



Spring, 2018 Newsletter

(Edited by Gary Bush)

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Rockcastle Karst
Conservancy
Protecting Kentucky's Interior

An Exciting Spring for RKC!

2017-18 was another good year for the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy. 2018 has several new, exciting projects already underway or planned to start within the next few months, as you'll read further on. RKC membership continues to increase, with several more Life Memberships to help us sustain our long-term goals. Every year, our May Open House at Great Saltpetre Preserve brings increased visibility to our mission to spread public education about the importance of Cave and Karst systems to the surrounding community.

Thanks to Bob Dobbs and other volunteers, our informative outings for local school groups continue to expand into surrounding counties. As much fun as they are for us, these trips delight and educate the students about the wonders beneath their homes and encourage them to care for the karst resources of this area.

Thanks to Darryl Marsh and numerous volunteers, the programs to introduce Scouts to wild cave exploration in the area continues to grow rapidly. Since last summer, RKC has also been in discussions with Eastern Kentucky University about coordinating some GSP projects into their Geosciences curriculum. The caves in this area provide an amazing and diverse environment for many aspects of geological, biological, mineralogical, and hydrological research.

The RKC Board again updated their Long-Range Plan and concluded our Director elections. We welcome new Board member, Gary O'Dell, and returning Board member, Werner Jud. A very big "Thank You" to retiring Board member, Tammy Otten, for her six years of Board service. Bob Roth has taken Tammy's position as Vice-Chair, while the other three Officer positions remain unchanged: Chair Sean Cain, Secretary Janice Gott, and Treasurer Werner Jud.

Our fund-raising program to replenish the Cave Acquisition Fund, after the Skylight Preserve purchase, continues to grow. But, more effort is needed by all of us, along with new members, to get RKC ready for future Preserve purchases.

Finally, RKC succeeds in its mission only by the service of its members. As an all-volunteer organization, 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 to be successful. It takes a continuing source of funds for RKC to fulfill its mission:

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

If you love caves, help us keep them available, by opening a Sustaining Membership today.



***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 19 & 20, 2018

Saturday, May 19, 2018 - 10am to 4pm

Sunday, May 20, 2018 - 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. Come and enjoy it. Join us for:

- Guided tours of the Cave.
- Free soup beans and corn bread.
- BBQ and 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 Livingston Fire Department's concession stand.

Great Saltpetre Cave Management Committee — Chaired by Jerry Brandenburg

The property continues to be in good condition. But, there are still projects needing support. The structural renovation of the historic Ticket House near the cave entrance 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.

But, the major project now underway involves mitigating the rainwater flooding of the gravel road from the caretaker's house down to the shelter. The project involves regrading the road surface, creating a swale down the uphill side of the

road, and installing two catch basins to divert the water from the swale under the road to the grassy hill on the downhill side. This expensive project is being funded by a grant from the Kentucky EMA, received thanks to the multi-year effort of Neena Jud. Details of this long-awaited project follow below.

Eastern Kentucky University Geosciences Department is interested in using GSP as an educational resource. A Memorandum of Agreement has to be signed with RKC.

Bob Dobbs is working with others on a concept of "Friends of Great Saltpetre" group to get local residents involved.

GSP Road Repair Project Report — by Neena Jud (Photos by Neena Jud, Bob Dobbs, and Gary Bush)

In November, 2016, RKC submitted a preliminary grant application to Kentucky Emergency Management for funding for the gravel road repair. This included from the top of the hill, beyond the caretaker's house, to just before the sycamore tree near the Shelter. It was presented as a Flood Mitigation project through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. GSP is eligible to apply since the Cave is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Rainwater continually washes out the road, carrying gravel into the field below.

