

Northeastern Cave Conservancy News

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At the Next Meeting...

- Reports from the Officers and Committee Chairs.
- New NCC brochures will be available. The new brochures explain the value of membership in the NCC and our mission.
- Addis will move that \$300.00 be paid to Attorney Michael Breen for his Legal Opinion on Section 9-103 of New York State's General Obligations Law, the so-called Sportsman's Law or Landowner's Liability Relief Law. (This was done in June but the lawyer hasn't been paid yet since Board approval is required. This Opinion was requested and given to Callanan Industries, Inc. as part of the negotiations for South Bethlehem Cave. In addition, it has long-lasting value for the NCC. Undoubtedly we will refer to it in our future negotiations with cave landowners.)
- Addis will move to add under Article IV, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, a new Section 3: Between regularly scheduled meetings of the NCC Board, urgent business may be conducted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board by responding to either an email or a US Postal Service offering. There shall be no less than two (2) calendar weeks between the initial posting and the deadline for ballots to be received. There shall be an attempt to foster discussion by listing this on the NCC's discussion group at the time of the initial posting. Results of the email or postal voting will be made available to the Board as soon as practical after the voting. (This is a Bylaws change that requires 21 days notice to the membership and a 2/3 vote of those members attending the December meeting. Email voting is upon us folks and I'm not satisfied with the wording of the above Bylaws change. Please help with some input here. Can anyone share how other organizations manage email voting?)

The NCC at Old Timers

by [Bob Addis](#)

For our debut in the world of flashy displays and marketing wizards, The Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. had its first booth at the Old Timers Reunion (OTR) in Dailey, WV over the Labor Day weekend.

Christa Hay took it upon herself to construct a slick display board complete with mounted photographs of our two cave preserves, Knox and Onesquethaw, the NCC mission statement, and a graphical representation of the Northeast. She also had re-written and formatted our brochure and printed it on nice thick stock. We borrowed a table, easels, brochure holder, lights, and chairs to complete our display.



Three cave conservancies had booths at OTR - West Virginia, Southeastern, and Northeastern. Ours was the smallest measuring in at only a 10 foot width. As a first attempt, the NCC had a good showing and created interest. Although, more manpower at the booth would have helped. We gained four new members and had four renewals for a total of \$110. Visitors paying for an opportunity to view the rare white bats netted \$19.40. Actually two cavers gave us \$2 each not to have to look at the rare white bats! Helping at the OTR booth were Bob Addis, Emily Davis, Bill Folsom, Christa Hay, Joe Levinson, Steve McLuckie, Chris Nicola, and Mike Warner.

Acquisitions Committee Progress Report

by [Bob Addis](#) and [Chuck Porter](#)

9/18/00

Selleck's, Cave 575, Natural Bridge, Cave of the Brown Teeth, Ward farm, Town of Carlisle, Schoharie Co., NY. The Ward family, long time acquaintances of mine, recently gave up farming. Originally planning on selling the 168 Acre farm and partitioning off a small building lot, they now want to keep approximately 25 acres around the house and sell the remainder. The proposed building lot has passed from the picture. The Wards' heat with wood and want to keep a woodlot or cutting rights to the property.

The NCC is (naturally) interested in the least desirable land - swampy, full of sinkholes, difficult to install a well and septic system, and farthest from the road.

I discussed the NCC with Debbie Ward on September 9th, but her husband wasn't at home. I outlined various proposals - leasing (unlikely), donation for a tax write-off, and purchase (no numbers mentioned). Bill Ward is a deliberate man and will be thinking about this. I tried calling the 17th and 18th and left a message.

Selleck's is known for two things - its stream connects with McFail's NW Passage and it contains a number of famous signatures carved in the flowstone: T.N. McFail (1854), Arthur H. Van Voris (1928), and the trapped caver, Cliff Forman (1954). Cave 575, a 30' deep fissure cave, is best known for its abundance of fossils. Natural Bridge is just plain cute (Schoharie County's shortest cave?) and, to my knowledge, no one has ever found Cave of the Brown Teeth since it was mentioned in the 1958 (but not the 1966) Schoharie County Guide to the caves.

