

**Memorandum of Understanding between the National Speleological Society and the
Appalachian Cave Conservancy
Updated February 2026**

WHEREAS, The Appalachian Cave Conservancy (hereinafter "ACC") is the manager of Perkins Cave in Washington County, Virginia;

WHEREAS, the National Speleological Society, Inc. (hereinafter "NSS") is the leading organization worldwide in cave management conservation and exploration; and

WHEREAS, the ACC and the NSS have jointly agreed to a joint management plan for the management and maintenance of all the Perkins Cave Preserve property donated by John M. and Mary S. Wilson to the NSS in the year 2021; and

WHEREAS, the property will be known as the NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve and will be jointly managed by the NSS and ACC as recited herein.

In consideration of the premises recited above, the parties agree as follows:

Purpose: The purpose of this MOU is to continue a framework of cooperation and partnership between the parties on all matters related to the management, maintenance, and all other functions within the stated purposes of the ACC and the NSS.

The activities, services, and obligations of this agreement shall include, but are not limited to:

Duties of ACC are as follows:

1. Will adopt jointly a preserve management plan as part of this agreement and be incorporated herein.
2. Will, to the best of its ability, maintain a healthy organizational structure, membership involvement, and financial integrity.
3. Will maintain institutional knowledge, skills, and abilities of cave management within the ACC organization to effectively manage Perkins Cave and the land constituting the Nature Preserve.
4. Will maintain the management instruments, so another organization's management assumption is as simple as practical. These include an operational cave gate, management plan, and other items.
5. Will pay the electric utility service bills at the Wilson field house.
6. Will notify the NSS as soon as possible if the ACC is unable or unwilling to continue to manage the NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve.
7. The ACC Board of Directors will help the preserve managers implement the preserve management plan and manage the preserve and reporting jointly to both parties.

8. The cave and surface resources are to be made available and accessible to the NSS for research, education, and maintenance on the entire preserve subject to the Access Policy and Visitation section.
9. Will allow access to the cave(s) for individuals with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to competently cave using safe and clean caving techniques to enter the caves on the property, subject to the appropriate rules and regulations formulated in the preserve management plan.
10. Will formulate rules and guidelines for the use of the NSS Nature Preserve in consultation with the NSS.
11. Will approve all publication or printed materials intended for public distribution regarding the conservancy and the preserve from the NSS.
12. Will maintain a clear right-of-way to Perkins Cave from Route 80.
13. Will report annually to the NSS involving all pertinent matters related to the preserve and its management, following the format suggested for NSS preserve managers, including an annual proposed budget, which will be reviewed by the NSS Preserves Committee.

The NSS shall:

1. Provide any requested or required technical assistance and expertise to the ACC and its preserve manager(s) regarding best management practices that would facilitate the preservation of the cave and land.
2. Provide as requested coverage under the NSS liability insurance for activities on the NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve.
3. Will maintain institutional knowledge, skills, and abilities of cave management within the NSS organization at a level sufficient to assume the management of the NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve in the future if ACC withdraws from this agreement or is otherwise needed.
4. Have final approval of any preserve managers appointed by the ACC who will in turn serve as NSS Nature Preserve Managers per the requirement of the NSS Board Acts.

It is mutually understood and agreed by and between the parties that:

1. The management and access to the property will be through the online permit system, which will be overseen by the NSS Preserve Managers.
2. Competent and qualified cavers with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities, whether NSS members or otherwise, shall be allowed access to the property:

A. Subject to approval under the NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve Management Plan.

B. Subject to compliance with all commonly accepted caving standards and practices and specific rules and procedures established by the Perkins Cave managers.

C. Are not managed or led as a commercial enterprise.

D. Comply with being under the Commonwealth of Virginia's recreational use statute executed with signed releases from liability.

Termination:

ACC may terminate this agreement in whole with due notice at any time. If ACC terminates this agreement, the NSS will assume full management responsibility for the NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve.

NSS may terminate this agreement in whole by showing cause and with due notice.

Modification:

If any changes are made to the agreement, such changes are to be made jointly and signed by all parties' authorized representatives.

Contacts:

The principal contact for this instrument is as follows:

For the NSS, the Executive Director who can be reached at Annette.Engel@caves.org

For the ACC, the following is the initial address is 79 Magnolia Drive, Front Royal, VA 22630

Non-Fund Obligation Document:

The NSS is an Alabama not-for-profit corporation with tax-exempt status granted under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Likewise, the ACC is a non-profit corporation qualified as recited above. No money is exchanging hands by and between any of the parties to this agreement. It is not the parties' intention that this agreement will generate a source of income for either party but rather it is an understanding of mutual benefit for both parties.

NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve Management Agreement

The NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve Management Team has completed a management plan, established its procedural rules, and appointed committee members; these processes will continue with updates and revisions being made as needed.

The ACC board appoints the NSS Perkins Cave Preserve Management Team, with the approval of the NSS Preserves Committee Chair. and includes the positions of property manager(s) and cave manager(s).

The initial property managers are Jeannie Bailey and Steve Bailey.

The initial cave manager is Jason Lachniet.

Before any party enters the preserve, it is the responsibility of the NSS preserve manager or managers to see that releases are executed through the online permit system, which releases all parties to this agreement and any persons, firm, or corporation having any interest or obligation in the management, maintenance, or exploration of the caves located on the preserve.

The NSS and ACC's intention is for the NSS Perkins Cave Nature Preserve to be kept in its natural and undeveloped state. Conservation, resource protection, education, scientific study, and recreation are the purposes of this Nature Preserve. The management team may approve cave modifications compatible with these principles. The preserve manager(s) is charged with implementing the attached management agreement adopted by the directors' ACC and NSS boards.

COMMERCIAL USE STATEMENT

Both parties to this MOU reaffirm their standing policy that bans commercial use of the cave property and prohibits explicitly any activity requiring an admission charge. Voluntary donations to the NSS or ACC may be accepted, provided said contributions are not given in any way to imply an admission fee. The preserve managers may charge a fee to pay for the cost of services offered at surface accommodation.

The surface part of the Nature Preserve is made available for use by the public with specific restrictions stated in the Preserve Management Plan.

The cave part of the Nature Preserve is made available for use by people with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities to cave in a competent manner respecting the unique conservation requirements of Perkins Cave and with specific restrictions stated in the Preserve Management Plan.

Annette S. Engel, NSS Executive Director

Date

Appalachian Cave Conservancy

Date