

Northeastern Cave Conservancy News



The Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (NCC) is a not-for-profit corporation committed to the conservation, study, management, and acquisition of caves and karst areas having significant geological, hydrological, biological, recreational, historical or aesthetic features. To these ends, the NCC combines the resources and expertise of affiliated cave explorers, educators, scientists, landowners, and conservation officials.

Next Board Meeting

Saturday, June 9th, 2007, 2:00PM at
Speleobooks. Cleanup at Baugh Cave
at 9AM preceding the meeting.

Notes from the Last Board Meeting

- 1) The recent NCC Board meeting took place on Sunday, March 10th at the Gallupville House, 1:00PM.
- 2) Emily Davis, Robert P. Addis and William Folsom were approved by the board to make deposits, endorse checks, and execute the transfer of funds for the NCC.
- 3) Vince Kappler reports the final Volunteer Value totals for 2006 include 1389.5 hours of work to support the NCC mission valued at \$29955.00 and 448 hours driving time.
- 4) \$100 donated to the 8 Rivers Safe Development of WV to support their efforts against a wastewater treatment plant over karst land near Sharps Cave.
- 5) Final draft of the NCC Conflict of Interest Policy was adopted by the board.
- 6) The Surprise Cave Ad hoc Committee has been established with Bob Simmons as Chair and Bill Folsom and Vince Kappler on committee.
- 7) Cleanup at Clarksville Cave before the meeting removed graffiti and broken glass from the cave.

In this issue

Notes from the Last Meeting	Page 1
NCC Project Activity	Page 2
- Howe Caverns	
- Beckers Cave	
- Beckers Cave Ownership	
- Recent Cave Management	
Opportunities	
- Events Attended	
- Groundwater Model	
Parking Lot at Clarksville	Page 3
Bat Deaths at Sharer Cave	Page 3
Upcoming Events	Page 4

Deadline for next issue – 8/24/2007

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<p>The Northeastern Cave Conservancy News is published quarterly by the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. The Northeastern Cave Conservancy promotes the study and preservation of speleologically significant properties in the Northeastern United States. Annual membership is \$15 (Regular), \$5 addtl. (Family), \$10 (student), \$50 (Benefactor), and \$100 (Institutional). All checks made payable and sent to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. P.O. Box 254 Schoharie, N.Y. 12157</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.necaveconservancy.org</p>		

NCC Project Activity by Bob Addis

- Howe Caverns.** In 4/19/07, the stockholders of Howe Caverns, Inc. voted to sell the business, buildings, and 380 acres of land to Galasso-Wright, Inc. for \$3.6 million. Bob Holt is the General Manager. They are open for daily operations and have plans for an expanded tourist trip beyond the existing dam on the lake.
- Beckers Cave.** Permit for the Expansion of the Schoharie Quarry and its Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

There is a hearing scheduled with a judge and lawyers for CSP, DEC, Town, village of Schoharie, and Save our Schoharie (SOS - the citizens' concern group opposed to the mine expansion), and the NCC Board will be asked if they want to join forces with SOS over our concerns about Beckers Cave and related groundwater. Motions are on the agenda to share expenses of legal fees and an expert witness on the blasting issue and I plan on going into Executive Session of the Board to discuss finances and strategy. The hearing process starts Tuesday night, 6/12 at 7 Pm in the Schoharie Holiday Inn as a public hearing similar to the one earlier in the spring. The following day, 6/13 and for as many days as are required the hearing will continue at the same location for "invited parties" of which the NCC is one.

I believe that I speak for the Executive Committee when I say that we feel the outcome of these hearings will have long lasting outcomes on the closeness of mining and blasting to the caves, i.e. what is an acceptable buffer zone to protect the caves and private water systems. The precedent will not be for Schoharie alone; it will address all mining in New York State and could be referenced across state lines. Hence the importance of this effort as we see it.

- Beckers Cave Ownership.** The cave's entrance is contained in a 3.3 acre parcel of landlocked land owned by T.L. "Tom" Wright. Tom sold an adjacent apartment complex in 2006 and thought that the 3.3 Ac. were

included in the sale. They weren't, and I was unable to communicate this with Tom until recently when he returned from his winter home overseas. He has acknowledged his oversight and expressed an interest in selling the parcel. It would appear that we are some distance apart in an asking price vs. the NCC's requirement of sticking close to an appraisal. Motions are on the agenda concerning this.

