



## Spring, 2017 Newsletter

(Edited by Gary Bush)

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Rockcastle Karst  
Conservancy  
*Protecting Kentucky's Interior*

# What's Been Happening with the RKC?

2016 saw numerous advances for the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy. 2017 is shaping up to be an even better year. RKC membership continued to increase. Our public visibility increased with another successful Open House last May. With help of numerous volunteers, we ran a successful fund-raising event, called "*Dinner In The Mountain*" last September, with dinner and music in GSP's *Echo Auditorium*. There were 98 attendees at the event.

The RKC Board updated the Long-Range Plan in February. Our Director elections just concluded. We welcome new Board member, Bob Roth. A very big "*Thank You*" to retiring Board member, Steve Gentry, for his three years of service. Our Officers remain unchanged.

Last, but not least, *We Bought Another Cave Preserve !!!!* Skylight Preserve joins our other three Preserves. The Preserve encompasses the two vertical entrances to the Pine Hill Cave System, located southeast of Mt. Vernon, near US route 25. Read all about it on page 2.

Finally, RKC succeeds in its mission only by the service of its members. We are an all-volunteer organization. As such, we give whatever we can, depending on our particular circumstances. Volunteering your time is critical to RKC's ability to get jobs done. But, it takes more than hard work and endless volunteer hours for RKC to be successful in its mission:

*Protecting Kentucky's karst environments and supporting access to caves in the Rockcastle County Region.*

Yes, it takes money, too. Keeping an organization running, purchasing office supplies, providing services to the members, maintaining and insuring our properties ... these all take money. Currently, member dues are our only source of recurring revenue. So, if you haven't renewed your dues for 2017, please do it now. Consider upgrading your membership to a "*Sustaining Membership*". For as little as \$5.00 each month, you can painlessly help us meet our operating needs. After the first month or two, you won't even notice the charge on your credit card bill ... and, your continuing donation better helps RKC fulfill its mission.

If you can spare some additional cash, please consider an extra donation. Our vision to "*Be the leading non-profit organization owning and protecting significant cave and karst resources*", won't be realized unless we can grow our **Cave Acquisition Fund** sufficiently to aggressively seek out and buy karst properties. If you love caves, help us keep them available.



*Help Save Our Vanishing Karstlands !!!  
Donate to the RKC Cave Acquisition Fund !!!  
Your Dollars Will Last for Years !!!*

## GSP Open House to be held May 20 & 21, 2017

Saturday, May 20, 2017 - 10am to 4pm

Sunday, May 21, 2017 - 10am to 4pm

**(Note:** The Open House is always the weekend after Mother's Day)

Great Saltpetre Cave was a significant source of saltpeter for gunpowder during the War of 1812. The property has been an important part of the Rockcastle County community.

Join us for:

- Guided tours of the Cave.
- Free soup beans and corn bread.
- Food concession stand operated by the Livingston Fire Department.
- Souvenir concession stand.
- Miles of hiking trails.

The public is welcome and encouraged to attend. Bring the whole family for a great day of interesting fun. The free cave tours last 45 to 60 minutes. The cave has electric lights. The cave floor is generally flat. Dress for the cave environment - comfortable shoes and a sweat shirt. The cave is 57 degrees year-round. Bring a flashlight, if you wish. Bring a picnic lunch or patronize the LFD concession stand.

# Preserve News

## Skylight Preserve Management Committee — Co-Chaired by Thor Bahrman and Dana Sutherland

(Photos by Maksim Popov)

On June 18, 2016, Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, announced the purchase of the property containing the Skylight Dome and Hurricane Pit entrances to the Pine Hill Cave System, located southeast of Mt. Vernon.



RKC's Mission is to support access to caves and protect Kentucky's karst environments in the Rockcastle County Region. With that mission in mind the acquisition of these valuable vertical entrances to the historic 4.8-mile Pine Hill Cave system is a significant milestone for the entire caving community.

The new property will now be named the **Skylight Preserve** and has a management plan in place that is posted on RKCI.org. Requests for access are continuing to grow, and our property co-chairs Dana Sutherland and Thor Bahrman are handling the steady flow of cavers wanting to visit the Preserve.



### Fundraising News

There is very big news on the fundraising side. You will remember that that our purchase price was \$37,000. We were able to fund \$17,000 of that through our Land Acquisition fund. But this was not enough, and we reached out to our community and borrowed \$20,000 from cavers.

