

Northeastern Cave Conservancy News

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June 2017



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<p>The <i>Northeastern Cave Conservancy News</i> 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 \$20 (Regular), \$5 (Additional Family), \$50 (Benefactor), \$100 (Institutional), \$125 (Family Life Membership), and \$400 (Life Membership). All checks should be made payable and sent to:</p> <p>Northeastern Cave Conservancy Inc. · P.O. Box 254 · Schoharie, N.Y. 12157</p> <p>www.necaveconservancy.org</p>		

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Next Board Meeting

**Sunday, June 11, 2017 at 10:00 am
 at Melrose, NY. Please check the NCC
 website for details.**

Fall Board Meeting

September 24, 2017 at 10:00 am (location TBD)

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.

The NCC programs are focused mainly on the preservation of caves and karst. Outreach includes education in schools and local communities, establishment of park spaces on karstlands, and educational messages about the significance of groundwater pollution on this sensitive underground ecosystem.

NCC members assist in the exploration, survey, and protection of these natural resources, and manage them so you can explore them yourself.



NCC logo design by Christa Hay

RECENT CLEANUP EFFORTS AT THE BENSONS CAVE PRESERVE PROPERTY

— Luke Mazza —

On April 17, the Northeastern Cave Conservancy hosted a very successful sinkhole cleanup with an AmeriCorps NCCC team at the Bensons Cave Preserve. Eighteen 55-gallon contractor bags of trash, as well as tires and other objects, were hauled out of two adjacent sinkholes not far from the Bensons Pit entrance. Approximately 800 pounds of garbage were removed. After an initial round of efforts put forth when the preserve was first acquired in 2014, this is the last area of the preserve requiring trash removal, and significant progress was made toward its completion.¹

A big thank you to the five workers who spent the day rooting around in a semi-frozen trash heap, as well as to Craig Cantello, who has donated his time in the past to remove trash from these sinkholes!

¹Additional note: As the top of the trash heap works its way downward, we are beginning to see voids opening up along one side of the sinkholes. What more motivation could you need for additional efforts?



Photos by Luke Mazza.

LTA GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT
— Christine Young —

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy is pleased to announce that it has received a NYS Conservation Partnership Program Grant for \$4,700 this year, and we wish to thank the Land Trust Alliance and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for selecting us. This grant will be used to cover the subdivision, transfer, and public-access improvement costs for the Spider Cave Preserve, located in the Town of Wright in Schoharie County, New York. Spider Cave is open to the public for the enjoyment of nature, geology, the sport of caving, and for scientific study. An aboveground hiking trail through a mature forest by the scenic cliff line extending along the property will be added at a later date.

The NYS Conservation Partnership Program is funded by the state’s Environmental Protection Fund and administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

“Through partnerships with local land trusts, the Environmental Protection Fund provides critical support for open space programs across the state,” said Commissioner Basil Seggos. “These grants help local land trusts support our work to protect New York’s peerless waters, lands, and habitats and preserve our state’s natural resources, while leveraging even more resources communities can put to good use protecting these irreplaceable assets.”

Hydrologically, Spider Cave is the longest cave in a cluster of karst features along the cliff line west of Kings Creek. Spider Cave consists of two sections: Old Spider

and New Spider. Old Spider is the first 200 feet of the cave, ending in the Terrace Room, and is generally traversable by walking and chimneying. Beyond the Terrace Room, New Spider is a series of wet and tight, joint-controlled crawlways that add over 1,200 feet of passage into Barton Hill.

Caves hold fragile, irreplaceable natural and cultural features, including vital groundwater resources. In the United States, “40 percent of the groundwater used for drinking comes from karst aquifers” (<http://karstwaters.org/educational-resources/what-is-karst-and-why-is-it-important/>).

The land surrounding Spider Cave is also important for conservation because of the unusual beauty of the karst landscape, which supports a variety of different plants that thrive in limestone-rich soils and are not found in the surrounding forest, such as walking ferns (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*), a New York State protected species.



