

# 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

Sunday, December 4th, 2005, 11:00AM  
at Speleobooks, Quaker Street, NY

The EC will determine which committees report to which officer at the next EC meeting.

- 9) **It was moved that the NCC enter into a contract to purchase Pompeys cave!**

## Notes from the Last Board Meeting

- 1) Baugh Cave Cleanup is progressing - Joe Armstrong, Conservation Chair.
- 2) If you have not already done so check out the new NCC website. Thanks to Seth Perlman, Bill Folsom, Mike Chu and Norm Berg. It is not 100% complete but almost and it looks great.
- 3) President Bob Addis established an ad hoc committee to help with assisting municipalities deal with construction in karst areas. This new committee is the Land Use Advisory Committee and will consist of Peter Youngbaer, Bob Simmons, Bob Addis, Thom Engle, Emily Davis
- 4) Between OTR and NRO and the Howe Caverns coin drop the NCC took in \$2707.75 for acquisitions!
- 5) New baseball hats have been designed for the NCC and will be delivered soon.
- 6) Preserves did not see any major problems this summer.
- 7) General Liability Insurance Report - ad hoc committee - Peter Youngbaer put together a very concise report on insurance. The outcome of which is that the NCC will adopt the Land Trust Standards and Practices as guidelines. The rest of the issues, joining the land trust and purchasing insurance was postponed until the December meeting.
- 8) It was voted in that committee heads will report to an officer to help with organization.

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Deadline for next issue – 1/15/2006

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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;"><a href="http://www.necaveconservancy.org">www.necaveconservancy.org</a></p>		

## NCC gets Gregory Entrance to Clarksville Cave

It has been a long slow process, but Albany County has officially conveyed the 0.6 acre parcel of land containing the Gregory Entrance of Clarksville Cave to the NCC. As part of the agreement with the county, the NCC has given a conservation easement on the property to the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy (see article on easements in this issue).

## Have you Paid Your Dues?

Is your membership current? If you believe your membership is up for renewal, you can help the NCC greatly by contacting the office committee about renewal today. Help the Membership Chairman Sean Ryan and the NCC by not waiting for renewal notices and reminders. Remember, we are all volunteers and need to pitch in to keep the NCC going strong.

## Lawton Subdivision

*By Bob Addis*

The following is a statement given to the Cobleskill Planning Board on 9/14/05 regarding a subdivision proposed near Bensons Cave:

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc (NCC) wishes to issue an opinion on behalf of the US Cave Conservancy, a nearby land owner to the proposed Lawton subdivision. This opinion was sought by the USCC's attorney, James Harbison, Jr. on 9/13/05 both verbally and by fax. We wish to have this read into the record at the Town of Cobleskill Planning Board's public hearing on 9/14/05.

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy was incorporated in 1978 for the purpose of protecting caves and the karst lands that surround them as well as the water sheds and aquifers of the area. Drainage in a karst area is predominantly underground and very rapid, so the need to protect our aquifers is clear. To this end, the NCC has a cautious program of cave and karst acquisition, public educational seminars, and sinkhole cleanups. We presently own or manage five significant cave preserves in Schoharie and Albany Counties, most of them containing interpretative kiosks and nature trails for the public. We also have an excellent working

relationship with the largest karst preserve in the Northeast - John Boyd Thatcher State Park, and we hope to expand our holdings into the New England states in the near future. The NCC has been granted nonprofit 501.c.3 status by the IRS.

An example of aquifer protection is the NCC's purchase of the Selleck's Cave Preserve in the Town of Carlisle. We have protected several acres of a water shed that drains through McFail's Cave to Doc Shaul's Spring (Town of Cobleskill) and ultimately into the Cobleskill Creek. We are in the process of cleaning a sinkhole dump on an adjacent property owner's land since it feeds directly into the groundwater. It is obvious that when we talk about an aquifer that extends south from US Route 20 to State Route 7, we are talking about the drinking water of a hundred or so families. Some of you may recall a recent article in the Times Journal regarding sinkhole cleanup very near the proposed subdivision. The reporter didn't mention that Mr. Armstrong is a Trustee to the NCC's Board and that NCC members assisted him in the cleanup.

Neither the Northeastern Cave Conservancy nor the US Cave Conservancy opposes the Lawton subdivision on Sagendorf Corners Road in the Town of Cobleskill.

