

Have a very Happy New Year!



Winter, 2021
Newsletter

(Edited by Gary Bush)

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Protecting Kentucky's Interior

Greetings from the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy Board of Directors

We hope you had a very Merry Christmas. This year is almost over so we thought you would like a recap of how RKC has weathered 2020. Although COVID-19 has affected visitation to our Preserves and cancelled fund raising events and our beloved caving activities, our volunteers have been able to make improvements at some of the Preserves. We are close to repaying the loan for the Sloans Valley Cave Preserve. Details can be found within this Newsletter.

We are all hoping we will be able to get together in 2021 for our usual events ... like Open House, Karst-O-Rama, Caver Appreciation Weekend, scout trips, school field trips, and, of course, cave trips. Until then, the Preserves are open for visitation. However, current COVID-19 regulations must be followed, until this pandemic is over. See our website for those.

The RKC Board encourages all our members to join us on-line for our quarterly meetings. For information about these meetings, please check the rkci.org website. Memberships can also be renewed on the website or you can consider setting up a Sustaining monthly membership for as little as \$5 per month.

Thank you for choosing to support RKC! Because of your participation in this organization, we can work towards our mission of purchasing significant caves and protecting karst areas, not only for our recreation, but also for scientific studies and to ensure future generations have access to unpolluted caves.

More News from the Board

Preparations for the annual May Open House at Great Saltpetre Preserve are well underway. Open House allows us to share the beauty, solitude, importance, and history of our showcase property with cavers and the general public during this exciting two-day event ... always the weekend after Mother's Day. The GSP property brings increased visibility to our mission:

*Supporting access to caves and protecting Kentucky's
Karst environments in the Rockcastle County Region.*

The RKC Board welcomed back Director and Chair, Mary Gratsch, and welcomed a new Director, Patrick Gibson, our new Vice-Chair. The other two Officer positions remain unchanged: Secretary, Janice Gott, and Treasurer, Werner Jud. Gary O'Dell rounds out the Board of Directors as the Director-At-Large.



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

GSP Open House will be held May 15 & 16, 2021 ... COVID Permitting.

Saturday, May 15, 2021 - 10am to 4pm

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

Sunday, May 16, 2021 - 10am to 4pm

(Please check rkci.org in the Spring for updates about Open House.)

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. They're free!
- Free soup beans and corn bread.
- BBQ and Food concession stand, operated by the Livingston Fire Department.
- Souvenir concession stand.
- A relaxing and peaceful Crooked Creek and 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 tasty BBQ concession stand.

Great Saltpetre Cave Management Committee

—

Chaired by Scott Pavey

GSP started out the year with big expectations for a great year, and then came COVID and everything stopped. With stay-at-home orders came the cancellation of the school field trips, scout trips, youth groups, Open House, KOR, and Caver Appreciation Weekend.

But it's turned out to be a chance to take a breath and get some of our projects completed.

The ticket house exterior is basically finished with a new south wall, repaired floor and a new door. We are now putting plans together for the interior.

The kitchen has gotten some major upgrades with wall coverings, an industrial stainless steel sink, a stainless steel prep table, and a refurbished grease trap to improve productivity for open house and KOR.

We have changed out all the locks on the property building's and cave gate with a more restricted access to the kitchen to help protect our investment.

A new water spigot has been added in the electric camp-

ing sites so the scouts can have closer access to water.

The main gate pivot post has been reset and braced to aid in opening and closing.

A new telephone line has been installed and the phone has been reactivated but due to COVID and the high demand for internet service, we have not been given a date that we can expect internet service at the shelter.

Our *Friends of GSP* have been doing what they can due to restrictions by setting up a roadside cleanup on Mullin Station road in October. They picked up approximately 100 bags of trash over three miles of road from Hwy 25 to the quarry. Thank you all.

There are still several projects that need to be completed but will have to wait due to reduced income.

I would like to thank everyone for your help and volunteering.

Looking forward to a better 2021.

Support RKC using Amazon Smile

—

by Patrick Gibson



Are you looking for a way to give back to RKC? This is perhaps the easiest way possible to support RKC. Anytime you place an order on Amazon, RKC will receive a donation from Amazon. This donation will directly support RKC's mission ... and it costs you nothing extra. The instructions for selecting RKC as your designated charity are below.

Here's how to sign up for AmazonSmile:

On your Computer:

Click or copy this link:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-1169061>

-- or --

1. Visit **smile.amazon.com**.
2. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials.
3. Choose "Rockcastle Karst Conservancy Inc" to receive donations, Click Select.
4. Start shopping!
5. Add a bookmark for **smile.amazon.com** to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile

On your Smartphone or Tablet:

Turn on AmazonSmile in the Amazon Shopping app.

1. Make sure you're signed up for AmazonSmile (use your web browser to visit **smile.amazon.com**)
2. Download or update to the latest version of the Amazon Shopping app for iOS or Android
3. Open the app and find "Settings" in the main menu (☐)
4. Tap on "AmazonSmile" and follow the on-screen instructions to turn on AmazonSmile in the app.

