

The Misty Cave Preserve Management Plan

To Preserve and Protect Through Education

I. Policy and Statement of the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, Inc.

Introduction

The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) encourages projects such as: establishing cave preserves; placing entrance gates where appropriate; opposing the sale of speleothems; supporting effective protective measures; cleaning and restoring overused caves; cooperating with private cave owners by providing them knowledge about their cave and assisting them in protecting their cave and property from damage during cave visits; and encouraging commercial cave owners to make use of their opportunity to aid the public in understanding caves and the importance of their conservation. As part of this effort, RKC has acquired and holds the deed to the Misty Cave Preserve and is committed to its careful and long term management. It is the duty of every RKC member to take personal responsibility for spreading a consciousness of the cave conservation ethic to each potential user of caves.

II. History of the Preserve

Misty Cave Preserve is 16 acre property located near the community of Sand Gap, KY in Jackson County. The property was purchased in early 2009 by RKC due to the entrance of Misty Cave being within the property. Misty cave was discovered by Jacques Ramey in 1987 and soon after mapped by members of the Greater Cincinnati Grotto. As of 2009, the property is largely unimproved; the only structure present is an old tobacco barn. The property is almost completely wooded and comprised of steep hills.

III. Misty Cave Preserve Management Committee

- a. The chairman of Management committee is appointed by the RKC board. Members of the management committee are appointed by the chairman and all must be members of RKC. The management committee will meet at least once annually. Committee members are expected to help in maintaining the property.
- b. The management committee is responsible for the Misty Cave Preserve Management Plan.
- c. The management committee will serve as the gate keeper for visitors to the preserve and cave.
- d. The management committee is responsible for approving all projects involving the preserve and the cave.
- e. The preserve manager will be appointed by the members of the management committee.

IV. Access Policy

- a. All trip leaders intending to enter Misty Cave are required to fill out and submit the visitation request form and submit for approval to the Preserve Manager or committee member two weeks prior to planned visitation.
- b. Due to the unique and sensitive nature of the cave and property, at least one member of any group entering the cave must be a member of RKC, the National Speleological Society or a Grotto of the NSS. While membership is not required for each person visiting the preserve, the RKC strongly recommends that visitors be members of the RKC. Membership in the National Speleological Society is also encouraged, as well as a Grotto of the NSS.
- c. Visitation is on a first-come, first-served basis. The Management Committee should be contacted as soon as is possible for access arrangements in order to avoid scheduling conflicts.
- d. The cave is closed to all access from November 1 through May 1, while the Indiana Bats are in hibernation. There will be "NO" entry allowed during the closed period without written permission from the Misty Cave Preserve Management Committee.
- e. To minimize the impact to the cave, the RKC requests that groups entering the cave be limited to twelve (12) people or fewer, with a minimum group size of 3 people. Arrangements for caving groups larger than 12 people must be made in advance by contacting the Misty Cave Preserve Management Committee at least two weeks before the desired date. The RKC and the Misty Cave Preserve Committee reserve the right to refuse access to Misty Cave Preserve to anyone.

- f. To avoid parking and over-use problems during caving conventions and special events, access to the property will be limited during those events to trips organized through The Misty Cave Preserve Management Committee.
- g. Due to the recent threat of White Nose Syndrome (WNS), all visitors to Misty Cave are expected to abide by current decontamination protocols set forth by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
 - i. Do not use any clothing, footwear or caving equipment that has been used in a known WNS affected cave in any non WNS-affected caves.
 - ii. To avoid carrying soil, water, or other substances from one cave to another, thoroughly clean and decontaminate all clothing and caving equipment, following the procedures outlined in the latest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidelines (see Attachment 1) before and after visiting the Misty Cave.
 - iii. All members of any group not fully decontaminating will be banned from RKC preserves indefinitely.
 - iv. In addition to the visitation request form, all visitors are required to complete the Misty WNS questionnaire.

V. Preserve Rules and Regulations

- a. Please keep noise to a minimum and be discreet while changing clothes. Fireworks, explosives, loud music, and other noisemaking activities are prohibited. All visitors to the preserve are expected to be considerate of our neighbors, and refrain from disturbing them, especially at night. The preserve is a natural area, and should be treated with peaceful and quiet appreciation.
- b. All plants and animals on Misty Cave Preserve are to be respected and observed from a distance, and are never to be removed. Avoid disturbing wild life and plant life. Cave flora, fauna, and cultural resources are to be left undisturbed. In addition, do not touch, break, or remove formations from the cave. Do not cut trees or brush for firewood or any other purpose. *Anyone found defacing the cave or formations, or causing harm to the plants and wildlife of the preserve will be subject to prosecution under both state and federal laws.* For any questions or concerns or to report vandalism or other abusive activities at the preserve, please contact the Misty Cave Preserve Management Committee
- c. Park only in the designated area, and drive only on existing roads. Do not block access to roads or gates. There are two small spots directly on the side of the road above the barn. All other parking must be on the gravel road across from the property.
- d. Camping is not permitted on the property.
- e. Please remove any trash that you bring to the preserve. Also, please help keep the cave and preserve clean by removing any trash left by others.
- f. Spray-painting, carbide marking, and all other types of graffiti are never permitted. Vandalism and abuse of the cave or the surface areas of the property will be prosecuted.
- g. Modifications of the cave or property, including placing bolts or artificial anchors, marking or constructing trails, cutting trees or brush, all digging, excavation, or blasting on the property or in the cave is prohibited without written permission from The Misty Cave Preserve Management Committee. Persons violating this policy may be subject to prosecution under state and federal laws.
- h. ATVs are not permitted on the property without written permission from The Misty Cave Preserve Management Committee. Any permissible ATV use is restricted to established roads and trails.
- i. Hunting is not allowed except by direct written permission from The Misty Cave Preserve Management Committee AND the RKC Board of Directors. Discharging firearms of any type for purposes other than hunting is prohibited.
- j. Use of the cave or property for any type of commercial activity, including guided or commercial caving or other recreational activity, is not permitted.
- k. Groups found breaking any rule may be banned from all RKC preserves and properties indefinitely.

VI. The Misty Cave Statutes

- a. The Misty Cave Preserve Management Plan, as well as supporting documents, shall be posted on the RKC website and accessible to all. To help protect the preserve and cave, the location of the property will not be publicly posted or announced.
- b. Media may publicize the Misty Cave Preserve in magazines and newspapers, without disclosing the precise location, with permission from the Misty Cave Preserve committee.
- c. RKC actively promotes the conservation of caves. All visitors pledge to protect the historical, geological and biological treasures found underground. The management committee stresses that nothing shall be done to deface or spoil the natural beauty and life forms found in the cave.
 - i. No camping is allowed in the cave.
 - ii. No vehicles or bikes are allowed in the cave.
 - iii. No fires are allowed in the cave.
 - iv. No children permitted in cave without adult supervision.
 - v. No using cave as a restroom.
 - vi. No dogs are allowed in the cave.

VII. Future Plans

- a. Our long term mission is to preserve and protect the natural resources of the Misty Cave Preserve. Each idea, project, and plan shall be measured against this. Our stewardship of the land means not developing the property or creating high impact improvements. MCP is a karst preserve. Visible and permanent changes on or to the property, or in the cave, must be thoroughly evaluated so as not to clash with our mission. Low impact and low visibility improvements such as signage, trails, and parking/access areas are usually acceptable since they enhance comfort and security without compromising our mission. Any such improvement or restoration project shall be evaluated to keep long term (life-cycle) costs down and minimize ecological impact.