Neither the caves nor the caving is under immediate threat and the Wards' remain friendly to any cavers who will stop for permission and sign a release. I believe, however, that the NCC is charged with a watchdog role, and situations of ownership can change suddenly and drastically. We need to pursue these opportunities; some harder than others. For example, the Levy farm to the immediate north contains Levy and the Kniskern Caves. It was purchased in the past two years by the Rogers family who values their privacy and may have been turning cavers away from their property. Obviously, this rumor needs to be confirmed before adding these caves to the ever-increasing and depressing list of closed caves. The handwriting is on the wall - The NCC must be proactive in cave acquisition!

Church and Wagon Wheel Caves, Albany County. On September 11th, I spoke with the owner, Ms. Pat Walker. My main proposal was the establishment of a nature preserve because of the rare flora in the sinkhole. She preferred not to work with the Nature Conservancy. I sent her pamphlets on the Land Trust Alliance (the national organization) and the Schoharie Land Trust (I didn't have an Albany County brochure then). I offered to share information about ground water studies in the area which Art Palmer assisted me with in the past. I also touched on tax advantages of an outright donation of land and/or a conservation easement.

She seemed friendly and open to suggestions and I plan to contact her again to continue discussions.

Ice Cave & Straddle Canyon, Town of Carlisle, Schoharie County. The owner, Roger Gural of Summit, NY, is a builder and has the 7 Acres up for sale. The previous owner had attempted to fill both caves, but Roger believes they might be open. In any case, I have been given permission to rough-survey the property to see if the caves can be subdivided away from the front building lot Roger has listed the property on the Internet and has had good response. One person "from the West" was very interested and offered a decent price if it met his expectations. The owner also worked with a realtor to establish an asking price of \$12,000 (but noted he'll take \$10,000).

I mentioned that the NCC's earliest involvement would be to prepare a management plan for the caves. He thought that would be beneficial for all parties, new buyers included. He didn't seem to jump for donation as a tax write-off, but he didn't dismiss it either.

South Bethlehem Cave, Albany County. We are continuing to pursue lease arrangements for South Bethlehem Cave. A management plan has been sent to owners, Callanan Industries, Inc., along with our attorney's opinion on possible liability. Callanan's attorneys are to review the opinion next. This has not yet happened despite several phone calls I've made to Andy Stokes, an executive at Callanan Industries. When I last spoke with him around September 12th, he said they are busy with a new acquisition and are hoping to look into the cave liability issue in a couple of weeks. South Bethlehem Cave is definitely on their back burner, but I'm confident we will be able to cook something up before too much longer.

The above was a slight effort on my part, and it needs follow-up and help. We have permission to survey both the Selleck's and Ice Cave properties and to complete management plans. If volunteers come forth, we should start on this immediately. I can hear the argument already - Why should the NCC consider buying a handful of tiny, insignificant caves and deplete our limited resources? The fact remains that there is a limited number of caves in any county, and despite discoveries, we can't wait for more to grow. In round numbers, Schoharie and Albany Counties both have about 100 caves each, and this discussion is about 7 or 8 small caves. Can we as futurists, as conservationists, let 7 more caves go the way of so many others? The closed caves list in the Northeastern Caver only has the popular, visited caves' status; the complete list of closed caves would stagger the mind. It could be dozens for each county.

- We need help.
- We need fund raising.
- We have hard decisions to make.
- Talk to your Board members.

Empty Space

by [Tom Rider](#)

Putting out a newsletter is not an easy task as any previous newsletter editor and publisher will tell you. Without a small contribution by a portion of the readership, however, NONE of us will have the pleasure of reading it.

Please give a little back to the NCC by putting fingers to the keyboard - reports on trips to NCC caves (or to caves/properties we may be interested in), blurbs, announcements, cartoons, as well as reports from the various committees.

Send me some content and help me put an end to this empty space!