

THE JOHN GUILDAY CAVES NATURE PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Revised June 12th 2019

The John Guilday Caves Nature Preserve property, in Pendleton County, West Virginia, contains several caves, including three well known, significant caves:

Trout (12,458 ft. long)

New Trout (14,908 ft. long)

and Hamilton (25,037 ft. long)

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this management plan is to establish processes and guidelines that will allow the Society to effectively manage and monitor the use of the Preserve in a way that will maintain and protect the property's natural environment, maintain visitors' access to the caves, allow historical, paleontological, biological, and other speleological work to continue, and protect and encourage the habitats and populations of endangered species while optimizing cave access. This management plan replaces the previous management plan developed for the Preserve.

Visitors to the property are reminded that in accordance with West Virginia law (Laws of West Virginia, Cave Protection, 7 Chapter 20, Article 7a, under Laws of the Division of Natural Resources, and Chapter 19, Article 25, Laws of the Department of Agriculture, limiting liability of Landowners) **neither the National Speleological Society nor its agents are liable for injuries sustained by persons using the property.** Commercial use of the property is strictly prohibited. Use by non-profit groups is acceptable, provided that no participant (or their family) has been charged any fee beyond the normal sharing of travel expenses.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Preserve Management Committee, chaired by the John Guilday Caves Nature Preserve Manager and Assistant Manager, is responsible for effectively managing the Preserve as outlined in this Management Plan. The Preserve Manager and Assistant Manager are appointed by the NSS Board of Governors, and select those committee members as deemed appropriate in achieving the objectives of this management plan.

GENERAL POLICIES OF THE JOHN GUILDAY CAVES NATURE PRESERVE

- Everyone in the group must be properly equipped. Each person must have a helmet and three independent sources of light, extra batteries, drinking water, sturdy clothing, gloves, sturdy boots with ankle support and be in good physical condition.
- Groups caving at the Preserve will have an expected out time and a person who will be responsible for calling out a rescue should the out time be exceeded by a predetermined time.
- The caves are closed to commercial (cave-for-pay) users. This includes any person or organization that takes money to guide others, or to anyone who pays for a guide. Not-for-Profit groups, to include youth groups, who pay or accept any type of fees associated with cave trips, are not allowed at the Preserve or in the caves. Scout, church, and school groups are not considered commercial users provided they have not hired a guide. Sharing of expenses is not considered a "fee". The NSS has determined that college, university and schools that teach safe caving and participate in trips to the caves which is peripheral to their safety/conservation curriculum are allowed access.
- Camping and fires anywhere on the property are prohibited.
- Please make no marks in the caves, including directional arrows and any type of writing. If you wish to mark your route you can make small piles of rock, but please remove them as you leave. Each cave contains a cave register where we encourage you to sign in and write any comments about your trip.
- The kiosk contains a sign-in book and all cavers who access the caves are asked to sign in and out, as well as what cave they are visiting and the number in their caving party. This way should a party become overdue exiting the cave rescuers will know their approximate location and not have to search all caves on the Preserve.
- Leave nothing in the cave, including trash, food, spent carbide, and human waste (bringing a "pee bottle" will help with this). If you bring it in the cave you must take it out with you.
- Do not disturb any animals you encounter. The caves are the home for many varieties of bats. You may see them hanging on the walls, ceiling or flying. We ask that your party be quiet when passing bats so as not to disturb them.
- Stay on the hillside trail. Avoid the temptation to take a shortcut directly down the hill to your car. Doing so is dangerous, causes erosion, and will disturb the poison ivy growing on the hillside. There are also drop-offs and small cliffs below parts of the trail that staying on-trail keeps you away from.
- West Virginia caves are protected by law. Any acts of vandalism, mineral collecting, or disturbance of cave animals is prohibited. Violations will be aggressively prosecuted.
- Hamilton and New Trout caves are open to responsible caving all year.
- All parking is to be in the wide shoulder across the street. Maintain a minimum of one-foot distance from the pavement. Vehicles parked too close to the pavement may be ticketed. Be careful with the traffic along 220. Often the traffic is quite fast, and not necessarily paying attention to you. Please use discretion when changing clothing at the parking area.
- Hunting is not allowed on the property.
- Rock-climbing is not allowed on the property.
- The management committee upon application in writing may issue scientific collection permits. Any additional permits required by any governmental agency are the responsibility of the applicant. Applications must comply with NSS guidelines.

ACCESS POLICY

Everyone in the caving party must be properly equipped. Each person must have a helmet and three independent sources of light, extra batteries, drinking water, sturdy clothing, gloves, sturdy boots with ankle support and be in good physical condition.

HAMILTON & NEW TROUT:

Hamilton and New Trout Caves are open to visitation without restriction or prior permission.

TROUT:

Trout Cave will be open for summer caving between April 16th and May 31st. Closed all other times.