Above - Representing the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Christine Young and Bob Simmons in front of the LTA Transaction Grant awards poster. Below - Group photo of the LTA Transaction Grant Ceremony, which was hosted by the Hudson Highlands Land Trust.



**THACHER PARK VISITOR CENTER
GRAND OPENING
— Thom Engel —**

On May 4, 2017, the new visitor center at John Boyd Thacher State Park officially opened. The 8,240-square-foot center includes interactive exhibits, a small theater, a Kids' cave with bats, a karst exhibit, and displays that highlight the park's history and geology.

The NCC's participation in helping to fund the Kids' Cave was recognized during the opening ceremony and in the official press release sent out by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

Thacher Park gets about 300,000 visitors a year. Many of those will now start their visits at the visitor center, located at the west end of the Indian Ladder Trail. The park sees the Conservancy as a partner, and has asked for and received a supply of the new NCC brochure. In addition, our name is displayed on the list of contributors and by

the cave itself.

As most NCC members know, the Conservancy has been working in the 2,500-acre park surveying and inventorying its caves. With the visitor center now open, the Conservancy and park staff will begin discussing options for formalizing recreational caving opportunities in Thacher. With the caves now open, we will also be scheduling NCC work days. In addition, groups wanting to survey in Hailes may contact Thom Engel to schedule a trip. We still need to work within the 72-hour lead time required by our permit, but such trips needn't be limited to formal NCC work days.

The following survey work needs to be done: 1) Map the Proscenium Arch, 2) Check the side passage on the right about 150 feet from the entrance, 3) Re-survey the cave from the entrance to "Farthest West" checking leads along the way, 4) Determine if there is a lead high and to the right at "Farthest West," 5) Check leads at H11 and between H19 and H20, 6) Blowing lead in Comfort Loop, 7) Left-hand Passage at R12, and 8) End of R survey (R21).

