

# The Cave Conservationist

November 2005

Volume 24, Issue 4

## ***The Cave Conservation and Management Section of the NSS***

### **Committee Approves Domenici Bill to Protect Ft. Stanton Cave - Snowy River Passage**

**Press Release: From the Office of Senator Pete V. Domenici**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today shepherded his legislation to protect the Fort Stanton-Snowy River Passage through the Senate's Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which he chairs.

The Fort Stanton-Snowy River National Cave Conservation Act (S.1170), which is cosponsored by Senator Jeff Bingaman, the Committee's Ranking Member, is now ready for action by the full U.S. Senate. The bill would protect, secure and conserve the natural and unique features of Fort Stanton Cave and the Snowy River passage.

Snowy River passage was discovered in the Fort Stanton Cave by volunteers of the BLM in 2001, but was only announced to the public after completion of an environmental assessment of the passage and its formations.

The passage is a unique continuous white crystalline calcite formation, that to date has been mapped to be at least two miles in length, the longest known formation in New Mexico. Scientists believe it could lead to new discoveries in areas such as water chemistry, weather trends, and flood and drought cycles.

"The discovery of the Snowy River passage is exciting not only for Lincoln County and New Mexico, but for the entire scientific community. This legislation protects the

Fort Stanton Cave and ensures that area will be conserved so that future generations can enjoy it. It will also encourage extensive scientific research in the area. I will work with Senate leadership to bring this bill to the floor as soon as possible," Domenici said.

"I strongly support the intent of this bill, which is to protect the extraordinary resources of the recently discovered Snowy River cave," said Bingaman, the top Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "Before the full Senate adopts this measure, I hope we can include some further provisions to ensure the surface is managed in a way that fully protects the cave. I look forward to working with Senator Domenici to accomplish that goal."

Domenici's legislation will direct the Bureau of Land Management to develop a comprehensive, long-term management plan for the cave area. It would authorize the conservation of the unique features and environs in the cave for scientific, educational, and other public uses, and bring in colleges, universities, and scientific institutions to participate in research.

The bill would also ensure that the cave is not used for mining purposes. In July, Domenici visited the cave and tested new radio and geomapping equipment used by cavers to map the formation.

### **NSS Convention 2005 - Conservation in the South Addition**

Last month's article "*NSS Convention 2005 - Conservation in the South*", it was reported The Cave Conservation and Management Session offered cavers a wide variety of cave and karst conservation and management sessions featuring various speakers. Although most of the session presentations were listed the Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy presentation was unintentionally omitted. Lois Walsh presented for the Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy in the place of Joe Walsh who was in the hospital and unable to make the presentation himself.



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**Cave Conservation and Management Section Board of Directors**

**CHAIRMAN**

Rod Horrocks  
 2201 Wilson Avenue  
 Hot Springs, SD 57747  
 PH: 605-745-4933  
 E-Mail: [rod\\_horrocks@nps.gov](mailto:rod_horrocks@nps.gov)

**VICE CHAIRMAN**

John M. Wilson  
 9504 Lakewater Court  
 Richmond, VA 23299  
 PH: 804-740-0339  
 E-Mail: [wilsonjml@msn.com](mailto:wilsonjml@msn.com)

**SECRETARY**

John LaMar Cole  
 1196 Millcreek Dr.  
 Lexington, KY 40517  
 PH: 859-245-3383  
 E-Mail: [koshkaCaver@insightbb.com](mailto:koshkaCaver@insightbb.com)

**TREASURER**

Eugene Vale  
 46 Cedar Drive  
 Pacific MO 63069-3414  
 PH: 636-271-8380  
 E-Mail: [eugenevale@socket.net](mailto:eugenevale@socket.net)

**THE CAVE CONSERVATIONIST EDITOR**

Lynn Roebuck  
 94 Magnolia Lane  
 Normandy, TN 37360  
 PH: 931-455-8658  
 E-Mail: [pretzlgirl@charter.net](mailto:pretzlgirl@charter.net)

**HONORARY CHAIRMAN**

Robert R. Stitt  
 4823 Panther Lake Rd  
 Snohomish, WA 98290  
 PH: 360-563-9767  
 E-Mail: [rstitt@wingedseed.com](mailto:rstitt@wingedseed.com)

**NSS CONSERVATION DIVISION CO-CHAIRS**

Val Hildreth-Werker & Jim Werker  
 P.O. Box 207  
 Hillsboro, NM 88042  
 PH: 505-895-5050  
 E-Mail: [werks@zianet.com](mailto:werks@zianet.com)

**DIRECTORS AT LARGE**

John Hoffelt  
 208 Cheatham Avenue  
 Smyrna, TN 37167  
 PH: 615-459-6594  
 E-Mail: [mossyguy@comcast.net](mailto:mossyguy@comcast.net)

