



NSS RULES FOR CAVE ACCESS: SIMS SINK NATURE PRESERVE

The National Speleological Society (NSS) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the scientific study of caves and karst; protecting caves and their natural contents through conservation, ownership, stewardship, and public education; and promoting responsible cave exploration and fellowship among those interested in caves.

NSS Nature Preserves are our commitment to future generations and ensure cave conservation, access, education, and exploration. Each NSS Nature Preserve is managed by a team of NSS members who provide oversight, maintenance, and help in regulating access while serving as the public interface of the NSS.

The following guidelines have been established to protect cave and karst resources, promote good relations with cavers and the NSS, and provide an enjoyable visit at the NSS-owned Sims Sink Nature Preserve. Please observe the rules and encourage others to do the same so that the unique and outstanding cave and karst features found on this and other NSS properties may continue to be enjoyed by all.

I understand and acknowledge:

That all visitors must obtain an access permit and sign a release and disclaimer before entering the cave. Additionally, individuals under the age of 18 years must have a parent or legal guardian sign an indemnity agreement and waiver. A permit may be obtained by contacting the Preserve Management team at simssinkpreserve@caves.org.

That all caves, even permitted caves, are completely "wild" and no improvements have been made or are desirable. I understand that a visit to a wild cave may involve certain risks, including but not limited to those listed herein. I desire to visit this Cave and will do so completely at my own risk and pursuant to the Florida Recreational Resources Law.

That any cave may be physically demanding and declare that I am fit and able to engage in the necessary activity to access a cave's features. I also acknowledge that a cave may contain passages, rooms, or pits that may be dangerous to access and/or may not be known, and there is the possibility of becoming lost. If a cave requires vertical rope work, I am sufficiently healthy and capable of completing the activity and not endangering myself or other group members.

That caves may flood, and that it is impossible to predict the time lag between rainfall and flooding in the cave. I will not enter the cave when the weather is questionable, or ground thaw could occur. Doing so could result in death by drowning, hypothermia, or entrapment.

That steep, slippery mud banks, exposed climbs, and loose rocks may occur in various locations in caves and may pose hazards.

That water in a cave may be polluted by unknown means and may be dangerous to my health if ingested or by contact.

That the minimum group size for cave visitation is two people. To minimize impacts on the cave, the property, and wildlife, group size is limited to no more than four people on an in-cave trip. Group sizes for surface activities are set by NSS Preserve Managers.

That the persons visiting the preserve or caves are not required to be NSS members but are encouraged to join and support our mission of conservation, exploration, research, and fellowship. When requesting a permit, the identity of the caver who will guide and be responsible for the activity of the group must be provided. A permit will be issued in that person's name and they will be responsible for ensuring that all group members abide by the terms of the permit and the management plan.

That parking is limited to designated areas and trailheads or public roadways. I will not block driveways or other vehicles.

That camping in the preserve is allowed when permitted by NSS Preserve Managers. Campfires are allowed within the permitted camping area.

That all visitors are required to pack out all waste. Only research-dedicated equipment, guidelines, and sampling plot markers shall be installed and left within the cave. Other research materials may be installed and left in the cave or above-ground on the preserve only with written permission from NSS Preserve Managers and after obtaining approval for the research from the NSS Cave Management Research Committee.

That loud noises could disturb wildlife, other visitors, and neighbors in surrounding houses and neighborhoods, and thus should be avoided.

That alcohol, recreational drugs, or other intoxicating substances are prohibited during any caving activity within the preserve.

That the use of caves or karst features on NSS property may not be used for any commercial activity or purpose, including guided or commercial caving or other similar activity known as "cave for pay." Cave diving and cavern diving classes within the preserve are forbidden.

That the collection or removal of wildlife, plants, minerals, or other items found in the cave or on the property, including scientific specimens, is not allowed without the express written permission of the NSS Cave Management Research Committee.

That the collection, removal, altering, and/or destruction of any cultural or historical resources, including but not limited to, human remains, cave art/drawings, or other archaeological resources or features is not allowed. Any observation of a cultural or historical artifact should be reported to NSS Preserve Managers with specific location information, descriptions of the object(s), and photographs.

That the modification of a cave or property, including the digging out of crawlways or entrances, placement of bolts or other artificial anchors, ladders, or other gear is prohibited without express written permission from the NSS Preserves Committee.

That equipment and clothing will be properly cleaned of flora and fauna to prevent colonization by noxious organisms prior to entering the Sims Sink Nature Preserve. This is to prevent invasive and/or non-native weeds, and animal species of any kind, from colonizing the cave and above-water habitats.

That changing clothes in any public area upon exiting the cave may be a potential privacy violation of other preserve attendees or NSS neighbors.

That the appropriate legal authority should be contacted first if any disturbances, vandalism, or illegal activities are observed within the Preserve. Upon informing the appropriate legal authority, the NSS shall be notified as soon as possible. Additionally, any site problems in or around the cave, the cave opening, or the land surface area above a cave and its entrance shall be shared with NSS Preserve Managers at the first available opportunity.

That the appropriate legal authority should be contacted first if any rescue or emergency should arise on the property. Upon informing the appropriate legal authority, the NSS Preserve Manager shall be notified as soon as possible.

Failure to abide by these “rules for cave access” may result in immediate removal from the property and/or result in future access denials and/or appropriate civil or legal recourse or compensation for damage or abuse to the cave system or features.

I acknowledge that I have read the provided access rules and understand them.

Signed Name: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____