The scope of the project includes what has been discussed in the past to restore this section of gravel road:

1. Re-cut the uphill side swale to carry the calculated flow volumes. This will be in two sections.
2. Install a new catch basin just before "the tractor barn driveway", discharging into a pipe culvert crossing the road into a rock dispersion structure.
3. Install a new catch basin just before "the steps to the Cave", discharging into a pipe culvert crossing the road into a rock dispersion structure.
4. Install open top culverts (formerly referred to as waterbars) across the roadway to collect the surface run-off.
5. Restore and re-compact subgrade. Install DGA course.
6. Add vegetation filter areas on downhill side of roadway.

After numerous submissions of information and requests for public comments, the grant was approved in August, 2017. Final designs and discussions with contractors led to a March, 2018, start date. A local contractor, Clifford Collins, was hired to provide and operate the heavy machinery needed to complete this project. They would perform the pipe and concrete vault installations and spread the road gravel. Volunteers were scheduled to assist with ancillary work to finish off the rough grading and installations by the contractor. The heavy equipment work began on Monday, March 19, 2018.



The initial step was to rough grade the road and clear the hillside for the location of the swale. A bulldozer made short work of it. A special jackhammer machine, called a "pecker" was used to break up the seams of limestone underneath.



Rain fell Monday causing a halt until Thursday, March 23rd.

By Friday night, the lower catch basin, culvert pipe, and head-wall were set & backfilled. Riprap was placed at the outlet. The upper catch basin and culvert pipe were set & backfilled. Riprap was placed at that outlet. Some large pieces of excavated limestone were set aside, so we could use them for a waterfall into the riprap and other projects on the Preserve. Pipe was run from the Shelter roof to the lower catch basin.



Most of the lower swale was cut and the hill was groomed and filled in to ease the slope and was seeded.



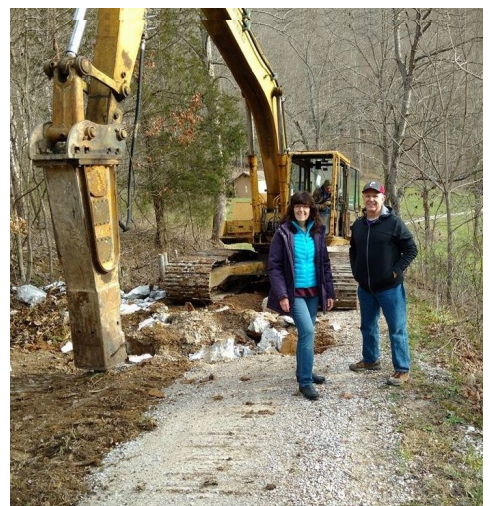
The following week had rain delays, slowing progress. On Monday, April 2nd, the road surface received 2-3 inches of dense grade aggregate and some backfill was placed around the large culvert pipe at the headwall. On Tuesday, the last two loads of dense grade was applied and the whole road was bladed by Clifford Collins (himself). They compacted it by running up and down the road numerous times with one of their heaviest trucks, plus all the times trucks drove over it with a full load of gravel.



The dirt and rocks that came out of the upper road section were distributed on the upper field (see above). That area needs grading and smoothing to level the lawn.

While there are numerous finishing jobs required, the most difficult parts of the project have been completed. Now we can bring on the rain to make sure it all works well.

More Photos of the GSP Road Project



Misty Cave Management Committee — Chaired by **Sean Cain**

Misty Cave Graffiti Clean-Up

On September 24, 2017, I was emailed by Jonathon Carmen, President of the Bluegrass Grotto, about a concern at Misty Cave. Jonathon, along with Tammy Otten, had visited Misty while doing survey work in the area, discovering three areas of green graffiti to the left side of the entrance. There was a cap to the paint can found, but no can.

On the following Sunday, October 1, 2017, Tammy Otten, Howard Kalnitz and Bob Roth returned to Misty to walk the inside. Upon touring the length of the cave, no additional graffiti was found.

On Sunday, November 5, 2017, Tammy Otten, Pam Duncan, Bob Roth, Bruce Isaacs and Sean Cain met at Misty to clean up the exterior graffiti. Bob supplied a tank sprayer with water and one with a 50/50 water/muriatic acid mix as well as rubber gloves. Sean supplied the wire brushes and everyone else supplied the hard work. After two hours of scrubbing, the graffiti was gone and the team was happy with their accomplishment.

