

SPIDER CAVE PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Spider Cave has been well known to cavers for many years. It was the subject of NRO Publication No.6, Field Guide to New York Caves: Schoharie County; published in 1958 and revised in 1966. The cave has a very picturesque, “storybook” entrance that was featured on the back cover of the 1991 NSS Convention guidebook.

The cave can be divided into two sections: old Spider and new Spider. Old Spider is the first 200 feet of the cave and is generally traversable by walking and chimneying. The rest of the cave (“new Spider”) extends into Barton Hill for over 1,200 feet and consists mostly of tight crawlways.

The Spider Cave Preserve consists of approximately 3.4 acres that were donated by the Carl family to the NCC in 2015. It is roughly rectangular and its long axis is oriented about N30EE. The cave entrance is near the southern corner of the property.

PURPOSE OF A MANAGEMENT PLAN

The purpose of a management plan is to describe what is on a property and how it should be managed. A plan is not a static document that once written is placed on the shelf and forgotten. It is a document that is to be used and referenced on a regular basis. The property manager must follow the plan unless there is a compelling and overriding reason for doing otherwise. Unless there is an immediate need, nothing should be done at a property that is not in the plan. If something new is desired, the plan should be amended only after careful, complete, and thorough analysis of the proposed changes or additions. Then, the amendments must be approved by the NCC Board. Think of the management plan as an operating manual for a preserve.

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

It is unclear how long Spider Cave has been known. J.H. French makes no mention of it in his 1860 gazetteer. The 1955 NRO Report 2 featured both Spider Cave and Beckers Cave. The map from this report shows only the first 200 feet (i.e. old Spider), ending at the Terrace Room. Beyond this point, the passage was blocked by rimstone dams. In 1978, this restriction was passed by Jose Flores and Nick Viscio. Past the Terrace Room, the cave consists of a series of joint-controlled, wet, tight crawls that add more than 1,200 feet of passage. Due to the exhausting effort required to negotiate this portion of the cave, no one has yet reached the end of this passage.

UNDERGROUND RESOURCES

Biological – A 1955 report noted the presence of seven bats. Another count in 1978 found a single bat. In 1981, Donald B. Clark from the State University of New York, College at Oneonta did a count and found no bats at all. At this time, utilization of the cave by bats is not known.

The cave biology was inventoried as part of the 1955 report. Seven invertebrates were noted including: sowbugs, millipedes, centipedes, harvestmen, dung flies, and cave crickets (*Ceuthophilis maculatus*). The only true troglobite observed was an aquatic amphipod, the “cave scud” (*Stygobromus allegheniensis*). The cave also has a variety of spiders.

Geological – The cave is formed in the basal Manlius limestone. It is largely joint-

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controlled and formed along the local dip of the rocks.

Hydrological – Spider Cave is the longest cave in a cluster of karst features along the cliff line west of Kings Creek. From south to north, these are Dryeye Spring, Wishywashy Springs 1 & 2, Spider Spring, Freight Train Spring, Weasel Sink, Spider Web Cave, Spider Cave, and No Flow Spring. Of these hydrological features, only Spider Cave is located on the NCC preserve; the other features are on private land. John Mylroie has conjectured that many of these may be tap-off features from an as-yet-undiscovered major conduit. A major system such as this might have been occluded by glaciation or collapse.

Paleontological – No unique paleontological resources are known from the cave.

Archeological – No archeological resources are known from the cave.

Historical – No historic resources are known from the cave.

SURFACE RESOURCES

Biological – To be completed at a later date.

Geological – In the stream below the entrance is the only known surface outcrop of the Brayman Formation on the Gallupville 7½' quad. The Rondout dolostone is visible in the floor of the cave entrance. All other outcrops on the preserve are Manlius or Coeymans limestones. There are tufa deposits below the entrance.

Hydrological – Other than the stream flowing from Spider Cave, there are no surface water resources on the property.

Paleontological – No paleontological resources are known to exist.

Archeological – No archeological reconnaissance has been done on the property.

Historical – No historical resources have been found on the property.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK STATEMENT

Cave exploration and hiking on karst terrain may involve risk of injury or death from various hazards, both obvious and obscure, including, but not limited to, slippery and uneven ground, open pits, injury by acts of other people, falling, being struck by falling objects, becoming lost, the presence or sudden appearance of water, and hypothermia. All cave visitors will abide by the normally accepted rules of safe and conservation minded caving as outlined by the National Speleological Society, 6001 Pulaski Pike, Huntsville, Alabama 35810-1122.

ACCESS POLICY

Spider Cave is managed in a park-and-go caving manner.

Route 146 is a New York State highway. In the vicinity of Kings Creek, the state's right-of-way is quite wide. Consequently, the state has dictated parking conditions. Visitors to the cave should park at the large pull-off on the east side of the highway, about 1,000 feet SSW (downhill) of the cave. This area may be used only as long as DOT doesn't need it during road maintenance work. If it is not available, visitors are to park in a safe place, but not along the

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preserve; DOT has determined that there is no safe parking there. Always park outside of the white line.

