

# 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

Saturday, September 30th, 2006, 1:00PM  
at the Howe Cave House

## Notes from the Last Board Meeting

- 1) The meeting was held on June 3rd at the Onesquethaw Fire house in Clarksville. Before the meeting there was a cleanup at the Clarksville Preserve. Even with the rain there was a very good turn out of people to help. After the cleanup people headed over to the fire house for a much needed dry area and pot luck lunch.
- 2) Trustee Elections - Welcome back to Jon Allison and Jason Siemion and Mike Warner. Our newest Trustee is Alan Hicks (NYS DEC).
- 3) The Ella Armstrong Management Plan changes were approved. The updated one will be on the webpage in the near future.
- 4) Will be looking into numbers for a parking area for Ella Armstrong. There was a straw vote that up to \$1000 will be used for this.
- 5) The EC meeting will be held in Kerhonkson on August 13 at 10:00am.

## MOUNT AEOLUS BAT CAVE – Management Plan Status Update

*By Peter Youngbaer*

The Mount Aeolus Bat Cave is New England's largest solutional cave, formed 1500 feet above the current valley floor in the white marble prominent in the region. It is part of the Dorset Bat Cave Preserve, a 248 acre property owned by The Nature Conservancy. It contains the largest known hibernating bat population in New England, with all of Vermont's cave bat species represented, including the state-threatened small-footed bat (*Myotis leibii*) and the federally-endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*).

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Deadline for next issue – 10/31/2006

<b>Officers</b>		
President	Bob Addis	(518) 237-1165 raddis@capital.net
Vice President	Bill Folsom	(212) 427-7256 rockeater@mindspring.com
Treasurer		
Secretary	Christa Hay	(518) 237-1165 c.hay@ctmale.com
<b>Trustees</b>		
Jon Allison		(518) 383-1465 allisj2@alum.rpi.edu
Al Hicks		achicks@gw.dec.state.ny.us
Vince Kappler		(973) 579-2116 vkappler@nac.net
Mike Chu		chum2@rpi.edu
Joe Armstrong		gonecaving@hotmail.com
Peter Youngbaer		(802) 454-7752 Youngbaer4@aol.com
Michael Warner		(518) 295-7978 mike@speleobooks.com
Jason Siemion		(518) 928-4300 jaysiemion@hotmail.com
Bob Simmons		rwsimmons1@msn.com
<b>Committee Chairs</b>		
Acquisitions	Chuck Porter	(518) 274-4863 necaver@acmenet.net
Bylaws	Joe Levinson	(973) 208-9049 jlevinson@tellurian.net
Conservation	Joe Armstrong	gonecaving@hotmail.com
Finance & Investments	Open	
Fundraising	Alan Traino	PollackOpticians@aol.com
Land Trusts Liaison	Jon Allison	(518) 383-1465 allisj2@alum.rpi.edu
Legal	Dan Werner	danwern@hotmail.com
Membership	Sean Ryan	belloq@juno.com
Nominating	Mike Martuscello	mikemart@superior.net
Office	Mike Warner	(518) 295-7978 mike@speleobooks.com
	Emily Davis	(518) 295-7978 emily@speleobooks.com
Preserves	Thom Engel (Onesquethaw)	(518) 478-9664 necaver@earthlink.net
	Jay Siemion (Sellecks)	(518) 928-4300 jaysiemion@hotmail.com
	Emily Davis (Knox)	(518) 295-7978 emily@speleobooks.com
	Michael Chu	chum2@rpi.edu
	Thom Engel	necaver@earthlink.net
	Chuck Porter (Clarksville)	necaver@acmenet.net
	Joe Armstrong (Ella)	gonecaving@hotmail.com
Publications and Publicity	Christa Hay	(518) 237-1165 c.hay@ctmale.com
Newsletter Editor	Michael Chu	chum2@rpi.edu
Website	Mike Chu	chum2@rpi.edu
Science Coordinator	R. Laurence Davis	(203) 932-7108 rldavis@Newhaven.edu
Special Use Coordinators	Aaron & Amy Cox	(203) 426-4602 Amycaves2@aol.com
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Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. P.O. Box 254 Schoharie, N.Y. 12157		
<a href="http://www.necaveconservancy.org">www.necaveconservancy.org</a>		

A cave gate was put in place in 1985, but generally left unlocked during the summer to permit visitation into what was generally an easy cave. In 2000, Vermont cavers pushed through breakdown to discover much more passage, including the vertically accessed "bat cellar", exposed 40 foot climbs, tight squeezes, a very large hall – over 300 feet long, and beautiful, plentiful and unique formations. Surveyed passage is now well over 3,000 feet.

In 2004, TNC contracted for the installation of a new bat gate, which was installed with much volunteer help. The cave has remained gated year-round, pending the development of a management plan. A few visits have occurred in the interim, restricted to the placement and monitoring of temperature data loggers, and assessment of the cave for management plan purposes.

