

Next Meeting

Saturday, December 8, 2001, 1PM

Location: Speleobooks

Notes from the Last Meeting

1. The last meeting of the NCC was held at the Fox Creek Nature Center on September 8, 2001.
2. Attendance: Addis, Allison, Cantello, Folsom, Hay, Kappler, Levinson, Lucas, Murphy, McLuckie, Rider, and Warner.
3. Presidents report – Bob Addis updated everyone on the status of the Sellecks property. We should be closing by the end of the year.
4. Vice Presidents report – Bill Folsom stated that the NCC will be looking for nominations for the Executive Board. The NCC also needs a volunteer to replace Chuck Porter as the head of the Nominating Committee. Bill also noted that the NCC booth was staffed three out of five days this past NSS Convention. During the convention, the NSS granted us \$5000 towards the purchase of the Sellecks property.
5. Treasurer's report – Joe Levinson noted that as of September 7, 2001 we have 78 paid members. Joe provided a summary of the finances for the Sellecks property purchase. Joe also noted that the NCC now has sales tax exemption.
6. Secretary's report – Christa Hay reported on the NCC t-shirts. The t-shirts are selling for \$12 ea. (\$14 for XXL) with \$4 of the cost going towards the NCC. Christa is also looking into the purchase of a weatherproof banner for use at events.
7. Knox Cave Preserve Report – Emily Davis reported that cave use was very heavy this past season by summer camp groups. Only one camp group is allowed in the cave at a time, maximum of 10 people and no one under Jr. High School level.
8. Website Subcommittee Report – Bill Folsom noted that the member list accessible from the NCC website is now password protected. Bill also intends on making the NCC PowerPoint presentation available on our website.
9. Office Committee Report – Mike Warner and Emily Davis stated that they could assist in symbolic item purchases such as stickers, t-shirts, etc.
10. The board authorized the Executive Committee to spend up to \$1000 for an easement to South Bethlehem Cave. In addition, the board voted to purchase a canopy for use by the NCC at caving events.
11. During the Committee of the Whole discussions were held on the NCC hosting an NRO (possibly Fall 2002 or Spring 2003). We also discussed the Brooks BBQ.

Mammoth Cave Awaits Mammoth Trouble

by Paul Steward

Ten-million-year-old Mammoth Cave is facing its toughest challenge yet. On February 16, 2001, Inter-Modal Transportation Authority (ITA) submitted a proposal to the state of Kentucky for a 4,000-acre industrial development to be located in Oakland, Kentucky, only 6 miles from Mammoth Cave National Park. The site for the so-called Kentucky Trimodal Transpark (KTT) will include roads, office buildings, an airport capable of accommodating large jets, a rail yard, and a trucking and transportation center. Two small towns will need to be removed to make room for the runway. Construction is scheduled to begin early next year.

Industrial parks as the one proposed are notorious for spills and seepage involving: gasoline, solvents, oils, jet fuels, anti-icing fluids, and a host of other contaminants and hazardous materials, not to mention air and noise pollution. Not only is the world's longest cave in jeopardy, but the Mammoth Cave Karst drainage basin, the Graham Springs Karst drainage basin, the Kentucky Sinkhole Plain, and ultimately, the health and safety of every person, plant, and animal in the area.

The fatal flaw of the entire complex is its location. The selected site sits within the Graham Springs Karst Basin. Thousands of sinkholes dot the area. Every drop of polluted runoff water will flow directly into the karst system. Dye tracing has proven that groundwater exchange does take place between from the Graham Springs Basin and the Mammoth Cave Basin. Eighteen world renowned karst scientists have confirmed that this is a fact. Yet, the ITA refuses to acknowledge this. Even a small chemical spill can have irreparable damage to the flora and fauna, and would threaten several endangered species for miles around, including bats, blind