We are very happy to tell you that our fundraising has just surpassed the \$20,000 mark. In the last 3 months, not only have individual cavers anteed up funds, but *Dinner in the Mountain*, as well as contributions from organizations such as GCG have also increased our totals. This, combined with the previous donations from other area grottos and organizations, as well as a large multitude of area cavers quickly pushed us past that milestone. Since we have hit that critical number, the RKC board has elected to pay off our outstanding external loans as soon as possible. This will save us several hundred dollars in interest payments alone.

The fact that we were able, as a Conservancy, to borrow that amount quickly from local cavers was huge. The fact that we were able to pay off those loans in less than 6 months is incredible. We are awed by the response. We have not forgotten the Donor Gifts, but the pace of the giving has swamped us, and we will be sending these over time to the following:

### The Skylight Fund Donor List (as of March 2017)

#### \$1,000 and over

Greater Cincinnati Grotto	Howard Kalnitz
NSS	Mike Wuertch
Dennis Green	Tom Cottrell
RKC Supporter(s)	

#### \$500 - \$999

Pete Stow	Robert Yuellig	Sean Cain
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#### \$250 - \$499

Pine Mountain Grotto	Mark Hennessey
Matthew Mezydlo	Dayton Underground Grotto

#### \$100 - \$249

Bob Dobbs	William Huber	Scott Pavey
Pete Webb	Aaron Reid	Gary Bush **
James Helmbold	Mark Swelstad	Mike Hood
Mike Deitmaring	Victor Fowler	Werner Jud
Blue Grass Grotto		

#### \$25 - \$99

Tama Cassidy	Pam Duncan	Darlene Kisner
Jeannie Trowbridge	Kim Hedges	Mark Skove
Stephen Vaughn	Mary Gratsch	Ralph Mann
Don Brandner	Stitch-n-Bitch	Jeff Cody
Janeen Sharpshair		

#### Up to \$25

Beau Gergel	Blake Young	Danny Young
Dave Mauney	David Martin	George Cesnik
Jayden Christopher	Kelly Hay	Brian Pitcher
Ryan Muddiman	Aaron Bird	Carrie Damico
David McFarlane	James Craycraft	Jerry Gratsch

\*\* Sustaining Donors

**Many, Many Thanks to all of our generous donors!**

**But we are not finished yet.....**

We still need to replenish the Land Acquisition Fund. This fund has been growing for many years by 'small efforts' by folks like Mary Gratsch, Pam Duncan, and Tammy Otten, among many others, working to keep money flowing in from KOR raffles, Split the Pots, Jewelry sales, Fleece sales, and raffle Baskets.

Without those funds in our bank account, we cannot quickly respond to other opportunities to purchase other properties. We want to be able to add to our list of open caves with area caves, and we never know when or how much the next pur-

chase will be. We must be ready for the next opportunity.

**Please Contribute**

Please continue to contribute to the Skylight Preserve, and the land acquisition fund and help us raise the \$17,000 needed to replenish the Land Acquisition Fund . These donations are tax deductible and go ONLY to the purchase of additional lands. To facilitate this, we will continue to give the contribution rewards of bumper stickers and Pit Ownership 'deeds' for contributing, until the entire Skylight purchase amount has been raised.

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**Great Saltpetre Cave Management Committee**

— Chaired by Jerry Brandenburg

The property continues to be in good condition. The Committee has updated the Long Range Strategic Plan and it was approved by the RKC Board.

There are still projects needing support. The historic Ticket House near the cave entrance is showing structural defects, due to slippage of the hillside. A remediation study is underway. The plan includes adding a Memorial Wall on one side to honor donors to the Preserve. One of the pressure regulators in the water supply still has to be replaced.

Additionally, the gravel roadbed down to the campground is still suffering significant erosion. A mitigation plan has been devised, but the cost will be high. We re-applied for a

grant from the Kentucky EMA, but still haven't heard back from them.

On a more positive note, Scout visitations are running higher than normal this past year, as were field trips from the local elementary schools in and around Rockcastle County.

GSP continues to serve the Rockcastle community and serves as a goodwill ambassador for the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy. Please help us maintain that position.