Approximately two years ago, TNC approached the NCC about developing a management plan and managing the cave preserve. Thom Engel took on the challenge, and with the assistance of many, including several Vermont cavers familiar with the cave and environs, a draft management plan was prepared at the end of 2005.

The draft has been sent around by TNC to numerous parties for comment over the intervening months. These parties include the federal Fish and Wildlife Service, bat biologists, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources personnel, TNC attorneys, and the Vermont Cavers Association, among others.

VCA has been intimately involved throughout the process, contributing maps, rescue planning, history, and hands-on assistance with the exploration, data-logger monitoring, and construction of the new gate.

Most importantly, however, for visitation purposes, the intent of TNC has been for the NCC to provide overall management of the cave preserve, with the VCA directly managing the public visitation.

Over the summer, a special meeting took place in Vermont to work out the details of the visitation portion of the plan. Attending were Dan Deitz (TNC), Scott Darling (Vermont's state bat biologist – and a VCA member), Ken Moore (VCA President), Peter Youngbaer (VCA Vice-President and NCC registered Vermont agent), Peter Quick,

Rick Pingree, and Steve Hazelton (all VCA and NCC members involved in the discovery and exploration of the new sections of the cave).

The meeting was very productive. The overall approach is to manage the cave as a bat hibernaculum – that's the primary focus. Scientific research on the bats and the cave are encouraged, and limited visitation will be permitted, but conservatively managed.

Revisions to the visitation portion of the management plan as a result of the meeting were incorporated, and the plan sent out again for comment within TNC, and now, importantly, to the NCC.

NCC President, Bob Addis, appointed an ad hoc committee to comment on the plan. This is continuing now. The goal is for the full NCC Board to take appropriate action to adopt the management plan and ultimately sign a Memorandum of Understanding with The Nature Conservancy for management of the Cave Preserve.

The purpose of this admittedly brief article is to provide background for NCC members and the NCC Board as to what has occurred up until now. Please feel free to contact me or Bob with any detailed questions you may have.

## NCC Acquisition Activity

The following are some updates from President Bob Addis on several of the current NCC projects:

1. Becker's. I spoke to the current owner, Tom Wright on 7/28, and he feels that they will be going to closing with the new owners soon. He has been a long term friend of mine, and he will put in a good word for the NCC so we can hopefully open a dialogue this fall. I'm calling Tom back mid-August.

2. Jack Patrick's. Another little pet project of mine with the owner and literally life-long friend, Arnie Fancher. On 7/23, we took the owner's wife, Noreen and a neighbor on a brief geology tour of the ravine and the cave entrances (or where they were 10 years ago!). Arnie had to work on the farm that day and Paul Woodell could not give the full tour as he had planned because the wetness and slipperiness of slopes. We had a chance to look around and appreciate the magnitude and

splendor of the ravine once again, and we had a nice conversation with Noreen. There is nothing in the works presently concerning acquisition, but we have reminded the owners of our interest and our ability to preserve their special place. I'll check back with them periodically.

3. Church & Wagon Wheel. On 7/16 I followed up on a 6/18 visit to the owner, Pat Walker in a continuing dialogue. Her Mother has recently passed away and Pat is the executrix of the estate. She requested that we wait at least a year for her to settle matters, and she said that she would contact us if something changed before then. Many issues are involved - will she want to stay in the house, will she sell the house, and if so, what parcels of land will be packaged with the house's smaller 3 acre lot. I'll check back.

4. Haile's. The Endangered Species Unit of NYS DEC has requested the assistance of the NCC in solving a bat hibernaculum problem at Haile's, that of sudden flooding of the cave which can literally wipe out as much as 70% of the bat population. I believe that it was seven years ago when flooding killed 16,000 bats, many of them on the Endangered List. The NCC will head a study which will investigate and then recommend solutions possibly at the resurgence(s), possibly in cave modifications, and whatever is discovered. We have several expert volunteers - hydro geologists, surveyors, engineers knowledgeable in hydraulics, etc. On 8/5 the DEC has made arrangements with JB Thatcher State Park for the NCC to continue and hopefully conclude the survey of Haile's with particular emphasis on accurate cross sections and pushing all leads. On the same day another NCC survey crew will tie Haile's entrance into the entrance of Novemberkill Cave, a smaller cave further north along the base of the escarpment that has been shown to be Haile's low flow resurgence. We may also try to survey Novemberkill Cave as well as any other pertinent karst features, time permitting. We think that this is an ongoing study and that the NCC will be invited back for more work on the issue.