shrimp, and blind crayfish. Also, never addressed by the ITA is the bioaccumulation of inevitable low-level pollution. This, without a doubt, will have considerable impact to the underground biota. Another grossly overlooked fact is that the entire site is underlain with the Lost River Chert unit of the St. Louis limestone. This is one of the significant differences between this karst area and most other karst areas. Although this 10-foot thick bed of chert is resistant to weathering, it is highly brittle, prone to sudden and catastrophic collapse, and is structurally unstable--not the place to build an airport. The ITA has done no study of the structural competence of the Lost River chert, saying that any investigation will be made after the project is underway. Art Palmer, a noted caver and geologist, is quoted as saying, "The concept of building an airpark on such highly cavernous ground, and in such close proximity to Mammoth Cave, is seriously flawed." A geologist from Western Kentucky University said, "I would give an F to any student of mine" who submitted work that bad.

Another area not addressed by the ITA is the archaeological and cultural resources of the proposed Transpark area. Man has lived in this region for 12,000 years and much of the area has yet to be fully studied. Significant artifacts and materials could be destroyed and lost forever.

Surely Mammoth Cave National Park would not permit such a disastrous plan as the Transpark in its backyard you say? KTT developers have been carefully skirting a formal Environment Impact Study (EIS), and until one is published, by law, the Park cannot comment on proposed developments.

Several citizen groups have joined in the battle. NOAH--"No Airpark Here" had been fighting this effort for two years. WCCMG--"Warren County Citizens for Managed Growth" is the residents' action group. They have been collecting signatures for a referendum vote on the KTT, because the ITA is an unelected quasi-governmental development authority, and so the citizens have had no official voice in the matter. In response to a request for help in getting good sound information KEEP--"Karst Environmental Education and Protection" was formed. KEEP has taken the frontline in this fight, and includes individuals from the National Speleological Society, the Cave Research Foundation, the Sierra Club, Kentucky Waterways Alliance, the Kentucky Resources Council, and a number of professors from Western Kentucky University. One of the most vocal in KEEP is noted caver, Roger Brucker. Brucker has spent the last 40 years studying the Mammoth Cave region and is using his expertise in the fight.

The ITA and the City of Bowling Green have gone so far as to get approval to issue \$25 million in bonds to fund the initial property acquisitions and eminent domain condemnations for infrastructure development. The financial analysis on which they based their repayment abilities does not include any extra money for dealing with the karst structural remediations which are inevitable with this site.

The bond issuance was appealed by a member of WCCMG, with the assistance of Tom FitzGerald, of the Kentucky Resources Council, and was heard by a commission appointed by the governor. A decision is being awaited, but the ITA announced it is going to seek private interim funding to proceed with property purchases now. And this, with not a single business or industry lined up to locate in the KTT, other than the assumed CSX TransFlo facility (bulk chemical and materials transfer station--automated transfer from train to truck), and rail switching yard.

This is one of the most studied karst areas in the world! The ITA and its environmental consultants continue to minimize or just plain ignore karst hazards and the advice of experts in the field. They simply think karst problems can be solved by plugging openings and filling depressions. Art Palmer points out these sinkholes leak laterally through bedding partings, as well as downward, so plugging won't work. History has shown that building on karst land requires continual repair from collapses, which usually come at the expense of the taxpayer. Why can't we learn from the mistakes of others?

What can the caving community do? Get informed and join the fight. The KEEP web site is a great place to start. Write to the ITA and express your concerns. Write to the Governor of Kentucky. Together we can say NO to the Transpark and save Mammoth Cave.

Information and Donations

KEEP

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Fall 2001 NRO

The NCC hosted the Saturday dinner at this past Fall 2001 NRO up in Vermont. On the menu this time around was chili (both a kind to please the hungry carnivores and a kind to please the hungry herbivores). The group cooperation (and boy was there great group participation) netted a significant income for the NCC.

Auction \$473.00
Dinner (after expenses) \$310.00
50/50 raffle (winner joined the NCC) \$105.00
Steve McLuckie's 100/0 raffle \$22.00
Membership renewals \$115.00
New memberships (10, 7 regular and 3 family) \$120.00
Additional donations \$51.
Total deposited for the weekend \$1196.