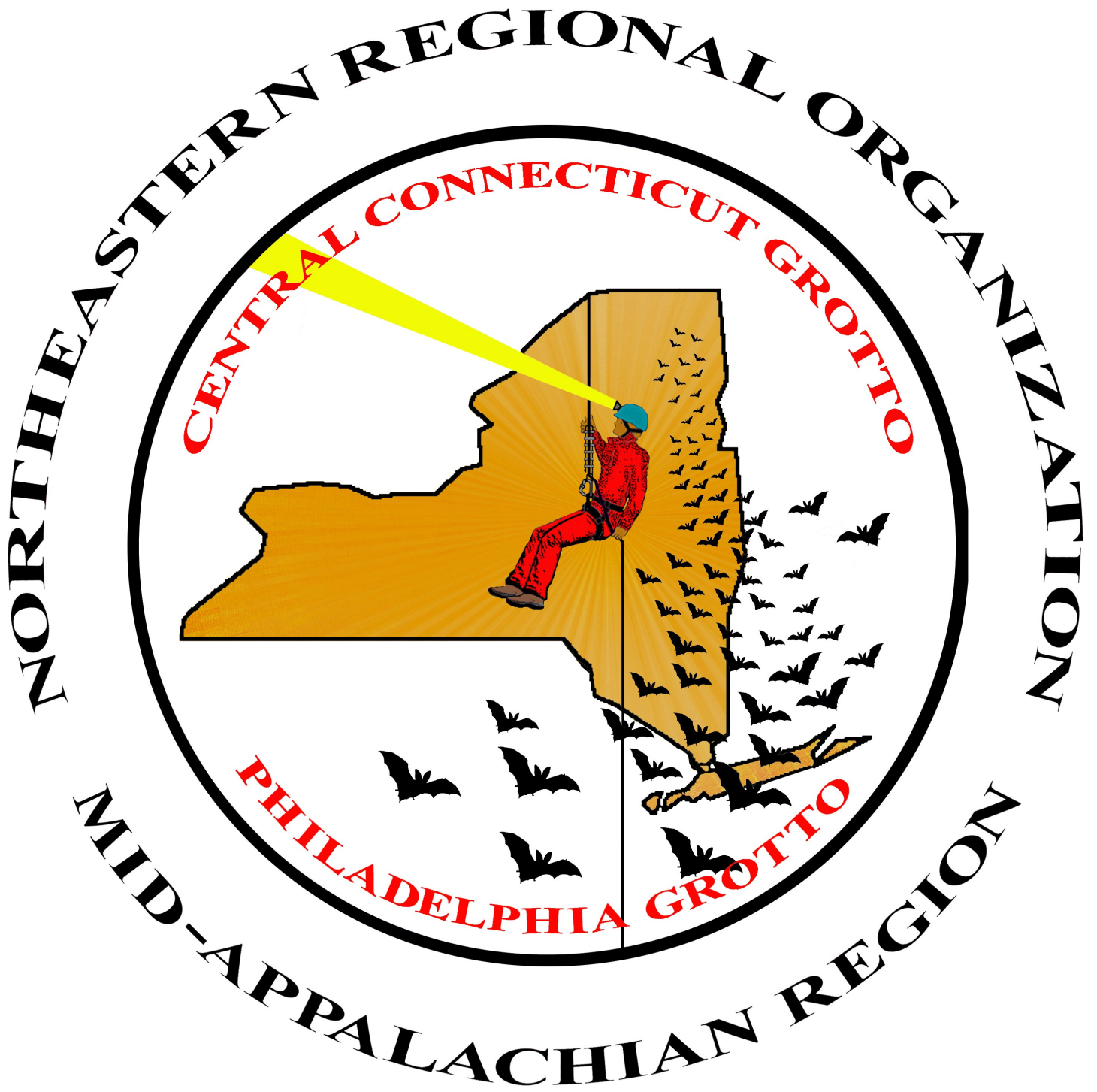


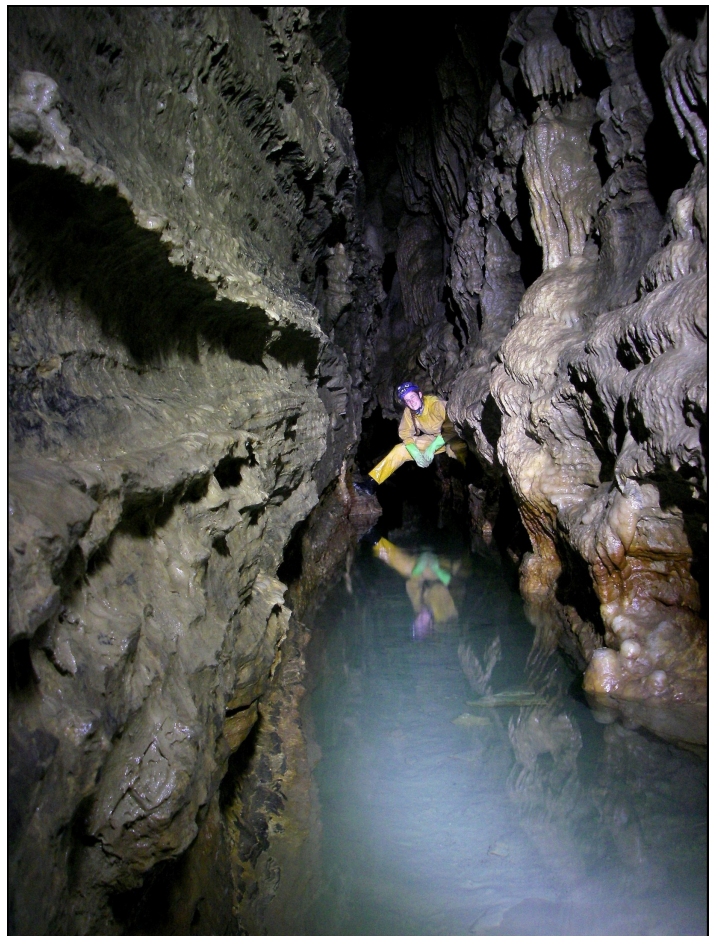
The dedication ceremony of the new visitor center (and kids' cave) at the John Boyd Thacher State Park marks the beginning of a new era in helping to spread the word about mission of The Northeastern Cave Conservancy. Photos by Christine Young.