4. Recent Cave Management Opportunities.

- **Surprise Cave, NY.** With Al Hicks' assistance, a letter is into the NYS DEC stating the case for the NCC taking over management. Follow-up on the letter is required.
- **Tory Cave, CT.** A similar situation as above exists in CT with a land trust owning the cave and needing help. Bob Simmons has been the point on this project.
- **Mt. Aeolus Bat Cave, VT.** Peter Youngbaer has been representing the NCC here. Unfortunately the Nature Conservancy (owners) had to cancel a May meeting on the management subject due to a recent loss of two key TNC personnel.

5. Events Attended:

- 4/28 - Earth Day at Howe Caverns. This was the first demonstration of our new ground water model and it worked well.
- 5/16 - Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy Annual Banquet. We manage their Onesquethaw Cave and this was a good opportunity for Christa Hay and me to talk to their board members. We are getting closer to trading them conservation easements for all of our Albany County preserves for the deed to Onesquethaw Cave.
- 5/18-20 – Spring NRO Weekend with over 100 cavers attending. We manned the booth, took in \$740 in the auction from donated items and bank-deposited about \$1700 including dues renewals and other donations.

6. Groundwater Model.

After a few months of discussion and several weeks waiting for it to

be constructed, the NCC has finally received its groundwater model. Described by President Bob Addis as a "giant ant farm without the ants!", it has proven to be an excellent communications device and one that will be helpful in teaching about underground water flow. We will be using it at a various demonstrations, invitations, and loan it out to earth science teachers who are NCC members. A good example would be the owners of Thunder Hole who are both science teachers and interested in having demonstrations to their classes if possible.

Parking Lot at Clarksville

by Michael Chu

With the drainage trench from last year's Clarksville work day working well during the spring melt, a work day was scheduled to complete the lower parking area at Clarksville this past spring.

On Saturday May 5th, a layer of gravel was spread around the surface of lower parking lot at the Clarksville Cave Preserve. Thanks to all those that helped out, and a big thanks to Bill Zinzow once again for the use of his tractor.

More gravel is needed for the lot to withstand the weight of heavier vehicles, but it is considered usable by most normal cars and vans at the moment.

Bat Deaths at Sharer Cave

by Judy Marshall

On May 19, a group of us from the Niagara Frontier Grotto attended MAR and signed up for the trip into Sharer Cave, with (naturally) the intention of making it all the way to the back. We were the first to sign into the cave this spring: it had opened just 4 days before.

It was a pretty wet cave from the start, but from the sounds of it, we wouldn't experience total saturation until we reached the waterfall, or Shower Room. The majority of our exploring was to lie beyond this room. We made it down through several levels of the cave and beyond the infamous Crocodile Rock, but just before reaching the soaking point, we encountered a passage full of bats, possibly more than a hundred, in various stages of death.

Our trip leader made the decision to go no further, and we turned around and made our way back out. It ended up being only around 2 1/2 hours of caving. We reported the bat situation to MAR officials, who promised to look into it. Needless to say it was disappointing not to be able to do the entire cave, but traversing through that wet and muddy passage without further injuring the weak bats which were still living, would have been impossible, senseless and needless, so our trip leader made the right decision.

The following e-mail arrived a few days ago from Karen Bange, the Secretary of MAR:

Friday May 25th, the PA Game Commission went into Sharer. Several Nittany Grotto members went along to help collect the bats and clean up the cave. There isn't an official count yet but the number of bats taken out of the cave is well over 200. It was a really gruesome trip. Many bats were still in the

act of dying and appeared very emaciated. The Game Commission will study these bats to determine the cause of death but at first glance, according to the bat biologist, the Sharer bats seemed to have died from drowning in flood water.

Upcoming Events

June 16-23, 2007: NCRC 2007 Cave Rescue Operations and Management Seminar, in Salem, Virginia.

July 23-27, 2007: NSS Convention in Marengo, Indiana.

October 8-12, 2007: NCKMS 2007, hosted by Missouri Department of Conservation and the Missouri Caves & Karst Conservancy in St Louis, Missouri.



Clarksville Work Day - May 5th, 2007