New “Friends of GSP” Has Been Started for GSP

As part of GSP’s continual work in public outreach last year, the GSP committee implemented a ‘Friends of GSP’ program to allow a process for better connection with the local community. *Friends of GSP* is monitored and regulated

by a newly updated GSP management plan, but has its own officers to guide and oversee the benefits for GSP and for residents of Rockcastle and surrounding counties. A website link will soon be available for more information.

FoGSP—Road Clean Up Project

— by Beth Brickley

On Saturday, October 17th, the Friends of the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve, with other valuable contributors, took 81 bags of trash, tires, a TV, car parts and other items off of Mullins Station Road. Working from highway 25 to the bridge past the quarry, a total of 3 miles, the group combed through the fallen leaves to find as many single use bottles, food containers, household trash ,and dumped paint/chemicals, as possible. This effort was made possible by the Rockcastle County Solid Waste \$100/mile Roadside Litter Clean-Up Program.

For more information about the Friends Group contact: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofgsp>



Visitation

Earlier in the year, visitation was halted to our preserves as much of the country shut down due to COVID-19. As our understanding of the disease grew and warm temperatures brought people outside, where social distancing is easier to maintain, visitation was again permitted. Since then, there have been a handful of trips to Skylight Preserve, bringing it back to around the same visitation as before. We've had four applications to visit since reopening.



Grounds and Issues

I visited the Preserve on 11 October with fellow caver Jason Rudder and found the usual downed limbs along the trail. We pulled up some plants and cleared branches and a few of the trees that had fallen across the trail, then used the larger branches and

small, downed trees to reline the trail. I instructed Jason to locate the two pits since he had never been to the preserve, and he had no trouble following the trails in spite of the storm debris. We cleared it out and we're able to move a tree that had fallen across a section of the trail.

Jason found it difficult to make it up the gravel driveway in his two-wheel-drive truck. The driveway is steep and rutted with the small-sized gravel continuing to wash down in the strong rains we've been having.



The parking area has seen some weed growth. With cold temperatures upon us, I'm going to get a couple people to help me clear out the weeds and cut back the approach to the trail again to be ready for the warmer months



Exciting things have happened at SVCP this year! The Preserves co-managers, Joe Morgan and Mike Harrington, took down the section of the old greenhouse that was on the Preserve, cleared the area, and constructed a fence around Crockett Pit and put in a nice gravel parking area! Glen Brandi made a beautiful sign for the Preserve which now hangs on the entrance gate. Glen is currently working on a unique logo for SVCP.

On September 19, RKC held a work day at the Preserve to pick up the accumulated trash around Crockett Pit and inside the cave. Following the proposed COVID guidelines, we practiced social distancing and worked individually or in family groups.

Twenty-five 80-gallon bags of trash were removed from the parking area and cave’s entrance passage. The trash ranged from broken pesticide tanks, buried plastic, cans and bottles, to rotten wood, wire, and metal. The metal was set aside for recycling and the rest was sent to the county dump. Following the clean-up, there was a bonfire and grill out.

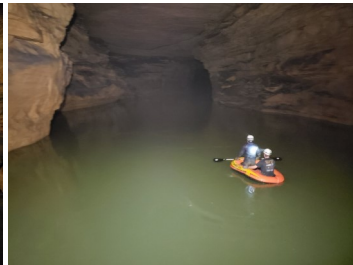


Plans for next year include the construction of a combination change area/kiosk and a place for storing some maintenance tools and possibly Joe’s collection of cave rescue equipment. There is also quite a bit of graffiti and trash inside the cave. Hopefully, in 2021 we will be able to hold work days so that Joe and Mike don’t have to do these projects themselves. RKC will try to announce these work days a couple of weeks in advance.



9/19/2020 Volunteers:

Joe Morgan	Caroline Kuiken	David Lee	Jerry Gratsch	Patrick Gibson	Joe Chaput
Mike Harrington	Jamie Thompson	Adam Batson	Janeen Sharpshair	Angela Rhodes	Ava Grimes
Mark Swelstad	Jon Swelstad	Dan Zubal	Amanda Francy	Josh Heirbuch	Fred Ball
Stephanie Suen	Mike Goltzene	Werner Jud	Rhonda Lewis	Cindy Goltzene	Neena Jud
Mary Gratsch	Thomas Epperson				



Greetings from the RKC Fund Raising Chair!

by Mary Gratsch

It is always exciting when RKC purchases a new cave. And when our next purchase included two entrances to the 23-mile cave in Kentucky, it is exhilarating! In 2019, RKC completed the purchase of 5.24 acres containing the Crockett Pit and Scowling Tom’s entrances to the world-class Sloan’s Valley System.

For those not familiar with the Sloan’s System, there are more than 22 entrances. However, the ones owned by the US Forest Service have been closed for over 9 years and all but one of the other entrances on private land have been closed by the land owners for many years. RKC’s acquisition of these 2 entrances ensures future caver access to this great system.