Thanks to all who participated in returning this gem of RKC back to it's original state.

-- Sean Cain



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

Cornhole Cave Entrance to the Goochland Cave System is situated at the far end of a 53 acre tract of undeveloped woodland and overgrown fields. The entrance is nestled beneath a short cliff face, near the edge of the field and foot of the hillside.

A trip to the cave requires a hearty four-wheel drive vehicle or a long, strenuous hike. The dirt access road is currently only passable to the edge of the field. This winter we need to get a crew together to clear the many small trees that have grown up in the access road through the field so we can once again use this road. Also a French drain needs to be dug near the top of the road to divert rainwater across the road to the ditch to help prevent erosion. A topping of gravel along the road would also greatly improve access. When the road work is completed we need to install a gate across the road to stop ATV and unauthorized access. To volunteer to help with these projects contact Mary Gratsch at m.gratsch1@gmail.com

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

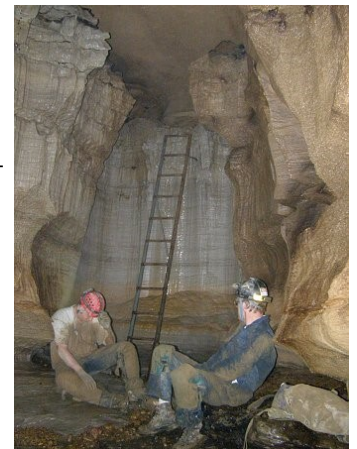


trip to the main Goochland entrance. Tight passages, dome climbs, big rooms, and a wide variety of cave life, make Cornhole trips memorable to even the most seasoned caver. Having access to Goochland Cave provides RKC members with a unique insight into Rockcastle County karst development on a very large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

Your continuing support maintains this access.

The current Management Plan for Cornhole restricts trips to ones led by cavers familiar with the cave. The remoteness of the entrance, complexity and tightness of the passages make search and rescue operations very risky and tedious.

A great way to learn the cave and become a trip leader is to join a survey trip! There are still many passages to map and hopefully lots more virgin passage waiting to be discovered. If interested in participating in the Cornhole Survey Project please contact Mary Gratsch at m.gratsch1@gmail.com



Skylight Preserve Management Committee — Chaired by Thor Bahrman and Jerry Brandenburg

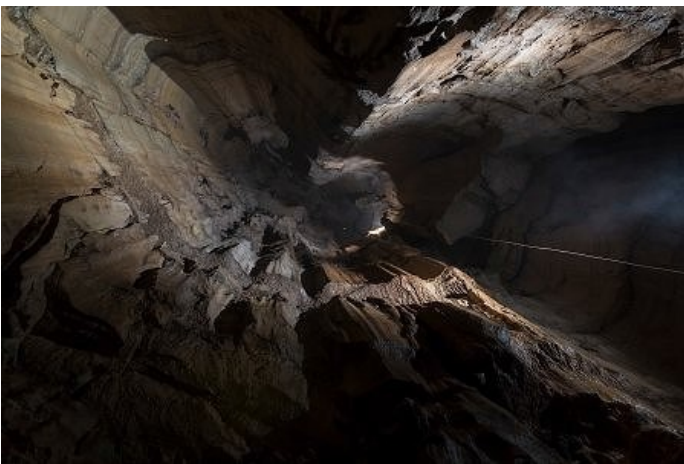
The Skylight Preserve became the 4th property operated by the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy in June of 2016. The Preserve contains the Skylight Dome and Hurricane Pit entrances to the Pine Hill Cave System, located southeast of Mt. Vernon, in Rockcastle County, Kentucky. Skylight Dome is a



125 foot high, beautifully fluted dome pit. Nearby, the Hurricane Pit entrance is a craggy dome pit with much less free drop, but it still provides an exciting passage into the cave.

