



RICHARD BLENZ NATURE PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The following Preserve Management Plan was adopted by the Board of Governors of the National Speleological Society to define management of Richard Blenz Nature Preserve (Monroe Co., Indiana). 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 BlenzPreserve@caves.org if you have any questions or need to request special arrangements.

INTRODUCTION

The property consists of approximately 43 acres of hilly and mostly mature wooded surface terrain. There are several karst features including sinkholes, small periodic springs, and three caves, the largest of which is Buckner Cave. Jim's Hole and another small ten foot pit are the other caves. The property contains one house currently occupied by Richard Blenz who holds a lifetime tenancy. The property also has a gravel driveway approximately three hundred feet long leading to a gravel parking area of approximately one acre and an open camping area of approximately one acre. Adjacent to the parking area is a concrete pad, the remnant of a barn that formerly stood on it. These latter features comprise almost all of the flat, ridge-top land on the property.

This management plan is intended to describe preservation and use of the land surface as well as the cave resources on and under the property. The property has a long history of use from prehistoric times to present day and as such represents a wonderful type example for its area. The objectives are as such:

- Prevent abuse of the surface features and caves.
- Manage the forest to provide both recreational and natural value, maximizing the natural diversity of species for its type example.
- Clean up the cave and restore it as much as is reasonable to pre-major usage condition.
- Encourage the responsible recreational and educational use of the cave.

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

In 1962 Richard Blenz purchased the property. Shortly after the property was opened to any and all people wishing to visit the cave. Owing to the property owner not being present on the property much the cave and property were abused and vandalized to high degree. In 2005 a conservancy was formed to manage the property and vigorous cleanup efforts were implemented. The Blair Family owned much of the surrounding property in the mid 1800s. There may have been Saltpeter mining from the entrance of Buckner.

It may have been used as a station for the Underground Railroad during Civil War era.

A complete history of the property ownership is available via the property Abstract.

RESOURCES

Biological:

- Surface
 - Mid-latitude mature deciduous forest and associated plants and animals
- Underground
 - Several species of bats including the Indiana Bat, Big Brown, and Pipistrelle utilize the entrance room of Buckner. Big Brown and Pipistrelle utilize much of the cave.
 - In the twilight zone of Buckner are a variety of mostly uncatalogued flora and fauna other than bats; including Cave Salamanders, mice, fungi, algae, and mosses.
 - Species of pigmented and pigmentless crawfish are found in the stream passage.
 - Other arthropods are found in the stream, mostly uncatalogued.
 - Actinomyceaties bacteria may be found on cave surfaces, uncatalogued at this time.

Geological: Most of the property is located in the Mississippian limestone with some Pennsylvanian sandstone on the ridge top. The caves exist almost entirely within the St. Genevieve limestone and are typical of mixed phreatic/vadose formation with a complex history of speleogenesis spanning three to five million years. All caves on the property are still undergoing active formation in the lower levels.

Hydrological: Hydrology for the property is typical for its region with diffuse recharge in the upper zones through the sandstone and very little surface drainage. Several input point for surface water exist along the contact between the sandstone and limestone. All water from the property and cave eventually ends up in the Blair Spring system down the valley from the property. Water from Buckner has been dye-traced to King Blair Cave located a few hundred feet away.

Archeological: No active archeological research has been done on the property, however, Woodlands Indian culture is known in the region and artifacts are found on the surface nearby. Buckner Cave, having a large entrance room and reasonable proximity to water, was most likely used as shelter throughout human history in the area, but evidence for this has most likely been destroyed.

Paleontological: No paleontological study has been performed.

Historical: Historical signatures from the 1700s and 1800s have been found in Buckner Cave. These have been preserved as best as possible during ongoing cleanup efforts. Remnants from settlements in the area are located on the property.

ACCESS POLICY

Exceptions to all access and use policies may be granted by majority vote of the RBNC executive board (preserve manager for the NSS). If exemption is granted, the visitor(s) will retain a permit for the exemption for review by either the caretaker or any active member or member of the executive board. Normal access time is from 7am to 9pm. As this is a Conservancy, all visitors to the cave and land above are required to use minimal impact techniques. All visitors must sign in at the kiosk. All cavers must wear helmets with chinstraps and each carry three independent sources of light while in the cave. It is recommended that at least one of the lights be helmet mounted.

1. All trash must be carried out of the cave and off of the property.
2. **Group size** is a minimum of 3 adults unless otherwise approved by the executive board. At least one person in the group is required to have sufficient knowledge of the cave to avoid becoming lost.