Above - Ribbon-cutting ceremony at the grand opening of the Thacher State Park Visitor Center. Photos by Christine Young.

Right - Recognition plaques commemorating the many donors and organizations that helped make creation of this new facility possible. Photos by Thom Engel.





NRO/MAR 2017

Please join us in Pattersonville, New York, on June 2 - 4 for a weekend of caving and camaraderie during the Spring 2017 NRO/MAR. This combined Northeastern Regional Organization and Mid-Appalachian Region event will be co-hosted by the Central Connecticut Grotto and the Philadelphia Grotto.

The location is central to many of the finest caves in New York State, and an array of underground venues varying widely in character and difficulty, will be accessible to cavers during the event.

In addition to a weekend of underground adventure, the event will also feature the NCC Auction, NRO business meeting, and a presentation on the free-tailed bats of Fiji. A hot tub and steam tent will also be available.

Additional details on the Spring 2017 NRO/MAR event are available at <http://caves.org/grotto/ccg/NRO-MAR-2017.htm>

Images of some of the underground venues available (clockwise from top left): Bensch Cave, Schoharie Cave, and Hannacroix Maze. Photos by John Dunham.

NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY, INC.
March 5, 2017 Minutes - Summary
Sam's Point Visitor Center - Cragsmoor, New York

Norm Berg was appointed Chair of the Nominating Committee.

Al DeMaria was appointed the new Surprise Cave Liaison.

Appendix E of the NCC Manual requires formal review of preserve management plans every two years. The policy was amended, and reviews are now required every three years.

The board approved the first reading of an amendment to Bylaw VI.2. The motion must now be advertised, and all members present at the June 11, 2017 meeting will vote when the motion is presented for its second reading. The proposed amendment is as follows:

Bylaw VI.2 Election of Officers. Commencing with the officer's elections at the December 2017 meeting, the President and Secretary's terms will increase from a period of one year to two years. Commencing with the officer's elections at the December 2018 meeting, the Vice President and Treasurer's terms will increase from a period of one year to two years. Commencing with those elections, no officer may be elected to more than three consecutive terms (six years total) in the same position, without taking an absence of at least one term. All Officers shall be current members of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc.

Items of interest from the Committee of the Whole discussion:

- The Thacher Climbing Coalition (TCC) has entered into a cooperative agreement with Thacher State Park, and is currently establishing climbing routes on the cliffs in the area of Hailes Cave that would be open to the public on a permit basis. TCC representatives attended our meeting and provided an overview of their agreement, their progress, and future plans. NCC is currently negotiating an agreement to manage Hailes Cave. The NCC and TCC agreed to share information on their agreements and progress on park projects.
- Land Trust Standards and Practices have been updated. NCC is a member of the Land Trust Alliance, and will review the new policy for the June board meeting.
- The NCC permit to do karst fieldwork in Thacher Park, including the mapping of Hailes Cave, has been renewed for 2017. Progress on the Hailes Cave management agreement (which will result in the cave being open to the public) is progressing although it is not likely that the cave will be open to the public this season.
- Rensselaer Land Trust has donated four kiosks to the NCC.

From committee reports:

Ella Armstrong: In late January, A. Triano, C. Porter, C. Sandonato, D. Hedges, and C. Cantello made emergency repairs to the kiosk, which had sustained severe weather damage. The roof and shingles were replaced, mounting brackets repaired, and new 4 x 4 supports were temporarily installed.

Knox: The DEC conducted a bat count on January 3, 2017.

Bat Hibernation ad hoc: M. Ingalls and J. Dunham assisted on a bat count in Hailes on February 16, 2017. Approximately 4773 total bats were counted, which is up from the 1587 observed during the previous count in 2015.¹ Some evidence of WNS was observed.