From the large pull-off, visitors are urged to cross to the west side of the road and walk to the cave on the west (forest) side of the guardrail.

Groups where any money has exchanged hands including but not limited to cave-for-pay, camps, schools, colleges, and outdoor education programs, as well as churches and scouts must contact the Special Use Coordinator for information on access to the cave at specialuse@necaveconservancy.org.

Other access requirements are:

- Visitors must be properly equipped. Each individual must have a helmet and at least three (3) independent sources of light.
- No groups of more than 15 individuals should be allowed in the cave at any one time. This is a safety issue for the group and a conservation issue for the cave.
- The cave and property shall be closed at the discretion of the preserve manager.
- All visitors entering the cave must have a change of clothes and commit to WNS decontamination protocols (see <http://whitenosesyndrome.org/topics/decontamination>).

The 1955 NRO Report 2 remarks that the cave is “recommended for small parties as there is no place to pass.” This is especially true for that part of the cave beyond the Terrace Room.

At the discretion of the preserve manager, the property boundaries may be posted. Property corners were marked as part of the property survey.

USE CONFLICTS

At present, there do not appear to be any use conflicts.

RESEARCH RULES

All research carried out on the NCC preserve must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Researchers must initially contact the NCC science coordinator.
- 2) The goals and objectives of the research must be clearly defined.
- 3) There must be a clear beginning and end to each project, with the exception of long-term monitoring studies.
- 4) The work must not cause permanent damage to any caves, natural features, native biota, or historical resources or interfere with natural hydrologic or chemical processes.
- 5) The research plan must ensure the maximum safety of all concerned.
- 6) The work must not interfere with the “experience” of other property visitors.
- 7) Unless specifically authorized by the NCC Board, researchers must operate within the confines of the established management plans for each property.

EXPLORATION RULES

Results of exploration trips will be conveyed to the preserve manager. The main possibility for exploration in Spider Cave is by pushing well beyond the Slab Room. On the rest of the preserve, there may be options for digging.

Any projects involving digging or passage modification must be approved by the

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preserve manager. Digging projects should be conditioned on detailed stratigraphic description and measurements with photographic documentation so that important geological information is preserved. Persons proposing a project shall submit a plan to the manager detailing where they plan to work, how long they plan to work, and where they plan to dispose of any spoils. For a dig, plans should also include how the diggers plan to remediate the dig should it be abandoned. Projects that include potential passage modification require specific approval from the preserve manager. Approved digging projects should include a condition that if diggers encounter noticeable sediments, deposits, or features of potential scientific interest that will be disturbed by the dig (e.g. varved clays, cross-bedded stream gravels, well-preserved animal bones), or otherwise suspect there is scientific value in something that will be disturbed by the dig, they halt the project, do thorough photographic documentation of the site, and consult with the preserve manager before proceeding. Any dig that is not worked on for more than one year, excluding cave closures for bat hibernation, shall be considered abandoned, and any subsequent work in the same area will require manager approval.

All new exploration is encouraged to be map-as-you-go.

PUBLICITY POLICY

Regarding publicity about the cave itself, except as noted below, the cave is not to be publicized in magazines or newspapers of general circulation nor on radio or television. Caver's publications like *The Northeastern Caver*, *NSS News* may contain information on the latest discoveries. Some grotto publications may contain information, but again these have limited circulation and usually do not give locations.

SURFACE MANAGEMENT

Because the cave entrance is located near the southern corner of the preserve and the parking area is located on the other side of the road, there is no logical location for a large kiosk or a changing area. The preserve manager will determine a location for a small kiosk or sign-board.

- Visitors should change clothes in the woods adjacent to the cave entrance. The proximity of the parking area to a state highway and to the nearest house makes changing clothes there inappropriate.
- No camping shall be permitted on the property.
- No parties shall be permitted on the property except by special written permission of the preserve manager.
- The preserve manager shall, once a year, ensure that property corners are marked and that no neighbors have intruded onto the property.

The preserve manager should assess the best route for a trail from the road to the cave (the last few feet of the trail probably will have to be in the stream). The manager should also assess the best route for a trail from the cave entrance in a generally northeasterly direction toward the base of the cliffs, running along the cliffs to near the northeastern edge of the property, and then down to the road.

RESCUE CONSIDERATIONS

Rescue from anywhere in the first 200 feet of Spider Cave should not pose any significant problems. The only possible danger might be from a fall while chimneying in the higher parts of the passage.

Because of the very tight nature of the passages and the presence of extremely cold water, rescue from beyond the Terrace Room would pose very significant logistical problems.

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Use of a Sked in this portion of the cave would be impossible.

FUTURE PLANS

- The manager should assess a route for a trail from the cave entrance in a generally northeasterly direction toward the base of the cliffs, then run along the cliffs to near the northeastern edge of the property, and then down to the road.