The new property fulfills RKC's Mission to support access to caves and protect Kentucky's karst environments in the Rockcastle County Region. The addition of these valuable vertical entrances to the 4.8-mile Pine Hill Cave system is a significant milestone for the entire caving community.

Requests for access are continuing to grow, and our property co-chairs, Thor Bahrman and Jerry Brandenburg, are handling the steady flow of cavers wanting to visit the Preserve. Visitors wanting access should possess good vertical skills and come prepared with the proper vertical equipment.



The signage at the Preserve is minimal at present, but new signs are planned soon. The driveway up to the parking area presently needs grading and drain work to prevent washing away of the gravel road base. Lockboxes have been purchased to aid in making access easier for visitors from out of the area. Contact one of the Co-chairs to gain access to the entrances.

A very good neighbor resides on the adjoining property and helps keep the property safe. Thanks, Tommy.

More Photos



Photo Credits:
(Left-side photos by Maksim Popov)
(Right-side photos by Tammy Otten)

Local School Class Outings at GSP — by Bob Dobbs

Class Outings from the local school systems are very popular with both the teachers and the students. We enjoy them, too.

School Field Trips 2017 Summary



2017 was another great year for school field trips and other visitors to Great Saltpetre Preserve.

- We had 26 preschoolers accompanied by 6 adults
- We had 81 second graders accompanied by 25 adults
- We had 117 fourth graders accompanied by 25 adults
- We had 104 sixth graders accompanied by 7 adults
- We had 235 eighth graders accompanied by 12 adults
- We had 45 teens plus 5 adults from Richmond Police Dept. summer camp

For a total of 641 students and 91 adults. The adults consisted of teachers, parents, and grandparents.

This total does not count the approximately 1200 visitors at Open House or the many scouts who visit the Preserve.



(Photos by Bob Dobbs and Gary Bush)

Youth Group Outings at GSP in 2017 — by Darryl Marsh

The 2017 youth group wild caving season has officially come to a close! Getting underground with one of our grotto members is often their first experience in a cave, as well as their favorite outing of the year (their words, not mine), for a youngun' that visits GSP. Once beyond the twilight zone, every participant receives an education on the biology and geology of caves, how they're formed, the related ecosystems, White-Nose Syndrome, information on conservation, and what a responsible caver must do to ensure caves are left in better condition than they were found.



Through the contributions of many faces, 1,385 hours were put toward youth groups through guiding and tail gunning trips, pre-cave presentations, and pre/post caving communication and administration. A large Thank You goes out to the many cavers who volunteered as a guide, tail gunner, and/or presenter and for those that donated time, sweat, supplies, and money maintaining the grounds of the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve. The next generation of cavers are truly appreciative and many have gone out of their way to comment on the loveliness of our preserve.

The volunteer need to successfully operate the wild caving outreach program for 2018 and beyond is greater than ever, from both long established cavers and fresh, yet-to-be-mudded faces. Word continues to spread about the great work we do and the numbers don't lie - We already have 43 trips scheduled for the year just thus far! Periodically check the volunteer website and please sign-up! Direct your internet browser to: <http://tiny.cc/volunteercaving>

2017 Youth Group Caving Stats:

# of scouts and adults underground:	525
# of groups:	34
# of trips:	51
# of groups scheduled during prime caving season:	12
# of groups scheduled during hibernaculum:	22
# of groups that camped 1 night at GSP:	4
# of groups that camped 2 nights at GSP:	22
# of groups that did not camp at GSP:	8
# of volunteer Hours:	1385



Thank you to all our volunteers!

(Photos by Gary Bush)



The Cave Preserves of RKC . . . (Photos by Nathan Williams, Tammy Otten, Mary Gratsch, and Maksim Popov)



Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve



Misty Cave Preserve



Cornhole Cave Preserve



Skylight Preserve



Join RKC

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

The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy
Membership Application Form
 Apply on-line at: www.rkci.org

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)

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

Date: _____

Name - Please print clearly: _____

Street: _____

City, State & Zip+4: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone: _____

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

Please Join or Renew Now !!!