Rather we call for a thorough investigation of the underground drainage should wells and septic systems be proposed in the future. A cursory glance of our resources indicates the possibility of a direct water connection with the main stream in Howe Caverns, the second largest natural tourist attraction in New York State and a major employer of Schoharie County. It would be devastating to pollute the River Styx and subsequently the Cobleskill Creek at its outfall in Howes Cave, but it doesn't have to be that way. Sound engineering practices and good local regulations can avoid this, and the NCC can and will help. The Town of Schoharie has building codes specific to construction in a karst area, and they have been effective in enforcing them to the betterment of their water quality. We don't believe that the Town of Cobleskill's building codes mentions karst, and this needs to be addressed when you live in a major cave area. The NCC can assist the Town of Cobleskill in obtaining copies of Schoharie's codes as well as those of the Town of Knox, Albany County. The NCC is an all-volunteer organization, and among our 200 members are talented professionals in all fields. It's possible that we could assist the Town of Cobleskill in a preliminary

manner with studies or advice. We are here to help Schoharie County and other areas as well.

For further information, please visit our website at [www.necaveconservancy.org](http://www.necaveconservancy.org) or email us at [nccpresident@caves.org](mailto:nccpresident@caves.org).

Point Of Information: Some of the nation's leading authorities will be participating in the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium in Albany, October 31-November 4, and it would be an excellent opportunity to meet the experts who deal with these issues on a professional level. Their website can be found at [www.nckms.org/2005/](http://www.nckms.org/2005/)

Thank you,

Robert P. Addis, President

## **Beckers Cave Threatened by Quarrying** *By Bob Addis*

Located in the Village of Schoharie and under the village's Lasalle Park, Becker's has long been a favorite of the "Lesser Caves of Schoharie County" gang. Cobleskill Stone Products has been operating the quarry north of the cave and near the high school for several years, and now they have applied to the Department of Environmental Conservation for a permit to expand (about double) their quarry size to the south. This application will need to have an Environmental Impact Statement prepared by CSP, and at this time (11/18/05) the DEC is taking comments and deciding if they should be in the scope of the EIS.

The NCC is concerned about what mining will do to the cave and karst hydrology, and it has prepared a list of about a dozen points for the scoping document. A few may have been addressed in the original application. It's the DEC's job to sort through these new scopings from groups/individuals and determine what CSP should address in its EIS. Local citizens are also voicing their opinions on other issues connected with the proposed mining.

Much activity has taken place at Becker's Cave recently, including a map of about 750 feet of passage, courthouse research, radio location of the end of the cave, and even contact with a possible owner. Below is a copy of the letter sent to the DEC as part of the public comment period:

Mr. Kent Sanders, Deputy Permit  
Administrator  
NYS Department of Environmental  
Conservation  
65561 State Highway 10  
Stanford, New York 12167-9503

Ref: EIS for Cobleskill Stone Products  
Proposed Expansion, Schoharie, NY

Dear Mr. Sanders:

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (NCC), a not-for-profit corporation incorporated in 1978 and granted 501(c)(3) status by the IRS, is committed to the conservation, study, management, and acquisition of caves and karst areas having significant geological, hydrological, biological, recreational, or aesthetic features. To these ends, the NCC combines the resources and expertise of cave explorers, educators, scientists, and landowners.

In reference to the Environmental Impact Statement being prepared for the above-mentioned project, the NCC requests that the following points be included in the scoping documents:

A. Effects on the Karst Hydrology:

1. We request that ASTM D5717-95, "Standard Guide for the Design of Groundwater Monitoring Systems in Karst and Fractured-rock Aquifers" be utilized for designing any monitoring systems for the expansion.
2. Will there be surface water degradation as a result of the expansion and, if so, to what degree?
3. How will the hydrology within Becker's Cave and the surrounding karst be affected by changes in the surface recharge and the groundwater flow patterns and quality?

4. The resurgence for a large drainage area and Becker's Cave is the Old Lutheran Parsonage spring. The Parsonage was listed on the National Registry of Historic Landmarks in 1972, and the title of the survey on the application was "Plan for Spring Park". This clearly indicates the importance that a good spring of water played in the lives of the earliest settlers. What will be the effect on this spring in terms of flow and water quality by expanded mining operations?
  5. What will be the effects on other springs within the Village of Schoharie? Several of them contribute to a small stream that flows north behind the downtown area, turns west at the school and discharges into the Schoharie Creek.
- B. Effects on Becker's Cave:
6. The NCC requests that a survey of the bats be conducted by DEC. We believe that none has been done on the site, and there always exists the possibility of endangered species.
  7. I have attached a copy of the 1955 biota inventory that has not been updated in 50 years. We request that this be updated.
  8. What effects will this proposal have on the physical integrity of Becker's Cave? Specifically, what will be the seismic impact on the cave features, hydrology, bats, and biota?
  9. Becker's Cave is used for recreation. What safety measures will be in effect to prohibit injury from the mining operation, particularly blasting, to cave visitors?
  10. There has been informal discussion that it would be possible to provide a buffer zone around Becker's Cave to protect it. Should this become a solution to our scoping requests, it must be reflected in appropriate modifications to the application – verbiage as well as plan changes. The DEC is reminded of a

similar situation in the Howes Cave Quarry where the show cave, Howe Caverns, is protected by a buffer zone of an un-mined peninsula of limestone.