Brian Roebuck  
 94 Magnolia Lane  
 Normandy, TN 37360  
 PH: 931-455-8658  
 E-Mail: [solow@charter.net](mailto:solow@charter.net)

Jo Schaper  
 46 Cedar Drive  
 Pacific, MO 63069  
 PH: 636-271-8380  
 E-Mail: [joschaper@socket.net](mailto:joschaper@socket.net)

Rickard Toomey  
 Kartchner Caverns State Park  
 PO Box 1849  
 Benson, AZ 85602  
 PH: 520-293-6996  
 E-Mail: [rtoomey@pr.state.az.us](mailto:rtoomey@pr.state.az.us)

James Wilbanks  
 PO Box 34  
 Rising Fawn, GA 30738  
 PH: 706-462-2316  
 E-Mail: [jimgail69@earthlink.net](mailto:jimgail69@earthlink.net)



**INSIDE**

**PAGE**

Committee Approves Domenici Bill to Protect Ft. Stanton Cave	1
NSS Convention 2005 - Conservation in the South Addition	1
IU Spelunkers Work to Clean Up Buckner's Cave	3
Call for Articles – NSS News Conservation Issue	4
Hail and farewell, Doc	4
Has Your Email Address Changed?	5

## IU Spelunkers Work to Clean Up Buckner's Cave

**Kim Cullman - Indiana Daily Student**

### Local Site Plagued by Graffiti, Trash After Partiers Leave Litter

There exists an underworld where IU students go to explore the darker corners of the state a system of caves that runs through much of southern Indiana and surrounding states, including Kentucky and Tennessee.

Locally, Buckner's Cave is about a 20-minute drive from campus and is a popular spot for the IU Caving Club to explore. Most caves are farther from campus than Buckner's, which is about as far north as Indiana caves can be found.

Bloomington resident and caving club member Tymme Laun said Buckner's used to be a heavily populated cave, sometimes with as many as a few hundred people coming through in a single weekend. The cave also used to be a hot spot for IU students to party.

"I think that many people found Buckner's to be a local hangout after it really became trashed. They got the idea that no one was taking care of the place, and therefore they could do what they wanted and get away with it," said club member and graduate student Jessica Deli.

The cave has lost much of its natural environment to graffiti and large amounts of litter.

"Graffiti definitely has impacted many of the local cavers who vow never to return to Buckner's because (graffiti) has ruined their desire to visit, wade through the trash and look at the ugliness," Laun said.

The IUCC has made it a goal to try to restore the natural environment inside Buckner's. The group is working on removing as much of the graffiti as possible and often cleans up litter along the way during its caving expeditions.

"We try to leave the caves as we found them, if not better," club member and graduate student Marianne Batchelder said.

It is common for one of the clubs's caving trips to include clean-up work. Graffiti removal is one of the newest techniques for restoring Buckner's. It involves using wire brushes to scrape paint from

the walls and into trash bags and disposing of the bags in the garbage. The challenge in this process is to remove the graffiti without destroying the walls of the cave, some of which contain history as well as nature.

"I think most of the signatures started being added in the Signature Room after it was named 'Signature Room' in the 'Spelunker's Guide to the Caves of the Garrison Chapel Valley.' Locals figured it was a place to write their name, sort of like a log book, when in fact it held some historic signatures, many of which have now been destroyed, or nearly so," Deli said.

In past years, other local groups, including the Boy Scouts of America and IU Outdoor Adventures, have spent time at Buckner's working on restoration; however, neither have current plans to continue work this year.

The IUCC is also trying to organize some conservation projects and is planning a work day along with the Richard Blenz Nature Conservancy for members to get together and continue to clean up Buckner's.

The club also takes monthly trips to different caves in the Bloomington and Monroe County area. The club members meet at 7:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of every month in the Geology building and discuss a range of environmental issues. Club members travel around the state to spend a few hours underground, crawling, climbing and hiking.

"I like the challenge. It's kind of a full body workout, not just hiking and not just walking," Batchelder said.

"Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints and kill nothing but time," Batchelder said, quoting the caver's motto, adding, "We are trying to teach respectful caving"

## Call for Articles – NSS News Conservation Issue

### Jim Werker and Val Hildreth-Werker

NSS News Conservation Issue—

Send articles, updates, and squibs on cave and karst conservation activities to the NSS Conservation Committee Co-Chairs, Jim Werker and Val Hildreth-Werker, [werks@zianet.com](mailto:werks@zianet.com)

Jim and Val serve as the editors for the annual conservation issue of the NSS News.

Help produce a thorough NSS overview of worldwide conservation research, projects, and cave/karst awareness efforts.

- Submit articles, updates, protection concerns, conservation opportunities, and appreciation for individuals or groups to [werks@zianet.com](mailto:werks@zianet.com).

