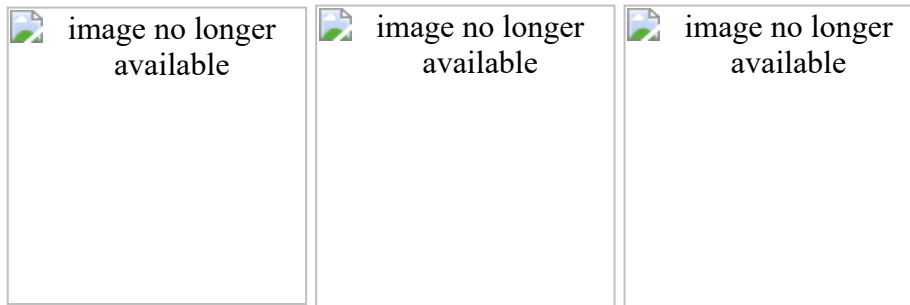


Northeastern Cave Conservancy News

Volume 1, Number 4, November 1999



Come to the next NCC meeting and vote on one of the above logos

Next Meeting - The next NCC meeting will be held at 1 PM on Saturday, 4 December 1999 (Snow Day of 11 December) at the [Five Rivers Environmental Center off of Route 443](#).

At the meeting, we will vote on the following bylaws change that would require all Officers, Trustees, and Committee Chairman to be members of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. Specifically, Addis moves that Article 5, Trustees, Section 1 shall be amended as follows: "All Trustees shall be current members of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc." Article 6, Officers, Section 2 shall be amended as follows: "All Officers shall be current members of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc." Article X, Standing Committees, shall be amended as follows: "All Chairman of Standing Committees shall be current members of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc." Article XI, Special Committees, shall be amended as follows: "All Chairman of Special Committees shall be current members of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc."

A bylaws change requires 20-day advance notice to the general membership and a 2/3 majority vote by the members present at the next meeting. If, for some reason, this newsletter is not published in time to meet the 20 day notice, the vote for the bylaws change will occur at the Spring 2000 meeting.

Minutes from the Last Meeting

The Fall NCC meeting was held at the A.J.Snyder Estate & Widow Jane Mine in Rosendale, NY 25 September 1999. Present were President Bob Addis, Vice President Peter Haberland, Treasurer Joe Levinson and Secretary Chris Nicola. Trustees included Vince Kappler, Kevin O'Classen, and Steve McLuckie. Robin Strashun proxied for Dana Atwood, Chuck Porter proxied for Mike Warner, and Christa Hay proxied for Sue Loden.

The meeting was called to order by President Bob Addis at 1:15PM. The following are highlights from the meeting:

Peter Haberland noted that the NCC now has 65 members.

Robin Strashun was appointed Fund Raiser Chair replacing Jennifer Esteva who stepped down. Chuck Porter was appointed chairman of the Nominating Committee. Dietrich Warner was appointed Chairman of the Publicity Committee.

Chuck Porter noted that the owner of Two Second Pit is interested in selling rather than donating the property.

Kevin O'Classen noted that the NCC membership cards ready, however, distribution will not occur until the completion of NCC logo so that it can be incorporated on cards. Folsom initiates discussion on status of logos. Bob Addis stated that two are being worked on currently, and will try to have them published shortly. Anyone interested in either submitting a logo idea, or assisting in the current logo project, should contact Bob. On a

related noted, Peter Haberland stated that he has spoken to Debbie Duedk about possibly assisting in the logo project.

It was reported that the NCC has not yet joined the Albany Co. Land Conservancy & Schoharie Land Trust.

The Fund Raising Committee was instructed to seek a grant to cover the expenses of gating Cross-Bones Cave on the Knox property. The grant worded "up to \$300, should be sought from the Robinson Association, Richmond Area Speleological Society, the National Speleological Foundation and/or any other suitable organization."

\$608 was allocated to our attorney, Lawrence Weintraub, to complete the application for IRS 501(c)3 tax exempt status.

Dietrich Warner and Peter Haberland agreed to write an article about NCC for publication in the local papers. Robin Strashun suggested contacting landowner Kevin Fortuin for his input in to the article.

Chris Nicola raised the idea of having the NCC visit local community groups, schools, etc. in order to give presentations on the NCC and caves.

Robin Strashun initiated a discussion on the NCC reaching out in order to place information about the NCC in grotto newsletters. Bob Addis and others raised possibility of a condensed form of the minutes being published in grotto newsletters.

Bill Folsom noted that an article about the NCC should be submitted to NSS News. Bill also suggested that the NCC should maintain a booth at OTR, NSS Conventions, and other caving events.

Chris Nicola suggested linking off of Websites such as that of Howe Caverns. Bill Folsom agreed to contact Howe Caverns to explore the possibilities.

Lack of Forward Progress...

Dear NCC Board Members,

I was singularly unimpressed at the lack of forward progress since the June NCC meeting. After hearing at the June meeting that the 501c3 was "in the mail next week", now we hear that it has not even been filed, 3 months later. At the meeting I was asked to follow up on several items, yet I would like to ask each board member/trustee:

What have you personally done since you were appointed to further the goals of the organization? Plenty of chiefs, but few indians.

Regardless of this, I have gone on good faith and expended plenty of effort, as well as putting my own word on the line, constantly telling naysayers: "I know things are not perfect, but there is at least now an organization that is making progress towards the goal of preserving karst and caves in the NE".

Does anyone have any ideas on how to get things into higher gear? Suggestions that you each may personally follow-up on are preferred, including personal persuasion.

I cannot stress enough the importance of making our words become deeds. Life is too short.

[Bill Folsom](#)

A Mission Statement for the NCC?