¹The vast majority of bats present in Hailes are little brown bats. There is also a handful of eastern small-footed bats and tri-colored bats (<10 of each in 2015 and 2017). Hailes is also a known northern bat hibernation site. None were observed on this most recent survey, but there were a couple captured there during the fall. So it is suspected that they are there and just roosting in areas (e.g., high up in cracks) in which they cannot be seen. The total numbers were primarily driven by declines in little brown bats.

Membership: The membership count is 209, with 59 being Life Members.

Volunteer Value: The NCC has been tracking VV for only eleven years, but members have contributed over one half million dollars of value in support of the NCC Mission.

Seeking nominations for President and Secretary
Open committee positions: Chair, Fund Raising Committee

The next Executive Committee meeting will be April 23, 2017 at 10:00 am. Location TBD.
The next board meeting will be June 11, 2017 at 10:00 AM. Location TBD.

The fall board meeting will be September 24, 2017 at 10:00 am. Location TBD.

NEW YORK LAND TRUST SYMPOSIUM — Bill Folsom —

Mitch Berger, Christine Young and I attended the New York Land Trust Symposium on March 16th in Saratoga Springs, New York. The Northeastern Cave Conservancy is unique among the area land trusts given that we are focused solely on karst/cave properties, and stand out as such. Together, the three of us networked the conference and met many of the key players in the region. As far as the sessions went, we split up so as to absorb more information collectively. For example, in the sessions I attended, a couple of tidbits that might be interesting for us going forward: 1) Karst landforms are the number one indicator of biodiversity in a given area (potentially helpful when sourcing funding), and 2) The Open Space Institute is piloting a test study to see if they can make sense of installing a photovoltaic (PV) system on one of their properties, with the goal of generating electricity to sell back to the power authority. Mitch and Christine attended a different session focused on risk and insurance. That session covered Terrafirma, the new insurance policy we recently purchased to assist us with legal defense costs potentially arising from defending our preserves.



Onesquethaw Cave in spring flood, April 9, 2017. Photo by Bill Folsom.

— WHO RUNS THIS JOINT —

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR TRUSTEE POSITIONS

The Nominating Committee of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (NCC) is soliciting nominations for candidates for Trustees of the NCC Board of Directors. Each spring, three of the nine Trustee seats come up for election. The Trustee candidates are elected by members of the NCC by emailed ballot during the last half of May. The Board of Directors, which consists of the Officers and Trustees, set policy for the NCC. The Board meets quarterly, generally for half a day, with frequent communications, mostly via email, between meetings. The first meeting after this election, when newly elected board members are seated, will be on June 11.

If you would like to be a Trustee candidate, please send a bio/platform (no later than May 18) of at least a paragraph to nominating@necaveconservancy.org for inclusion with our electronic ballots. I'll send an acknowledgement to you when I receive it.

If you have questions about the process, or would like to see sample bios/platforms, contact Norm Berg, Nominating Committee Chair, at nominating@necaveconservancy.org or call me at 860-621-2080 (leave a message), or contact any NCC Board member. You may wish to review the NCC Board Manual and the agenda/minutes from previous meetings of the Board: http://www.necaveconservancy.org/files/NCC_Board_Manual.pdf and <http://www.necaveconservancy.org/minutes.php>.

Candidates need to be a current member of the NCC. No specific prior experience is required; however, experience in conservation, management, finance, business, or law is always helpful.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR OFFICER POSITIONS

Each year at the Annual Meeting in December, the Trustees elect the four Organization Officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer). Each year, the Nominating Committee presents a slate of candidates for these four positions for consideration by the Trustees. Nominations are also solicited from the Trustees. The Nominating Committee is looking for potential candidates for the Officer positions at this time. If you would like to be considered for a position, would like to nominate someone for a position, or would just like more information on the process and requirements, please contact the nominating committee at nominating@necaveconservancy.org. For reference, the general duties and responsibilities of the four Officer positions are described below.