5. McFail's Surface Property. Yes this is NSS property, but two significant factors have brought it in front of the NCC. Fred Stone of Hawaii was the discoverer of most of McFail's, the gentleman who purchased the first parcel, and the man who convinced the NSS to accept it as their first cave preserve, all back in the mid-1960's. He was in town this summer for family business, and he once

again expressed his love for the property by offering a matching grant to purchase the surrounding woods with either the NSS or NCC. Fred spent considerable time researching deeds, tax maps, aerial photos and walking the woods, and we met with one of the farming brothers, Stu Tillapaugh on 7/16. There are three brothers and spouses involved in the ownership, but our preliminary discussions went well with a promise to meet again in mid-August after they have had a chance to talk it over. When we initially contacted Stu, we were expressing concern over the recent opening up (collapse?) of Wicke's Hole, but Fred envisions a much larger acquisition. Therefore the preliminary talks are about buying anywhere from a few acres up to 40-50 acres, with Fred's preference for buying all of the woods between Hall's Hole and Ack's Shack.

The second event is the talk by the NSS that they will turn over their preserves to local cave conservancies on a case by case basis. This is beyond a rumor yet not formal NSS Board discussion. Emily Davis will be talking to the NSS Officers at the Washington Convention to test the waters and have them contact the NCC.

A matching grant is an exciting prospect and one that usually goes quite well. I personally believe that thanks to Fred Stone, the Northeast cavers have a wonderful opportunity in front of them.

6. Paperwork Reduction. This is a cooperative effort between the NCC and the NSS to streamline and clarify that whole liability waiver, minors' waivers, insurance certificate thing. We expect to post new rules in the Schoharie & Gage Cabins, possibly a check list for youth groups, an article in the Caver and on the discussion group, and so forth.

7. New Accounting Procedures in the Office Committee. Emily started in July running a manual spreadsheet that tracks budget spending, and the EC should decide how we wish to disseminate the information - emails to the EC, Board, website? I have already found it to be useful.

That's all for now. Stay tuned.  
Bob

## **2006 National Caves & Karst Conservancies Forum, Sept. 20-22, Lewisburg, WV**

*by Bob Addis*

This event is held every two years and this year's is the second one. Judging from the first time and this agenda, it will be an information-packed forum and one suitable for the NCC Board and NCC members in general.

See the link to their webpage. <http://www.wvcc.net/forum/> Note \$45 registration is due Sept. 4, \$60 at the door. Several of us are driving down and can share rides & rooms. Rooms are \$72/night double, and if anyone needs to save money there's a free fieldhouse about 25 minutes south.

Please contact me to ride share.(home - 237-1165) I think this will be good for all who manage caves, and isn't that all of us?

## **NCC Auction at NRO**

Once again Bob Addis will be the auctioneer for the NCC Auction. So please ransack your closets, attics, basements and garages for items to donate to the auction. Stop by the NCC tent at NRO to drop off your donated items and if you wish you can get a receipt for tax purposes.

For those wondering, NRO is being hosted jointly by NNJG and SCAG Grottos @ Oakland Valley Campground in Cuddebackville, NY (near Port Jervis, and more importantly near Surprise Cave).

Same Bat weekend: September 15-17. No preregistration, but onsite registration starts @ 6PM Friday night.

## **Virginia KarstLands – NSS Recruiting**

*By Ted Kayes*

Virginia Karstlands has been reviewing opportunities to promote cave and karst conservation and education. It appears that at this time the most effective means to work toward those goals may be to recruit members for the National Speleological Society. The Society is the largest and most active caving organization in the country. The number of people caving has been

increasing, yet the membership of the Society has been essentially unchanged for about a decade.

Unfortunately the NSS has been unable to grow its membership. Despite the many projects and programs undertaken by the Society, their regional organizations and grottos, the word is not getting out and they are doing little to promote themselves. An outside effort to promote the growth of the Society membership may be what is needed to spur them to a sincere undertaking in this area.

Therefore, cave conservancies are being offered an opportunity to help grow the membership of the NSS and receive contributions for their efforts. Your conservancy will receive a \$10 donation from Virginia Karstlands for each Regular or Conservation member they enroll in the NSS. The conservancies are encouraged to recruit their own members and to have their personnel recruiting others at regional caving events. The program will continue until 30 June 2007 or until VKL has sponsored 500 new NSS members, whichever comes first.

It is expected that many of those recruited will be newer cavers that have not been exposed to the Society's safety and conservation goals and precepts. Conservancies will not be discouraged from recruiting 'limited' NSS members, but, believing that such members would not get sufficient exposure to the Society, the conservancies will not receive an honorarium for those enrollments.

If you have questions not covered by this letter or Appendix A or if you have suggestions, please call or write.

## Upcoming Events

### NRO

September 15-17  
Cuddlebackville, NY

### NCC Board Meeting

Saturday, September 30th 2006, 1:00PM  
at the Howe Cave House. There will be a cleanup of Baugh Cave in the morning followed by a potluck lunch at the start of the meeting. All are welcomed and encouraged to attend.

**Hailes Cave photos by Mike Chu**

