

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, September 9th 11AM at the Macedonia State Park in Kent, CT. (Directions at the end of this issue.)

Notes from the Last Board Meeting

- 1) The recent NCC Board meeting took place on Saturday, June 9th at Speleobooks at, 2:00PM. A cleanup of Baugh Cave preceded the meeting, with about 20 volunteers helping out.
- 2) Peter Haberland and David Lyons were elected as trustees, and Mike Warner and Joe Armstrong were re-elected. Thanks for all who ran, and thanks to the Nominating Committee, Mike Martuscello.
- 3) Major bat kills were reported this winter, with over 1000 total carcasses found between the entrances of Gage Caverns, Knox Cave, and Schoharie Caverns.
- 4) Clarksville management team reports that 22 tons of gravel was spread around the lower parking area, with the help of Bill Zinzow.
- 5) \$0.00 (not a typo) was allocated for the cost of a professional appraisal on the parcel of land containing the entrance to Becker's Cave.
- 6) Vince Kappler reports that current volunteer value totals for 2007 are up to a total value of \$5503, with 2385 miles and 291 work hours reported.

- 7) Up to \$2000 was allocated for legal defense in the DEC hearing concerning the Schoharie Quarry expansion and its threat to Becker's Cave.
- 8) Up to \$1500 was allocated to engage in the services and pay the expenses of an expert witness on blasting, for the Schoharie Quarry DEC hearing in June.
- 9) NCC to open formal discussions with the Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust of Connecticut to pursue potential management and/or ownership of Tory Cave.

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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>		

What the Heck was/is Going on with Howe Caverns and Beckers? *by Christa Hay*

As most members know the NCC started working on a purchase of Howe Caverns when it went up on the market at the end of 2006. There were several entities that went into the sales process but the three main participants were the NCC, Wright-Galasso, Inc. and a Korean entity. In case some members are not aware one of the owners of Wright-Galasso is also the owner of Cobleskill Stone Products (CSP) which owns the near-by quarry. There have been issues, rumors etc about the NCC's involvement in this and hopefully now that the dust has settled I will try and address these issues as I saw the process.

First of all I would just like to say that Bill Folsom, Peter Youngbaer and Bob Addis worked extremely hard and professionally on this purchase. I was also involved but more as the role of an administrative assistant. I do not have the business savvy to do this kind of work or the experience in business and politics (outside of caver-politics) that they have. Bill and Bob have the business experience and Peter has both being in the Vermont political scene. Just to give an idea of the time commitment involved here...in my email alone for this one specific issue I had over 680 emails.

When the pending sale of Howe Caverns was announced and with one of the bidders being associated with a mining company there was concern about the future of the cave. The NCC worked with New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPR) and the Open Space Institute (OSI). We had a very good working relationship with both offices and this can only be a positive situation when we have more projects in the future. The hope was that OSI would have given money to the NCC in the form of a bridge loan until the State took over the property as a state park. Unfortunately with the timing of an administration change over in the State and tight time constraints we could not supply the proof to OSI that NY State was committed to a state park.

Here is some more information on the administration change and how that affected the process. The old administration might have accepted Howe Caverns as a State Park if we had

started this process in 2005, but the sale only started in September 2006 and the elections were in November. The new administration barely had top management in place in January/February 2007 when the NCC met with the new Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Carol Ash, and they felt that they had inherited a number of problems from the previous administration. Thus the NCC couldn't bring a strong offer to the bargaining table in April to convince Howe Caverns stockholders that we had something possibly better for them and the future of the cave.

If the NCC had been able to get this proof we had four top commercial cave managers ready to step in to oversee the management of the cave until the State could take it over. We were smart enough to realize we needed this help and would not have attempted to do it on our own.

I think the biggest issue was that the NCC had to sign a Confidentiality Agreement with the sellers which meant that most of the detailed discussions could not go outside of the Board. Since the NCC is a corporation we have to follow these rules or risk the possibility of being sued. This is a corporate law not a NCC Board decision. As Board members we take risks with such items. Being sued can mean the loss of our homes and financial security. One thing all members should remember is that the NCC is a corporation not a caving club. We have to follow rules no matter how mundane some of those might seem.

The NCC tried to set up meetings with Wright-Galasso during the sale process to offer assistance on a conservation easement and just to let them know that the NCC was concerned with keeping the cave open for future generations. NYSOPR also suggested that the state could pay for a conservation easement. Wright-Galasso did set up two meetings with us but cancelled both.

There was an unfortunate timing issue that also arose. The Cave Protection bill came back on the legislative plate for voting. Thru the grapevine it was thought that the NCC did this on purpose to stop the sale of Howe Caverns to Wright-Galasso, Inc. This was not the case, in fact the Board did not even know about this bill until one of our members sent us an email. Also the way the bill was written was not what would have been preferable so it was good that it did not pass.

And now for Beckers Cave...

CSP recently purchased another tract of land in Schoharie and have plans on expanding their quarry. This expansion could affect many people and the village so a group called Save our Schoharie (SOS) was formed. The NCC talked with this group but did not partner with SOS. We are only following our mission statement and not the broader issues of community character, noise, dust, increased truck traffic, etc. We are only concentrating on the issue of Beckers Cave and the potential damage that near-by quarry can cause to it and the nearby karst resurgence, the Palatine Springs (sometimes referred to as the Parsonage Spring).

With Board approval the NCC hired a cave/blasting expert to attend and talk at the hearings. His findings will be entered into the decision making process. Our continuing efforts in this area are that the NCC might go to the formal hearing stage if the Board and the membership think that it is worth the money. Do not think of these expenses as a price for one tiny cave but the legal decisions made here may have far-reaching effects anywhere in NYS that limestone mining could affect caves and/or karst.

