



SCHOHARIE CAVERNS NATURE PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Schoharie County, New York)

The following Preserve Management Plan was adopted by the Board of Governors of the National Speleological Society to define management of Schoharie Caverns Nature Preserve. The intention of this plan is to protect the property and promote good relations between the NSS and neighboring landowners. Please observe the rules and encourage others to do the same so that this unique and outstanding cave may be enjoyed by all. Contact the NSS Property Managers at SchohariePreserve@caves.org if you have any questions or need to request special arrangements.

ACCESS POLICY

At this time no effort will be made to restrict access to Schoharie Caverns to most caving groups. Exceptions are described in the next four paragraphs. It is recommended that two signs be placed at the cave entrance. The first should state that persons caught removing formations from the cave will be prosecuted. The second should provide a message on caving safety and proper equipment. It shall also include a telephone number to be called in case a rescue is needed

Individuals who show up to go into the cave and who are not properly equipped should be strongly discouraged from entering the cave. Minimum equipment per individual is a helmet with chin strap, three sources of light - ideally one of these should be helmet mounted, and sturdy footwear. In cases where people are not adequately equipped, they should be asked to leave and not enter the cave until properly equipped.

Behavior in the cave shall conform to accepted NSS standards. All formations, bedrock, and sediments including mud shall be left as is unless special permission is received from the chair or chairs for scientific collection. There shall be no mud fights etc.

Cave for pay groups are not permitted in Schoharie Caverns. Cave for pay means those groups where a leader receives payment for activities related solely to the cave trip. This may include, but is not limited to, rental of cave equipment, transportation to the cave, and guide services.

Profit making groups for whom caving is an ancillary or additional activity such as camps or schools are permitted. Such groups and certain non-profit groups must be covered by insurance as specified by the chair or chairs. Release forms for minors signed by a parent or legal guardian may be required.

EXPLORATION RULES

There does not appear to be any significant potential for exploration on this preserve. John Schweyen's work in Schoharie Caverns seems to have pushed even the dive potential to the end. Any bolting, diving, digging, or blasting is considered a special use of this property and requires specific approval from the committee chair or chairs. Further, any exercise of the cave rights received with the property also requires specific approval from the committee chair or chairs.

PUBLICITY POLICY

The cave is not to be publicized in magazines or newspapers of general circulation. Caver's publications like The Northeastern Caver and the NSS News may contain information on the latest discoveries and other pertinent information. Some grotto publications may also have information, but again, these have limited circulation and usually do not give locations. The cave, because of its ease of access, has been used as a cave to take members of the media to. It must be understood by all individuals doing this that the name and location of the cave is not to be used and that they must obtain a promise in writing from the reporter, producer, or editor to that effect.

SURFACE MANAGEMENT

In addition to the chair, the committee authorizes the following three positions: fieldhouse registrar, preserve manager, and maintenance manager. The fieldhouse registrar will handle all fieldhouse reservations and the distribution of keys or lock combinations. The preserve manager will be another decision maker who will have most powers of the committee chairs except to actually run the meetings. He or she can direct persons or groups to leave the property, have persons arrested, and identify problems to be resolved. For obvious reasons, the preserve manager will be a local caver. The preserve manager may also appoint any deputies as needed to help enforce the rules set forth in this plan. The maintenance manager will oversee all up-keep of the property and will identify any special work that is necessary.

In contrast to many cave properties, this one has few problems associated with direct management of the cave. Rather, the chief problems seem to be related to the use of the surface for camping and other pursuits by cavers and non-cavers, alike. At present, use of the property is open. People come and camp. A \$.25 donation per person per night has been requested, but not required. This money and money from donations accepted for the use of the cabin (\$.50 per person per night suggested donation), has been used for property upkeep. The new outhouse and the repair of the cabin roof were funded in this manner.

Preserve Rules have been adopted as follows:

1. Use of the cabin is on a reservation basis. Persons who have reserved use of the fieldhouse have first priority even if someone else may have arrived first. Groups may and are encouraged to contact the group reserving the cabin first to see if a sharing arrangement can be worked out.
2. All persons using the fieldhouse must clean it and the outhouse before leaving even if found in poor condition. Clean-up requirements will be posted in the fieldhouse.