President: The President is the Chief Executive Officer of the NCC, and supervises the activities of the NCC within the scope provided by the bylaws. The President presides at meetings of the Board of Directors. The following committees report to the President: Acquisitions, Preserves, Nominating, and Risk Management, as well as any ad hoc committees established for specific purposes.

Vice President: The Vice President assumes the duties of the President in the event of absence, incapacity, or resignation of the President, and presides when the Board meets as a Committee of the Whole. The following committees report to the Vice President: Bylaws, Education, Science, Special Use, Surprise Cave, and Thacher Park.

Secretary: The Secretary keeps the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors and of the Executive Committee, and maintains the membership roll. The Secretary also carries on all organizational correspondence as delegated by the President and sends out notices of meetings. The Secretary is responsible for editing and publishing the Board Manual. The secretary may appoint assistants, as required.

Treasurer: The Treasurer is responsible for the safekeeping of organizational funds; maintaining and reporting financial records and statements to the Board of Directors; and filing all financial documents required by local, state, or federal regulations. The following committees report to the Treasurer: Technology, Fundraising, Membership, Office, Publications, and Volunteer Value.

CURRENTLY OPEN OFFICER POSITION**PRESIDENT OF THE NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY, INC.****Application Deadline**

Open until filled.

Summary Description

This position can be based anywhere in the Northeast.

As leader of the organization, the President and oversees the following committees: Executive, Acquisitions, Cave Preserves, Nominating, Risk Management, and several Ad Hoc Committees.

The President is responsible for providing dynamic leadership for the planning, development, implementation, assessment, and improvement of mission-related programs, revenue-generation and financial-management strategies, partnerships, community relations, legislative relations, marketing/public relations, strategic and annual planning, and other key areas.

The President serves as the primary spokesperson for the organization with funders and stakeholders. As part of the President's responsibilities, s/he will formally and informally present reports, updates, and results to the Board of Trustees on a periodic basis, which will include regular Board meetings and specific committee meetings of the Board.

The President will be responsible for supporting the development of and advancement of a vision for the NCC's impact in the region, for its continuing growth, for ensuring financial viability, and for building collaborative relationships in the Northeast.

Specific Responsibilities

As chief executive officer of the land trust, the President is responsible for the efficient operation of the land trust.

This shall include performance of, or timely delegation to the Vice-President or other officer the following duties:

Chairs quarterly Board and Executive Committee meetings.

Facilitates the orderly transaction of land trust business and the attainment of land trust purposes, including the proper functioning of standing committees.

Signs policy and fiscal documents with prior authorization from the Board of Trustees.

Signs routine administrative documents, such as reports on behalf of the land trust Board, and letters relating to fund-raising and similar activities.

Is the principal representative of the land trust at public functions.

Seeks, obtains, and transmits regular reports from land trust committees.

Sets overall land trust priorities, including short-term and long-term goals, with other members of the Board.

Actively works together with the Acquisitions Committee on acquiring new cave preserves.

Actively works together with the Cave Preserve Committee on stewardship matters.

Performs other duties at the request of the Board of Trustees.

Proactively cultivates and solicits donors and prospects, and works toward annual fundraising goals.

Qualifications

Bachelor's degree or higher desired.

Demonstrated ability to provide forward-looking leadership to the organization to enhance its impact, while growing and maintaining effective partnerships.

Significant experience working with volunteer boards and/or other groups.

Superb verbal and written communication skills.

Leadership, diplomacy, and negotiation skills required.

Ability to work effectively as part of a team and without daily supervision.

Ability to work quickly, meet deadlines, and multitask.

Organized and attentive to details.

Willingness to travel extensively.

Willingness to work a flexible schedule, including occasional weekends.

Computer proficiency, especially with Microsoft Office and email.

CURRENTLY OPEN OFFICER POSITION, cont'd

PRESIDENT OF THE NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY, INC.