- Send submissions now, before the end of the year. Submit conservation pieces from one

paragraph to several pages. Please do not exceed 2500 words (or a 15,000 character and space count). Submit photos as slides, prints, or e-files. Check the NSS News Submission Guidelines and Style Sheet available on the NSS website [www.caves.org](http://www.caves.org) (We prefer to receive submissions by e-mail before December 31, but the final deadline is January 15, 2005.)

- Please give notice that you plan to submit—send an e-mail now.

Jim Werker and Val Hildreth-Werker,  
NSS Conservation Co-Chairs,  
PO Box 207, Cuna Cueva Hwy 27, Hillsboro, New Mexico 88042-0207.  
Voice: 505.895.5050 E-mail: [werks@zianet.com](mailto:werks@zianet.com)

## Hail and Farewell, Doc Warren Chancellor Lewis (8856RL, OS, FE)

Warren Chancellor Lewis died Wednesday, October 12, in Albuquerque, Exactly two weeks short of his 90th birthday. Born in Cape Girardeau, MO, he was the second of five children of Walter Glen and Ethel May Macurdy Lewis. He attended the University of Nebraska Medical School and practiced Internal Medicine, with special interests in cardiology and improving nursing-home care. Later in his career, he became active in forensic psychiatry, performing mental examinations for the judicial system. The great themes of his life were natural history, science, and music. He applied a tenacious curiosity to observations of birds and bats, orchids and decorative bulbs, and wind and weather. "Doc" Lewis was the author of over 60 papers on cave-science subjects, such as cave-associated illnesses and air movement in caves. In 1999 he was awarded the National Speleological Society's President's Award for Contributions to Speleology. Up until his death, he was actively reading in issues as diverse and challenging as clear-air turbulence and the basic structures of the universe. Through the years, Dr. Lewis sang baritone in 23 choirs and choruses, and

he played double bass in the Rockford (IL) Symphony Orchestra for 35 years. After moving to Albuquerque, he played with the Symphony of Albuquerque, the Rio Grande Symphony, and the Hoffmantown Church Orchestra. He is survived by his wife, Marjorie Seitz Lewis; and a large family of four children (Wendy Orley, Kathryn Parmentier, Roger Lewis, and David Lewis); three stepchildren (Judith Groves, Tom Lathrop, and Janet Fischer); 15 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. In addition, he leaves his brothers, Glen and Fred Lewis; and his sister, Patricia Lewis. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the National Cave and Karst Research Institute, 1400 Commerce Dr., Carlsbad, NM 88220, or the Albuquerque Youth Symphony, PO Box 30961, Albuquerque, NM 87190. A memorial service will be held at 10 am on Saturday, November 12, 2005 at the First Unitarian Church, 3701 Carlisle NE, Albuquerque. Arrangements by Sunrise Funeral Options 7601 Wyoming Blvd., NE Albuquerque, NM 87109 (505) 821-0010.

## Has Your Email Address Changed?

It seems that email addresses are the most impermanent of contact information. Please be sure that the Cave Conservation & Management Section is updated should your email address change. We've gone to a cheaper membership for those who save us mailing costs by taking the *Cave Conservationist* via email. Should we get a bounce back from your email address, we will send one paper copy to you. That paper copy will arrive with the following message, "Email bounced, see notice inside" on the address label. This is the "notice inside," if you receive an unexpected paper copy with that line on the address label, immediately send your correct email address to Treasurer, Eugene Vale. Otherwise you may miss the succeeding issues of the *Cave Conservationist*. Thank you for your continuing support of the Cave Management & Conservation Section of the NSS.

## The Cave Conservationist

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## Editor's Address

Lynn Roebuck  
94 Magnolia Lane  
Normandy, TN 37360-9504  
E-mail: pretzlgirl@charter.net

## Dues/Renewal

Payable to: CCMS  
c/o Eugene Vale  
46 Cedar Drive  
Pacific, MO 63069-3414  
E-mail: eugenevale@socket.net

## Printing/Postal Distribution

Robert Hoke  
6304 Kaybro Street  
Laurel, MD 20707-2621  
E-mail: bob@hoke.net

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The NSS Cave Conservation and Management Section is open to all members of the National Speleological Society as well as those interested in the conservation, management and protection of caves. Members receive the newsletter *The Cave Conservationist* and are entitled to vote at the annual meeting. Annual membership dues: \$5.00/year to receive *The Cave Conservationist* electronically and \$10.00/year to receive *The Cave Conservationist* by regular mail. A membership application can be found on our website. The Section presents two annual awards to a NSS Grotto and a NSS Group that have made significant contributions towards conservation or management of cave or karst resources. For more information concerning The NSS Cave Conservation and Management Section please visit our website. <http://www.caves.org/section/ccms>

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**THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY – VOL 24 - 4**  
**CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT SECTION – NOV 2005**  
**C/O Eugene Vale**  
46 Cedar Drive  
Pacific MO 63069-3414



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