3. Only caving groups may use the fieldhouse or camp on the preserve. Only cavers and their non-caving spouses and friends may use the fieldhouse or camp on the preserve.
4. No motor vehicles in the pine woods.
5. No fires, attended or otherwise, in the pine woods.
6. No cutting of any wood unless authorized by the chair or preserve manager.
7. No unattended fires anywhere. (Even in the stove in the fieldhouse.)
8. Excepting urine and feces in the outhouse, all waste, including leftover food, must be removed from the property.
9. On busy or holiday weekends, day visitors should park in the upper lot and leave the lot by the fieldhouse for those staying in the fieldhouse.
10. Groups and individuals shall bring their own firewood and toilet paper.
11. Groups and individuals shall show respect for others and shall observe a quiet period from 10:00 pm to 8:00 am. Additionally, because minors may be camping on the property, individuals shall not engage in any lewd or lascivious behavior while on the preserve.
12. No vehicles may be parked or driven into the lower camping area unless authorized by the chair or property manager.
13. All Boy Scout groups shall follow all internal Boy Scout Rules regarding caving.
14. Careful analysis by Boy Scouts of America has determined that the most appropriate scout to adult ratio is 4 to 1. By extension, all youth groups whether affiliated with the scouts or not must meet this ratio to use the preserve for both caving and camping.

The current situation where nominal donations are suggested will continue. Suggested donations will be as follows: \$1.00 per person per night for use of the fieldhouse and \$.50 per person per night to camp. Names of individuals and groups will be sent to the NSS office annually so these can be officially identified as NSS contributors. Such monies that may be collected and sent to the NSS shall be set aside in a Schoharie Caverns Preserve Fund for use at that property.

It is highly recommended that grottos participating in the Schoharie Caverns Preserve Management Committee should do at least one clean-up or project in the property per year. Examples include roof replacement by the Met Grotto, outhouse replacement by Connecticut Valley, and lawn cutting, campground maintenance, and window repair by Helderberg-Hudson.

RESCUE CONSIDERATIONS

Most people visiting Schoharie Caverns will only see the first 2000 feet from the entrance to sump 1. This part of the cave is almost entirely walking. In a few places it is necessary to scramble over rocks or to do some chimneying. Still, problems could occur.

A rescue from Schoharie Caverns would be fairly simple as it is almost all walking passage. Of chief concern would be hypothermia. Anybody entering the cave does get wet. This increases the chance of problem with exposure. Still, the cave offers so few obstacles to a rescue, that once a call out is made and rescuers arrive, resolution should proceed quickly.

There is no phone at the fieldhouse, but the people living in the first house downhill from the cabin have indicated that their telephone could be used in cases of emergency.

FUTURE PLANS

Futures plans are a moving target and more than anything else in this plan, this list will change as goals are accomplished and new ones added. The following list is presented in no special order, though the first seven will be given the highest priority.

1. Construct a new mortar chimney on the cabin.
2. Survey the property.
3. Eliminate the firepit in the pine woods.
4. Permanently close off the vehicle access to the pine woods.
5. Place signs at the entrance to Schoharie Caverns as discussed in the section on Access Policy.
6. Post the property. Particular attention should be paid to the northern boundary and to the cabin itself.
7. Identify properties on which we have cave rights.
8. Extend the loft over the top of the porch. This needs further analysis and inclusion here does not commit the Society to this task.
9. Construct a pavilion in part of the lower camping area. To mitigate for the loss of camping sites, create more flat tent sites in the pine woods. Another area for additional camping sites lies immediately south and below the lower camping area. This is an old dirt road. It forms a 15 to 20 foot wide bench and is about 150 feet long.
10. Replace the windows on the cabin and include external working shutters to be locked from the inside. Thus, to open a shutter, one will have to go into the cabin, open the window, and unlock the shutter. This should prevent the new windows from being easily broken.
11. Repair the road to the cabin.
12. Improve the upper parking area.
13. Construct a new trail to the entrance of Schoharie Caverns from the lower camping area.
14. Replace the lock on the cabin. It is recommended that plans to make this change be printed in the Northeastern Caver and posted on the cabin. Notices should state that the change will

occur on July 1, 1994. Thus, no one should be taken by surprise. The new lock will be a combination lock with a changeable combination. The combination will be changed on a regular basis without advance warning except to those groups who have already reserved the fieldhouse ahead of time.

15. Complete removal of wood from Schoharie Caverns.

At this time, and not in the foreseeable future, do plans exist to reconnect electricity to the fieldhouse.

Commercial Use Statement: The Board of Governors of the National Speleological Society reaffirms its standing policy that bans the commercial use of our properties, and specifically, prohibits any activity where a charge of any type is made or a payment of any type made to anyone organizing or leading a trip to the cave preserve.