[The following email was addressed to Chuck Porter, Chairman of Acquisitions, from Alan Plante on 16 September 1999]

I mostly wanted to write and open a dialog with you about NCC cave acquisition priorities. I'm sure you, Bob, and the gang are only too painfully aware that the organization's limited resource - money and talent - will only stretch so far. That the NCC will have to be careful about the acquisition projects it takes on. And since I've been involved in land use planning - including conservation acquisitions - for quite a few years, I thought I might best help the organization by offering my thoughts on prioritizing cave acquisition projects.

I don't know how far you folks have taken your thinking and planning on this topic. Undoubtedly some of what I have to say has already been thought of. If so, great! You're getting things in hand. But maybe a point or two will be new, or will support your thinking. So if this helps at all, I'll be happy.

I'd be careful about the way priorities are set down as policy. Be very careful about setting absolutes - they usually come back to bite you. For example, don't prioritize the priorities. If, say, imminent destruction was the number one selection criteria, somebody might push for saving their pet hole - but its Roadside Dump Cave, a hole with no redeeming value other than it was Joe's first cave. Keep the priorities flexible and mixed, work on a case-by-case basis.

Using closure status - physical or legal - as criteria may give you problems. And I wonder if it should even be part of the mix. Everyone is going to want you to go after their favorite closed cave - just so they can get in it again. But closed caves are, in fact, protected to a certain degree - even from us! Skull isn't going anywhere. Neither is Eldon's. I think the more important question is: "What's going to happen to the cave if we don't get it?" If the answer is that it's just gonna sit there until the property changes hands, then let it sit! (I am assuming that the NCC's mission is focused on conservation of speleological resources, not recreation - or at least not as it's top interest. I hope that's the case...) Anyway, I think that in the absence of other threats, closure is the last reason to go after a cave - maybe no reason at all. (There is a very closed cave in the Berkshires that few people know about, and it has been doing just fine since the retreat of the last ice sheet...)

I think that significance is probably the most important criteria though not necessarily always the first one - to be applied to any proposed acquisition. (Skull is sure as hell "significant," but - under present ownership - it's already pretty well protected.) After that, the main question in my mind would be the level of threat: Is the watershed compromised or about to be compromised by development? Is the owner using it as a garbage dump, toxic waste dump, or the receiving end of his sewer system? Is the quarry rim fast approaching the periphery of the cave? If the answer is "no" to all of the above, then maybe the NCC can just keep an eye on the situation - put its time and resources elsewhere. I'm sure there are cavers who want the NCC to go after all of those caves - NOW! But do you really need to?

Barytes, on the other hand, might be in imminent danger of destruction (are they proposing reopening the quarry?) and is fairly significant - both as a geologic feature and as a hydrologic one. It may not be Barrack Zourie, but it's still pretty important. It - along with the parcels containing Wolferts, etc. - might be the real priority for the NCC at this time. But only if there is a realistic chance that the owners will negotiate. No sense beating your head against a stalactite. Actually, places like Barytes might be better protected through legal and legislative channels. For example, would renewed quarrying threaten water supplies?

Basically, I hope you folks are thinking in terms of what really needs to be protected - not just what caves do cavers want to visit or study. As much as I'd love to see both Pettibone and Eldon's owned by cavers, I know that they are "safe" for the moment. No need to put your time and resources into getting them.

I'm not saying that the NCC shouldn't consider caves that aren't threatened, or not bother to keep an eye on them. You should, of course. Opportunities may arise that let you think real long-term protection, and they shouldn't be passed up. And I'm not saying you shouldn't go after primarily recreational caves. I would just give recreational projects a lower priority than protection ones. Again, if you can pick up Two Second Pit for a reasonable sum, do it! Or South Bethlehem, or Young's, etc. Just not at the expense of something that really needs your intervention - like Barytes.

The biggest on-going problem the NCC is likely to face (and may already be dealing with...) is the cavers. You're going to be constantly fending off people who want you to save their favorite cave, and of course there is no other cave in the world as significant as that one! I expect that your best defense against that sort of thing is a strong and clear mission statement - and a clear acquisition priority policy.

The mission statement should be kept right up front in everything the NCC does and says. Cavers will need to be constantly reminded that the NCC doesn't exist just to buy caves, and has limited resources. I don't think I've seen a mission statement yet. Do you have one? If not, how about something along these lines:

"The mission of the NCC is to acquire and manage cave properties in the northeast which it deems to be significant geological, hydrological, biological or recreational features. Priority is given to scientific and environmentally important properties which are under imminent threat of the destruction of their significant features or systems. Recreational properties are only considered when they either tie in with more important concerns, or when their acquisition can be accomplished without taxing the resources of the organization."

Probably not quite what is needed, but something to start with if you haven't already come up with something better.

I'd appreciate hearing back from you - and Bob. I'd like to get a better sense of where things stand - and where you are headed, or hope to head. I'm available to help out any way I can.

Alan Plante

In The News

The September 1999 edition of AMC Outdoors ran an article entitled "Leave it to Beavers How a Conservation Easement can Protect your Land," by Jim Motavlli. The article discusses the increasing popularity of easements to protect land - "In 1988, easements protected only 290,000 acres in the U.S.; by 1998 local and regional trusts were signing up 1.4 million acres a year."

The Schenectady Gazette recently featured an article on Knox Cave entitled "Knox Cave Project May Help Teen Earn Eagle Scout Rank," by Gazette Reporter Alan Ginsburg. The article highlights the Eagle Scout Project of Lee Emmons whose a member of Otschodela Boy Scout Troop 56 and includes an interview with Bob Addis. The project involves cleaning up the entrance to Knox Cave, improving the foot path to the sink, and producing a brochure describing the cave and the property. Bob Addis was quoted saying that "Emmons's project will be a boon to improving the cave environment and would be in keeping with the conservancy's mission to conserve underground wilderness."