3. **Groups containing minors** shall have at least one adult for every 5 minors and must have the minimum of 3 adults.
4. **Groups of more than 10 individuals** need to apply for a special use permit.
5. **Any group charging money** for participation in the trips **must** have a special use permit and approval by the executive board of the RBNC. Church groups, school groups, summer camps and other non-profit organizations must have a special use permit and show proof of liability insurance which specifically names the Richard Blenz Nature Conservancy, Inc, its officers, the National Speleological Society, and its Officers as coinsured and indemnified. This type of use of the property is highly discouraged and is intended primarily to apply to caving organizations associated with the NSS. Scouting groups are permitted provided they comply with the NSS/BSS policy and also provide a copy of their group tour permit from their scouting organization. Individual or group tour operators who charge fees to lead people on wild cave tours are prohibited. People pooling money for common expenses are exempted.
6. **Alcohol or other intoxicants use is completely prohibited in the cave.** Alcohol use is prohibited on the property except by special permission from the executive board. Anyone witnessed drinking or partaking in intoxicants or illegal substances on the property will be asked to leave and may be banned from further access to the property at the discretion of the executive board.
7. **Smoking and other tobacco use is prohibited in the cave.**
8. **Overnight camping** is restricted to 3 nights in any month. Dead or downed wood may be gathered for firewood. Local firewood may be brought to the property. No live plants or trees are to be cut for making fires. Campfires are to be kept small and in provided fire rings only. Camping in the cave is discouraged and may be done only by permission from the executive board.
9. **Modification to the cave** requires permission by the RBNC executive board. **The making of any marks on cave walls, ceilings, floors, or rocks is also prohibited except by permission of the RBNC executive board.**
10. **Gathering plants or forest products** is discouraged except for those on the approved list. Gathering of the approved plants and forest products must be done using minimal impact techniques and requires approval by the RBNC.
11. **Anyone caught violating or vandalizing the property will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.** The Richard Blenz Nature Conservancy, Inc. is granted full legal right to prosecute vandals on behalf of the National Speleological Society by the action of the NSS BOG at the July 2007 meeting.

CAVE MANAGEMENT

Buckner will be monitored in an ongoing basis to ensure further degradation of the cave is minimized. Regular patrols of the cave (at least monthly) will be conducted to check for signs of vandalism in the cave. As soon as practical, inventorying of biological, geological, and cultural resources will be performed to establish a baseline and periodic evaluations will be performed. Usage levels will be adjusted to ensure degradation of resources is minimized. It is recognized that Buckner Cave has already sustained substantial degradation from several decades of abuse and one goal of the management plan is to reestablish as best as possible conditions as close to the original.

PUBLICITY POLICY

In general Buckner Cave is widely known and is to be considered a valuable resource for recreation and education. To that end publicity will not be encouraged, but neither shall information about the cave be kept secret.

SURFACE MANAGEMENT

The property consists of mostly mature deciduous forest. A gravel driveway to a parking area exists and is gated. The driveway passes in front of a house which is both part of and separate from the property (see property deed). A sign in and informational kiosk exists in front of the house and the driveway leads another fifty meters to a gravel parking area capable of parking approximately thirty vehicles. At the parking area is a concrete pad, the floor and foundation of an old barn. Approximately one acre is cleared and maintained for camping next to the parking area. A gravel (to minimize erosion) path leads down the path from the parking area to the entrance of Buckner Cave. The forest will be managed lightly with mixed resource use balancing the natural and the recreational.

FUTURE PLANS

- The cave is in the process of being remapped. The new map will be owned by the RBNC, Inc and full copyright will be granted to the NSS.
- Assist in future scientific study of the cave and its biota.
- Continue cleanup and monitoring efforts.
- Compile a formal history of usage of the property.
- Work with the NSS concerning any future management issues that shall arise.

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.

Appendix One

Trip/Liability Card

Great Expectations Cave Nature Preserve

Trip Card

Date & time in ___/___/___

Date & time out ___/___/___

Trip leader _____

Number in party ____ (Please list the trip members on the back.)

Purpose of trip

Was there anything unusual or any problem you noted on the property of which the manager should be aware?

Appendix Two

Liability Release

I, the undersigned, do hereby release forever the NSS or anyone acting directly or indirectly on the part of the NSS, from all liability, damages and responsibilities of any nature whatsoever incurred by my hiking, educational or research activities on said property. I agree that any personal injuries, accidents, death, damage to my property, or health problems incurred by me on said property are my responsibility, not the NSS's.

I promise to bind myself, my family, and my heirs to the aforementioned terms of this release.

I have carefully read the foregoing release and indemnifying agreement and understand the contents thereof, and sign this document of our own free will.

Signature Date

Signature Date

Signature Date

Signature Date

Updated March 2003