As they say timing in life is everything...not always a good thing though and there has been much damage done with a future relationship with the NCC and CSP. Which is unfortunate as both sides were only doing their job and it was business not personal. I have no issues with quarrying in fact throughout my life I have been to many large mining operations as my father was a geology professor and he also worked for a Canadian mining company. He went to university with many of the managers of these mines so we got some really amazing tours (tours right into the guts of the operation, tours not open to the public) of these places...and I am talking giant, world known mines and quarries.

I hope this article helps some. You can always call or email me or any of the EC or Board members for information or clarification of issues. Also, the Board meetings are open to everyone (unless there is a confidentiality issue and that was explained above) and the EC meetings are open to all members as well.

Memorial to Cheryl Kenez *by Bob Simmons*

We all lost a dear friend this past Saturday. Cheryl Kenez (NSS 16054) lost her battle with the cancer she had been fighting for much of the last two years. Cheryl has been a fixture in the northeast caving scene since the early 1970's and, before getting to ill to travel, could be found at every caving event with her trusty dog Biner at her side. Cheryl was a great friend to us all and will be truly missed by everyone who knew her. Besides being an avid caver for nearly 40 years, Cheryl served the CCG as our Secretary for more years than I can remember; stepping down only when her illness prevented her from attending meetings regularly.

Cheryl was a reliable project caver and assisted in the mapping of several caves including Twin Lakes (CT), Mystery (NY) and Scott Hollow (WV), to name a few as well as being a willing Sherpa on numerous sump dives over the years (McFails & Scott Hollow). Besides caving, Cheryl was also gifted with the crochet needles; intricate bats being one of her specialties.

In memory of our dear friend, I'd ask you all to say a prayer, drink a toast, celebrate a life well lived; only too short.

Cheryl's Service on July 28 was a wonder celebration of a life too short and the stubborn, heroic struggle of a dear friend who refused to impact on the world in which she lived. Many friends and family spoke to Cheryl's love for life, her friendliness, her openness and her lasting positive impact on the world in which she lived. Many familiar faces from the caving community were present and shared fond memories of Cheryl and their thoughts for her friends and family. So many more of her caving friends who could not be present were truly felt in the room by the thoughts they sent along by mail, email and phone calls.



Fall NRO 2007 Information

by Steve Millet

The Central Connecticut Grotto will host the 2007 Fall NRO at Privacy Campground in Hancock, Massachusetts on the weekend of September 14-16. All cavers and friends are welcome.

This NRO will feature cave trips, vendors, NCC auction, NRO business meeting and probably a slide show on Saturday night. Vermont Cavers Association will prepare a bountiful Italian feast (with vegetarian option) for Saturday dinner, and Steve Janesky will provide Saturday and Sunday breakfasts. A small charge for each meal will apply, and please bring your own folding chairs.

Campground features include a kids playground, bonfire, hiking trails, a waterfall, and a local karst area (with potential digs). A windmill tower will be available for vertical ropework. A sauna will run Friday and Saturday nights if there is enough interest. There is a pond suitable for swimming, and rowboats and paddle boats are available for rental. Volleyball courts are also open. The campground owner has offered to give tours of his underground bomb shelter and hydro-electric plant.

All attendees please pay at the NRO registration tent upon arrival, by either cash or check. The NRO basic fee for this event is \$5 per adult and \$3 per child under 14, whether you are camping or just visiting for the day. Campground rates (per night) are an additional \$6 per adult and \$3 per child for tent camping, payable at registration.

There is limited space available in the parking lot for vendors and a few trailers. If you wish to bring a trailer, please call the campground in advance to make arrangements. Please note that no dogs are allowed in the campground.

Privacy Campground is located on Massachusetts Route 43 (Hancock Road), 5 miles south of the junction with US Route 7. The approximate coordinates are 42.6083°N, 73.2883°W. The campground phone number is (413) 458-3125. For further details please email Fall2007NRO@ctcavers.org or phone Norm Berg at 860-621-2080.

Upcoming Events

September 14-16, 2007: Fall NRO at Privacy Campground in Hancock, MA. The NRO basic fee for this event is \$5 per adult and \$3 per child under 14, whether you are camping or just visiting for the day. Campground rates (per night) are an additional \$6 per adult and \$3 per child for tent camping, payable at registration.

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

Directions to upcoming 9/9 NCC Board meeting in Kent, CT.

- From the Northwest take NY 22 south to Dutchess County Route 3, just south of the village of Wassaic. CR 3 will turn into CT Rte 341 at the state line. Follow CT 341 for about a half mile to Macedonia Brook Road on your left. Macedonia Brook Road leads directly into the park; the pavilion is about a mile from Rte. 341.
- From the southwest, take NY 22 north to the village of Webatuck. Turn right (east) on Rte 55 and follow Rte 55 into CT to US Rte 7 in Gaylordsville. At Gaylordsville, turn left on US Rte 7 North for about five miles to the junction with Rte 341 in the village of Kent. Turn left on Rte 341 (west) for about a mile to Macedonia Brook Road in about a mile. Turn right onto Macedonia Brook Road and reach the pavilion in about a mile.
- From the east, Pick up CT Rte 4 in Torrington and follow it to the intersection with US Rte 7 in Cornwall Bridge. Turn left (south) on Rte 7 and proceed to the town of Kent. Turn right onto Rte 341 in Kent to Macedonia Brook Road which you will follow for a mile to the pavilion.
- From southern CT take Rte 7 North from Danbury through Brookfield and New Milford to Kent. Turn left on Rte 341 in Kent for a mile the right (north) onto Macedonia Brook Road to reach the pavilion in about a mile.