1. All cavers will adhere to the John Guilday Caves / Nature Preserve Management Plan guidelines for conduct/safety (See General Policies below) and follow the National Forest Service WNS procedures for pre-contamination / de-contamination.
2. Three (3) trips per week will be permitted. Two on the weekend and one during the week.
3. On your trip you may choose one of the following:
 - A) Go during the daylight hours in which case you must be out of the cave by sundown, and must restrict your exploration to the cave up to and including the register room and the "maze" which is to the left of the register room. Please do not proceed beyond the register room down the main trunk. Virginia Big Eared bats are plentiful past that point during the day in the summer. Or.....
 - B) Plan a trip at night. Between 11 PM and 5 AM. During this time option cave exploration is unlimited. You may go anywhere in the cave you like, but you must be out of the cave by 5 AM.
4. Please do not shine lights at the bats, and attempt to be as quiet and non-disturbing as possible around them.
5. If large numbers or significant clusters of bats are encountered please back away and do not disturb them. Report this along with their location to the Preserve manager post trip on your completed application/report.
6. Please replace the gate and lock it while you are in the cave to prevent others from entering during your trip. They may be locked in the cave without your knowledge if you don't.
7. Please unlock only the top gate, and replace it. The bottom gate is to increase the size of the opening in the event of a rescue, thereby permitting a litter to pass through it.
8. The combination will be changed very often and randomly by the manager.
Trip approval will be given out on a first-come-first-served basis generally, however preference will be given to those who have not had a chance to see the cave that year.

NSS FLOOD:

All trips to NSS Flood Cave require prior approval, which will only be granted for approved research proposals.

CAVE MANAGEMENT

The small caves on the cliff require no special management scheme, but shall be inspected sporadically for impact. To date, no impact has been observed.

Hamilton and New Trout Caves shall be examined at least twice annually.

NSS Flood Cave is closed to recreational use in an effort to protect the unusual (for the area) number of formations present in the cave. The cave shall be examined at least once a year for signs of disturbance from its natural state, as it must be dug open for entry.

Trout Cave requires the most attention because of its use as a hibernaculum by Indiana Myotis, a federally endangered species. The committee and representatives from the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources shall conduct a winter bat census every two years in accordance with the Indiana Bat recovery plan of the U.S.F & W.S.

THE "LOST PASSAGE"

The management committee has received reports that a "back" entrance to Trout Cave was observed in the 1950s, and also that Peter Hauer during his saltpetre research discovered an upper level that was a 600-foot-long passage paralleling the main passage. Promising sites are examined and pursued as they come to view, usually by digging. In the event the "Lost Passage" is found, the following procedure will be undertaken:

1. The entry to the passage (which may differ from the one Hauer filled in) will be discussed with the management committee, the Preserve Chair, and the AVP to determine what further actions will be taken.
2. The passage will be surveyed by the committee or its designees to determine where the original connection is. Any artifacts found will be documented and preserved in situ for study by researchers that have fulfilled NSS requirements for doing such work.
3. If the connection was not the entry point, the original connection will be reestablished. The entry point will be restored to its original dimension / air flow if possible.
4. Another temperature study, similar to the one conducted in the early 1980s, will be conducted in cooperation with the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources.
5. It is expected that if, in fact, the above hypothesis is correct, at least 300 feet of the entrance passage will be found to reach temperatures in the preferred range of 3.0 - 7.2 deg. C.
6. If the expected increase in suitable habitat does not occur, the committee will continue to pursue avenues of restoring the habitat to the stated condition.

PUBLICITY

An information booth has been constructed at the base of the cliff at a point nearest the highway. Information is provided regarding the property and its legal uses. Conservation, safety, and general informational brochures are available for visitors, and a sign in/out log is made available. A John Guilday Cave Preserve Facebook page exists which is regularly updated and maintained by the Preserve manager. The NSS maintains a web page on its site (caves.org) dedicated to the Preserve.

SURFACE MANAGEMENT

Flora on the property consists of that which is typical for the area. Its development is neither directed nor hindered. A wide area of erosion was present below Trout Cave at the time of the property's purchase, but this has since become more stable with the acceptance of the natural trail at the base of the cliff by the vast majority of visitors. The trail is maintained only to the extent that deadfall is not necessarily permitted to block it. A plastic fence helps to identify the trail in some areas. 100 Red Bud trees were planted on the hill several years ago which were paid for by the WV Highway Department, after an overly aggressive pruning along the road on their part. The hillside is now largely back to its previous natural state.

CONSERVATION

The Preserve manager and assistant manager shall conduct or arrange inspection and maintenance visits at the Preserve on a regular basis, repair and paint the kiosk, clean graffiti, maintain trails in a natural state, and repair or replace fences and signs.

Updated June 12th 2019