C. What effects will there be on other karst resources?

Please contact me if you have any questions about our scoping requests. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Yours truly,

Robert P. Addis, President

### **NCKMS 2005**

I am pleased to report that the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium recently hosted by the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc in Albany, New York was a success by every measure. I believe the interests of the NCC will be well served by our participation in this national event. Many NCC members were able to attend sessions and otherwise participate. Over 100 participants were able to share our regional experiences through interaction with NCC members in attendance. NCC properties and management methods were showcased on the Wednesday field trip.

Comments from Cheryl Jones, chairman of the permanent steering committee which is responsible for the NCKMS reinforced my feelings about the success of the 2005 NCKMS:

"By hosting and co-sponsoring the Symposium, the Northeastern Cave Conservancy was able to make us realize how vital the conservancy has been over the last four decades in conserving and managing important caves in the region, and preserving access to them for cavers."

"The field trip showed everyone attending the Symposium how committed the NCC and each of its members are to managing the Conservancy's caves and karst responsibly, as well as the caves on the NSS preserves."

"I believe the future of cave conservation, management, and access lies with cave conservancies, so it is important that they be involved in the NCKMS, and sought out by agencies and other groups when cave and karst management issues arise. The NCC made this pretty clear to the attendees during Wednesday's field trip, and no doubt increased the credibility of the work being done by cave conservancies in general."

"Thanks to the efforts of Mike and the NCC, we had participants from more cave conservancies at this Symposium than ever before. I hope that this is will start a trend, for conservancies must be involved in any overall cave and karst management picture."

The symposium worked so well only because many members of the NCC worked very hard in advance and during the week. I feel privileged to have been the coordinator of such a skilled and dedicated group of volunteers. Thank you all, and congratulations on a job well done.

Mike Warner  
Chairman 2005 NCKMS ex-officio!

### **Officer Nominations**

*By Mike Martuscello*

The nominating committee seeks candidates for the upcoming officer elections which will be held at the December Board meeting. The executive officer positions include: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Each year the Committee solicits candidates for these positions. Nominations are open to all NCC members.

If you're interested in applying for one of these positions, or would like to recommend a great candidate, please contact Mike Martuscello at [mikemart@superior.net](mailto:mikemart@superior.net) or call (518)842-2189. Alternatively, you may express interest to any Board member or officer of the NCC and ask that your name be forwarded to the Nominating Committee. Please respond by the end of November (sorry for such short notice). Thanks.

Mike Martuscello, Nominating Committee Chair

## Plum Day – 9/24/05

*By Bob Addis*

This was a Community Day set up by the historical society featuring several events. There were historical exhibits, a craft show, food, car show, several garage sales, and the NCC booth set up in our parking lot. We had 8 members helping, 80 visitors, of which 34 were cavers specifically there for the cave regardless of Plum Fest. Thom Engel led about 12-15 people on a surface tour explaining the geology. Overall, this was a positive interaction of the NCC with the community, and we did get a donation of one interesting old letter about Clarksville Cave. This makes two years in a row that the NCC has had a booth in the community.

## Conservation Easements

*By Jon Allison*

The following is a short description of Conservation easements I found on the Land Trust Alliance website (<http://www.lta.org/conserv/options.htm>)

*A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. It allows you to continue to own and use your land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs.*

*When you donate a conservation easement to a land trust, you give up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, you might give up the right to build additional structures, while retaining the right to grow crops. Future owners also will be bound by the easement's terms. The land trust is responsible for making sure the easement's terms are followed.*

*Conservation easements offer great flexibility. An easement on property containing rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development, for example, while one on a farm might allow continued farming and the building of additional agricultural structures. An easement may apply to just a portion of the property, and need not require public access.*

For the NCC, conservation easements are an additional way for us to further protect caves and karst. This protection could be accomplished by the NCC holding an easement on a cave property

which a landowner wishes to retain ownership of, or by the donation of an easement on a NCC property to another conservancy.

In the case of the parcel with the Gregory Entrance to Clarksville Cave, the NCC has given an easement to the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy. The MHLC are currently the owners of Onesquethaw Cave, which the NCC manages access to, and have strong relationship with the NCC. By giving an easement, the NCC has ensured that the Gregory Entrance will remain protected, even if the NCC were to lose the property in the future.

