.

On January 9, 2020, the NSS Board of Governors held a special meeting where the following two motions were approved unanimously. The motion to accept the NSS Joint Management Agreement and NSS Preserve Management Plan for Thunderhole Cave, Tennessee and another motion to approve the NSS Preserve Managers who would manage access and serve as a public intermediary between the caving community and the landowner.

“Thunderhole Cave is a classic example of a TAG pit,” stated Geary Schindel, NSS President, “the NSS is very fortunate to have such dedicated members who work so diligently to promote landowner-caver relations, as well as access.”

In accordance with the Thunderhole Cave management plan, access to Thunderhole Cave will be managed by Megan Atkinson, NSS 68967, and Warren Wyatt, NSS 67422. These NSS Preserve Managers are Cookeville area cavers that will serve as the liaisons to the landowner, Jason Cathey, by communicating with visitors, checking credentials, issuing releases and distributing permits. Atkinson and Wyatt will serve as official NSS Preserve Managers and ensure landowner-caver relations. “It is the amazing generosity of cave landowners, such as Jason Cathey, that allows cavers to enjoy access and helps the NSS with our mission of education, exploration, and conservation of caves,” stated Julie Schenck-Brown, “Megan and Warren’s dedication and support of landowners make them an asset to NSS Preserve Management.”

Megan Atkinson and Warren Wyatt may be contacted at thunderholecommittee@caves.org to discuss access to the Thunderhole Cave Preserve.

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The National Speleological Society 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 70 years, the National Speleological Society 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.

NSS membership offers worldwide caver camaraderie and networking opportunities and access to information about discoveries and developments in caving, speleology, equipment, and techniques through our publications, annual conventions, grottos and other internal organizations, and NSS-sponsored projects, expeditions, and surveys.