Passion for saving land, caves, and karst features is a must. Knowledge of private land-conservation techniques and/or land trusts highly desirable.

An understanding of the landscape and culture of New York and New England is strongly preferred.

Development experience in individual major gift fundraising, including significant experience with face-to-face solicitations.

Compensation

This is a volunteer position and does not provide any compensation. However, reasonable expenses incurred while attending external meetings, conferences, and seminars relating to official land-trust business, and expenses related to land-trust projects may be reimbursed if approved by the Board.

Category

Officer

How to apply

Send resume, cover letter, and three references to nominating@necaveconservancy.org

CURRENTLY OPEN OFFICER POSITION

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD, NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY, INC.

Application Deadline

Open until filled.

Summary Description

This position can be based anywhere in the Northeast.

The Secretary is an officer of the NCC who actively participates in the Executive Committee, Board meetings, and other meetings as needed. S/he is an integral part of the leadership of the organization, responsible for managing and recording internal and external communications and assisting with coordination between various committees.

Specific Responsibilities

The Secretary is responsible for the following:

Attend Board meetings, Executive Committee meetings, and other meetings as needed.

Prepare the Secretary's Report and Board-meeting agenda, collect committee reports and minutes, and circulate them to all Trustees at least one week prior to the quarterly Board meetings.

Maintain the schedule for preserve management-plan reviews and advise the appropriate managers accordingly.

Announce committee vacancies and bylaw votes to the general membership.

Attend Board meetings, take minutes, circulate draft minutes to Trustees for edits and corrections, make edits and corrections to minutes, and post final minutes on the website.

Take minutes at Executive Committee meetings and participate in decisions on the day-to-day operations of the organization.

Edit, update, and publish the Board Manual on the website after each Board meeting.

Prepare and disseminate all official organization correspondence.

Initiate an email discussion with Board members and others, should there be any urgent business between regularly scheduled meetings requiring immediate attention. Manage and record any votes taken by the Board on such issues.

CURRENTLY OPEN OFFICER POSITION, cont'd

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD, NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY, INC.

Send out notices of meetings.
 Work proactively to achieve fundraising goals.
 Perform other duties at the request of the Board of Directors.

Qualifications

Bachelor’s degree or higher desired.
 Demonstrated ability to provide forward-looking leadership to the organization to enhance its impact while growing and maintaining effective partnerships.
 Significant experience working with volunteer boards and/or other groups.
 Superb verbal and written communication skills.
 Leadership, diplomacy, and negotiation skills required.
 Ability to work effectively as part of a team and without daily supervision.
 Ability to work quickly, meet deadlines, and multitask.
 Organized and attentive to details.
 Willingness to work a flexible schedule, including occasional weekends.
 Computer proficiency, especially with Microsoft Office and email.
 Passion for saving land, caves, and karst features a must.

Compensation

This is a volunteer position and does not provide any compensation. However, reasonable expenses incurred while attending external meetings, conferences, and seminars relating to official land trust business, and expenses related to land trust projects may be reimbursed if approved by the Board.

Category

Officer

How to Apply

Send resume, cover letter, and three references to nominating@necaveconservancy.org

CURRENTLY OPEN COMMITTEE CHAIR POSITION

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE CHAIR

The Fundraising Committee Chair coordinates all fundraising activities for the Northeastern Cave Conservancy. The fundraising committee may be authorized by the Board to research and apply for grants to generate funds for specific projects, including cave acquisitions. If interested in this position, please contact the nominating committee at nominating@necaveconservancy.org

NCC VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

Cavers can get involved with many volunteer opportunities offered by the Northeastern Cave Conservancy. These include work on various committees or assisting with one of the cave-preserve management teams. Volunteers contribute to the maintenance and preservation of unique underground environments and help to support various NCC educational and outreach activities. If interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities with the NCC, please contact Vince Kappler at volunteervalue@necaveconservancy.org. You can also speak to any NCC Board member or officer. Don’t pass up the chance to give something back to the caves that are so important to us all.