If the worst were to happen, and the NCC was ever forced into bankruptcy or became defunct, our preserves would be at risk for being developed. The easement ensures that even in this case, any future owner would be legally bound by the same restrictions as we have imposed upon ourselves. In order for a future owner to develop the property, they would need to acquire the easement as well as the property, which is a very unlikely scenario.

The easement which was agreed on restricts the NCC from:

- Building residential, commercial, or industrial structures
- Building roads, driveways, utility lines
- Altering the hydrology
- Dumping or polluting
- Excavating or mining
- Clear cutting
- Erecting neon signs or billboards

In most cases, an exception can be made via written agreement between the MHLC and NCC if both parties agree that the exception still meets the intent of the easement.

## Clarksville Changing Area

*By Bob Addis*

We had to label it as such because it seems that some people didn't know what its purpose was. It appears to be used and appreciated; the management team has hung a dispenser of plastic grocery store bags for muddy cave clothes. Good thinking because that immediately cut down on the discarded caving clothes in the changing area.

When you are next out there you may notice a pile of bricks beside the changing area. These came from the Baugh Cave cleanup (Schoharie County) and are intended to be used as a flooring material in the changing area. Feel free to place them inside as flooring.

### NCC Acquisition List

Shortly after the NCC changed to a membership based organization back in 1999, Chuck Porter compiled a list of caves the NCC to pursue. Six years later how are we doing on the list? Below is the original list:

1. Barrack Zourie
2. Two Second Pit
3. South Bethlehem
4. Everetts
5. Church and Wagon Wheel
6. Devils Den (NJ)
7. Purgatory
8. Pompeys
9. Wolferts, Hells Wells, Baugh
10. Loden Sink
11. Eldon French
12. Red Mountain Pit
13. Barytes
14. Pettibone Falls Karst
15. Jack Patricks Cave
16. Mitchells
17. Single X
18. Clarksville
19. Joober Hole
20. Jack Packers
21. Devils Den (VT)
22. Boneyard Karst
23. Youngs Cave

Others not on the list but mentioned: End of Gultch, Skull, Wynd/Livingston, Stairstep Shaft, Kent Cave, Bakers Quarry, Coon Hollow, Pirates Glen, Twin Lakes, Diddly

Over the last six years the NCC has tried to acquire: BZ, Carlisle Ice Cave, Straddle Canyon, Westfalls, South Bethlehem, Purgatory, Two Second Pit, Schroeders Pants, and Joober Hole. We also worked on projects associated with Surprise Cave and Indian Oven Cave. We succeeded in getting Clarksville (2 Entrances),

Sellecks, and Ella Armstrong and are working on Pompeys Cave.

In general this was pretty good progress, but we can do more. What caves do you want to see on the new version of the list? Email your suggestions with reason (recreation, bats, quarrying threats) to Chuck Porter at [acquisitions@necaveconservancy.org](mailto:acquisitions@necaveconservancy.org)

### The NCC Recognizes Its Founders

*By Bob Addis*

Unknown to Bob Addis, Art Palmer, and Jim Harbison, their significant others made certain that all three were at the National Cave & Karst Management Symposium banquet on November 3, 2005. They were discussing how unlikely it was that the three of them were in one room at the same time when Mike Warner presented them with plaques stating that the NCC "was born of their vision" in December 1978, 27 years ago. And the rest, as they say, is history.



NCC Founders L-R: Jim Harbison, Art Palmer, and Bob Addis

## Upcoming Events

### NCC Board Meeting

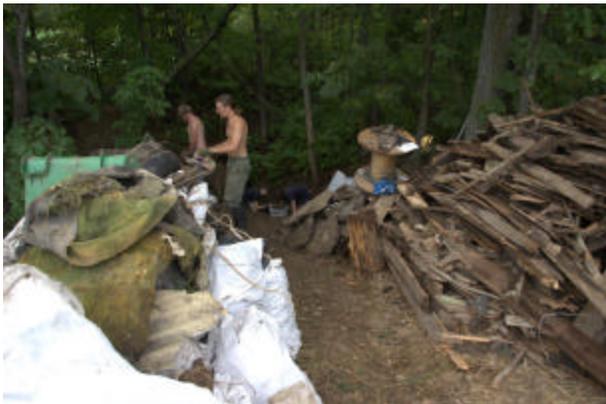
Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2005, 11:00AM  
at Speleobooks, Quaker Street, NY



Cleanup Crew at Baugh Cave from l-r Robin Strashun, Christa Hay, Vittoria Curl, Mike Chu, Joe Armstrong, Bob Addis Photo by Bill Folsom



Baugh Cave Cleanup Photo by Simeon Warner



Baugh Cave Cleanup Photo by Simeon Warner



Baugh Cave Cleanup Photo by Simeon Warner