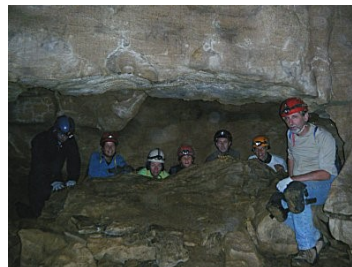


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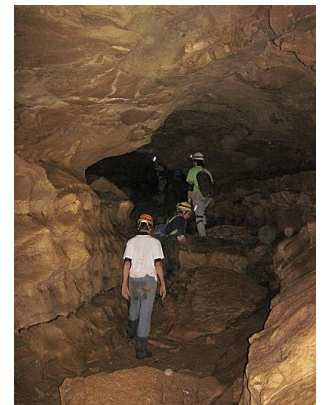
**Misty Cave Management Committee**

— Chaired by Sean Cain

Misty Cave is located in Jackson County. This past year the cave was used by members for numerous led trips. Primarily due to its remote location, the cave shows little wear and tear ... it's a great RKC property.



Misty Cave offers visitors a variety of passages, big and small. Challenging climbs and big domes are a delight for first-time cavers and old-timers, alike.



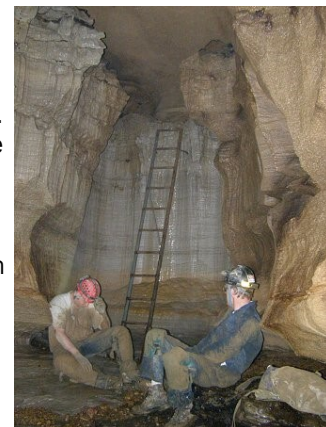
**Cornhole Cave Management Committee** — Chaired by **Mary Gratsch**

This entrance section to Goochland Cave, Rockcastle County's largest, offers RKC members exciting and challenging trips. Visitors can spend hours in the Cornhole section or push on for a through trip to the main Goochland entrance. Tight passages, dome climbs, big rooms, and a wide variety of cave life,



make Cornhole trips memorable to even the most seasoned caver. Having access to Goochland Cave provides RKC members with a unique insight into Rockcastle County karst development on a very large scale. The combination of walking passages, low crawlways, and dome climbs will make for great cave trips.

Your continuing support maintains this access.



**Dinner In The Mountain** — Chaired by **Bob Dobbs**

..... (Photos by Mary Gratsch)

On September 24, 2016 we had a very successful *Dinner in the Mountain* Fundraiser in Great Saltpetre Cave to benefit Rockcastle Karst Conservancy and Great Saltpetre Preserve. It was a catered event and was by invitation

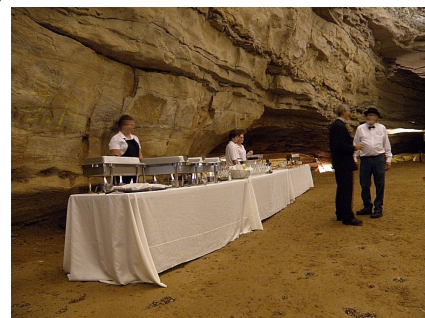


only at \$150 a plate. Thanks to George Ridings, Mike McKinney and Ralph Hacker for helping to make it a success.

We had 98 guests for dinner, including singers and volun-

teers. That amounted to 13 large round tables; each seating 8 people, which, when spread out, covered about half of *Echo Auditorium*. The combination of the beautiful singing by the Johnson Sisters and the Penny Loafers, and the presence of our well-

dressed guests, made for a surreal atmosphere in the cave. To add a little class all volunteers dressed in white shirt and bow tie to escort our guests into the cave.



**Join RKC**

*We can't do it without you!!!  
We can't do it without you!!!*

**The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy**

Membership Application Form  
Apply online at: [www.rkci.org](http://www.rkci.org)

Date

Name - Please print clearly

Street

City, State & ZIP

Email Address

Telephone

**Membership Categories and Dues**  
(Circle Membership Type)

**Memberships for Individuals — Voting**

Individual Member \$15 / year (Apr. 1—Mar. 31)  
Lifetime Member \$300 / one time

— OR —

Sustaining Member \* \$5 - \$50 / month\*  
(Credit Card Charge via PayPal)

\* Sustaining Memberships can only be done on-line  
(Go to [www.rkci.org](http://www.rkci.org))

**Institutional Memberships — Non-Voting**

Institutional memberships for groups that would like to support RKC are also available:

**Supporting** - Non-profit, grottos, and youth organizations—\$25/year  
**Supporting** - All other organizations — \$50/year

**Make all checks payable to: Rockcastle Karst Conservancy**

**Mail Completed Form to: Rockcastle Karst Conservancy**  
c/o Werner Jud  
1044 Vacationland Dr.  
Cincinnati, OH 45231-4749

RKC is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt, non-profit organization.

**Please Join or Renew Now !!!**