RKC has solicited funds for the purchase and maintenance of the property, now called the “Sloan’s Valley Preserve”. **Please consider making a donation to the RKC Land Acquisition Fund!** 100 % of these donations go towards ownership and maintenance of this and future preserves.

Donations can be made on-line, at rkci.org, using the Preserves Loan Repayment button or mail checks, payable to “RKC Land Acquisition”, to Werner Jud, (RKC Treasurer), 1044 Vacationland Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45231

RKC receives Grants for Sloans Valley Cave Preserve

by Mary Gratsch

With the cancellation of Karst-O-Rama, the NSS Convention, and most other caving events for 2020, RKC was looking at a pretty bleak year for raising funds to pay off the loan and for the needed improvements for our new Sloans Valley Cave Preserve (SVCP).

As of July 2020, RKC still needed approximately \$5,000 to repay the SVCP loan and \$1,559 for improvements that have already been made, as well as another \$2,000 for future projects. We had to look outside the box to find alternate funding.

In early July RKC decided to apply for a Vehslage Grant from the National Speleological Foundation (NSF).

Another Grant opportunity was offered by the National Speleological Society (NSS). Although we received a \$2,000 Grant from the NSS Land Acquisition Fund in 2019, we discovered that RKC was eligible to reapply for a Grant in 2020, so we submitted our request in late July.

I am pleased to announce that RKC was awarded a **\$2,000 NSF Vehslage Grant!**

RKC also received a **\$2,000 NSS Land Acquisition Grant** for 2020!

We are now very close to repaying the \$25,000 Sloans Valley Cave Preserve loan!

A big "Thank You" to All who have donated funds, materials, goods, and/or time

Although we are close to repaying the loan for the property, RKC still needs to raise approximately \$4,000 to pay off the improvements. It would also be prudent to establish a SVCP Maintenance Fund before we move on towards establishing our next Preserve.

Besides monetary donations, many have donated materials and goods for fund raising as well as valuable time. I'm going to make a stab at naming as many of these people as possible: Ralph Mann, Joe Morgan, Mike Harrington, Glen Brandi, Matt Taylor, Pam Duncan, Bob Dobbs and Sandy Rice. My apologies to anyone I have left out.

Below is a list of the grottos, organizations, and individual donors who have made monetary contributions towards the establishment of the SVCP. A very special Thanks to James Clement for his generous donation of **\$8,000** in memory of his daughter, Allyson. I would personally like to thank those who donated in honor of my late husband, Pete Miller. Because of the support of these institutions and individuals, future generations will be able to explore this world-class cave system!

Donations to the Sloans Valley Cave Preserve & Land Acquisition Fund

	<u>\$1,000 and up</u>	<u>\$500 -999</u>	<u>\$100-499</u>	<u>\$50-99</u>	<u>\$10-49</u>
2018	Greater Cincinnati Grotto	Rob Coomer Sean Cain James Helmbold			
2019	In Honor of Allyson Clement (from James Clement) NSS Grant Lou Simpson Philip Francis	Blue Grass Grotto Central Ohio Grotto Sean Cain	NSS Convention Stitch-n-Bitch Karst-O-Rama Charles Bishop Stephan Vaughn Tomislav Gracanin Charles Bishop Jason Wheeler	Gary Barnes	Gary Bush Shane Slay David Hughes James Baswell Ana Scherschel Tim Bowman Dan Collins On Rope 1
2020	NSS Grant NSF Vehslage Grant pending Gary Bush Julie Schenck-Brown	Sewanee Mtn Grotto Gary Barnes	Birmingham Grotto David & Karen Martin Brandon Levitt In Honor of Pete Miller (from Jeff Gillette & Family)		In Honor of Pete Miller (from Kelly Hay & Ron Hager) Mary Gratsch jewelry class Brian Levitt

Submitted by Mary Gratsch, RKC Chair, with data provided by Werner Jud, RKC Treasurer

*Sloans Valley System is the 4th longest cave in KY !!!
RKC now must re-pay the loan to buy the Cave !!!
Donate to the RKC Cave Acquisition Fund !!!*

The Cave Preserves of RKC

(Photos by Nathan Williams, Gary Bush, Mary Gratsch, Tammy Otten, A.Hadock)



Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve



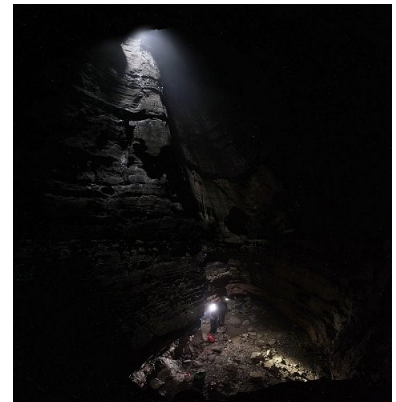
Sloans Valley Preserve



Cornhole Cave Preserve



Misty 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 !!!