

The Alan Traino Cave Preserve Management Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy (NCC) owns 1.89 acres of land surrounding the entrances to Slingerlands Hellhole and George's Surprise Cave. These are the longest two caves in the Chatter-Stone-Hole System. (Chatter-Stone-Hole has about 3050 feet of mapped passage.) Slingerlands Hellhole and George's Surprise are the upstream end of the system which carries an underground segment of the Feuri Spruyt Kill or a tributary thereof.

The late Alan Traino had planned to purchase this property and, eventually, donate it to the NCC. To that end, the land is already subdivided and surveyed.

Slingerland's Hellhole is the longer of the two caves with about 1450 feet of passage. George's Surprise has about 950 feet of passage. Total known passage in both caves at this writing is 2400 feet. Both caves can flood to the ceiling. There is a channel that carries the overflow on the surface to the east and north.

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 managers 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

The first known mention of this area is from French's Gazetteer (1860). "*Feuri-Spruyt Kil, a small stream in the N. part [of Coeymans], disappears, and flows for half a mi. in a subterranean passage, coming to the surface again in New Scotland. At the place where the stream disappears it falls perpendicularly into a deep cavity, forming a considerable water power.*"

None of the caves in the system are mentioned in the 1960 *Albany County Guide* and were likely unknown to the caving community then. (Roadside Cave about 1800 feet down the road is mentioned.)

The caves were first mapped in the 1960s and date from 1965 to 1969.

The caves were rarely visited until about 2016. Alan Traino led a group of cavers who started re-exploring the caves. This included clearing out many years of flood debris. During this period, Alan approached the owner with the idea of his purchasing the land. The current owner subdivided the land. Unfortunately, Alan passed away before the actual purchase.

Slingerland is a relatively common surname in the area and the family has been in the vicinity since the 18th Century. It is not known who George was and just why he was surprised.

UNDERGROUND RESOURCES

Biological – As a sinking stream there are likely a number of accidentals washed into the cave. This would include frogs and minnows. These either get flushed through the system or die in the cave. They do not constitute a significant or important biological resource except as a food source.

The cave should be biologically inventoried. It is likely that the cave-adapted amphipod, *Stygmobromus alleghaniensis*, is in the system (No special precautions are in place to protect the amphipod as normal caving activities do not seem to have an adverse impact on its population.) The cave cricket, *Ceuthophilus maculatus*, might also be there.

Due to seasonal flooding a bat population has never been established in either cave.

Geological & Hydrological – The cave is formed in the Onondaga limestone. The Feuri Spruyt Kill sinks into the caves. The drainage basin is about 2.6 square miles. While the regional dip is to the southwest, the stream drains to the northeast, resurging at Sump and Chatterbox Caves. A structural study of the caves should be done to ascertain the reason for this.

Reviewed w/o change:

Amended: 12/08/2019,

Initial Approval: 03/03/2019

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

Archeological – No unique archeological resources are known from the caves.

Historical – No unique historical resources are known from the caves.

SURFACE RESOURCES

Biological – The property contains no unique or unusual flora or fauna. The north part of the property adjacent to the road is field with alfalfa still growing in it. Along the edge of the field is goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.).

South of the field is a wooded area that is mid-successional. Common trees are black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), and shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*). Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) is also present. There are few understory plants. These are American elm (*Ulmus americana*) and dogwood (*Comus* spp.). There is a considerable amount of poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) in the woods.

There are a few invasive species. There is not a lot, and they could be extirpated from the property. These include buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), and garlic mustard (*Alliaria officinalis*). There is also a small patch of *Phragmites* that should be eliminated.

Geological & Hydrological – The Feuri Spruyt Kill sinks into the caves. The drainage area of the caves is about 2.6 square miles. The caves may fill up. When they do, the stream flows on the surface to the east, then turns north and flows through a culvert under Co Rte 301 and then rejoins the main branch of the Feuri Spruyt Kill.

The caves and surface channels display a good example of stream piracy into karst. This process continues as the caves at times still cannot handle the entire flow of the Feuri Spruyt Kill and the water flows northeast via a surface channel.

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 or injury, even 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

The caves of the Alan Traino Cave Preserve will be managed as park-and-go caving. As there are no bats, they will be open all year. Due to the proximity of houses, quiet hours will be observed from 10PM to 7AM.

Since the cave can flood it is recommended that groups check the weather forecast before entering either cave.

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:

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- P Visitors must be properly equipped. Each individual must have a helmet and at least three (3) independent sources of light. Kneepads are recommended.
- P No groups of more than 15 individuals should enter the cave. This is both for the safety of the group and for the safety of the cave.
- P The cave and property shall be closed during rescues or at the discretion of the manager.
- P All visitors entering the cave must have a change of clothes and commit to post-caving WNS decontamination. See:
<https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/static-page/decontamination-information>
- P Due to the proximity of a house and two main roads, cavers must use the changing area.

USE CONFLICTS

At this time, no use conflicts are known. The caves flood to the ceiling throughout their length and no bats have been observed.

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 nor interfere with natural hydrologic or chemical processes.
- 5) The research plan must assure 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

Efforts to connect Slingerland's Hellhole and George's Surprise are encouraged. Recent mapping yielded 200 feet of new passage of the 300 surveyed. This suggests that there may be new passage within the footprint of the current system.

Diving by certified cave divers might yield a connection to other caves in the system.

Any digging or diving must be approved by the preserve manager. Results of exploration trips will be conveyed to the preserve manager. 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. 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 will 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. Cavers' publications like *The Northeastern Caver* and the *NSS News* may contain information on the latest discoveries. Some grotto publications may also have information, but again these have limited circulation and usually do not give locations.

SURFACE MANAGEMENT

The parking area on Co Rte 301 is almost due north of the entrance to Slingerlands Hellhole. The parking area is on the old roadbed. Visitors should not park so as to block access to the house immediately to the east and north of our parcel. The parking area should be delineated with posts.

A trail from the parking area to the caves should be marked. The trail should be routed clockwise around the sinkhole to the walk-in entrance.

A changing area and a kiosk should be constructed closer to the cave entrances.

The vegetation on the surface should be inventoried. Invasive species should be identified, and a strategy developed to control or eradicate them.

No camping is allowed on the preserve.

RESCUE CONSIDERATIONS

The caves are all relatively small in passage cross-section. This makes them especially vulnerable to flooding. Visitors are urged to check the weather forecast prior to visiting and should use discretion when entering either cave. The best rescue is one that is unnecessary.

Ceiling heights in the cave are generally 2 to 3 feet. There are several places where they are about one foot. Rescue in a stretcher would require considerable lap passing and other strategies for moving a stretcher in a low passage.

There are no big drops in the cave, though there is a 15-foot drop at the entrance to Slingerlands Hellhole.

FUTURE PLANS

- P Construct a kiosk.
- P Construct a changing area.
- P Mark a trail from the parking area to the caves.
- P Mark the property boundaries.
- P Delineate the parking area.
- P Complete a modern survey of the caves.
- P Extirpate invasive species.

Chatter-Stone-Hole System
Slingerland's Hellhole & George's Surprise

Albany County, N.Y.

SLINGERLAND'S HELLHOLE & GEORGE'S SURPRISE

Grade 4 with Grade 2 Additions

Surface Survey Grade 4

10-3-69

P. Pulensky

P. Tarasco