This and the \$1735 that we deposited after OTR shows how important it is for us to be visible at major caving events.

Donations to Help Pay for

Karst Spill Cleanup

*by Roger W. Bruker, Member
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Beavercreek, OH, September 1. KEEP (Karst Environmental Education and Protection) is making contributions to the Park City Volunteer Fire Department and the Smiths Grove Volunteer Fire Department to help defray the cost of cleanup of the 3,800 gallon diesel fuel spill that entered the cave system two miles south of Park City last Thursday.

Mayor Bill Mansfield of Oakland will present the checks to the departments. "Hazardous chemical spills can be costly for volunteer departments. KEEP is making these donations to underscore the fact that a disaster like this is costly. It is easy to search for blame, but we want to do something positive to help."

KEEP (Karst Environmental Education and Protection) is a coalition of individuals, local, state and national groups, and businesses that oppose the development of the Transpark at Oakland, KY. Roger Brucker, a spokesman for KEEP said, "We have been educating the InterModal Transportation Authority and taxpayers about the expensive hazards associated with development on this karst land. Mammoth Cave National Park officials and scientists fear this spill may wipe out a significant population of aquatic life in the underground drainage basin. It may not be fixable. Unfortunately, this example illustrates too vividly what we have been warning about for several years. "The tanker spill comes in the wake of a string of unfortunate coincidences that dramatize the truth of what Transpark opponents have been saying. The Natcher Parkway collapse, while not due to karst, demonstrates that structure collapse can be dangerous and expensive to fix. "The structural instability of the Oakland site with regard to the chert and karst has been demonstrated, but ITA has done NO investigation. We have described the fragility of karst and its susceptibility to irreversible pollution. Nearly every scientist who is NOT on the payroll of ITA has warned ITA that a hydrological investigation must be done to

avoid risk. The ITA says it is too expensive. "Meanwhile the Scott demolition landfill on the karst was the scene of an expensive fire on August 18 that has yet to be explained. In their haste to make the Transpark a "done deal" the Warren County Fiscal Court is rushing to borrow \$6 million for irreversible land acquisition for the ITA. The haste is suspicious because the average Environmental Impact Statement takes 2.9 years to accomplish, yet ITA president Dan Cherry says it will be completed in just months. "The long awaited revised Transpark Environmental Assessment turns out to be more of the same excuses that are wrong at best and deceptive at worst. What Dan Cherry described as an "in depth" study of the karst at Oakland is nothing more than a Preliminary Study prepared by two engineers with no field investigation. "When will people wake up to the fact that their leaders and the ITA are setting up taxpayers for a big hit and the environment for an even bigger disaster?"

Write to KarstContact@yahoo.com or check out www.geocities.com/KarstContact/KEEP_home.html or www.stoptranspark.org for more information.

Church and Wagonwheel Caves

As many of you know, both Church and Wagonwheel Caves have been closed for over 10 years. The current landowner is considering subdividing the property, which will allow the NCC to purchase the caves and eventually re-open them.

PLEASE DO NOT VISIT THESE CAVES OR APPROACH THE LANDOWNER AT THIS TIME.
Let us give this a chance and hopefully in a few months, the caves will be accessible again.

Recent Donations

<i>less than \$50</i>	<i>\$50 - \$99</i>	<i>\$100 - \$499</i>	<i>\$500 or more</i>
Aaron and Amy Cox	Buster Miller		Bill Folsom (including matching donations)
Chery Kenez	John Mylroie		Dick Blenz
RL Davis	Josh Rubinstein and Scott Wahlquist		Buzz Rudderow (with thanks to CVJG and NNJG)
Eric Hendrickson	Tristate Speleo		Howe Cavems
Mike Warner and Emily Davis	Steve Buer		NRO
Vince Kappler			
Gordon Burritt			
John Taylor			
Thom Engel			