

THE CAVE CONSERVATIONIST

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Rep. Hill Tours Indiana's Lost River Cave and Gets Update on Possible Land Exchange

August 14, 2007 press release from Rep. Hill's office:

WASHINGTON, DC. – Congressman Baron Hill toured the Lost River Cave yesterday afternoon and received a briefing from the Nature Conservancy on the possible boundary line exchange involving land around the Lost River.

"I enjoyed crawling around in the cave and discovering all of the interesting and unique animals that live there," Hill said. "I was very impressed by the beauty I found within the cave and learned a great deal about it."

Hill toured the cave with representatives from the Nature Conservancy, Indiana Karst Conservancy of the National Speleological Society and the Hoosier National Forest.

During the tour, Hill saw animals such as the cave salamander and crayfish. According to the Indiana Karst Conservancy of the National Speleological Society, the Lost River Cave has a globally significant fauna with species that are not found anywhere else.

Hill was also briefed on the possible boundary line exchange that would allow the National Forest Service to purchase or accept donated land to the Hoosier National Forest for preservation and recreation in and around the Lost River.

The Nature Conservancy is specifically supporting a boundary line exchange that would remove approximately 16,900 acres of territory in Dubois and Orange Counties from the Hoosier National Forest while adding 16,500 acres of territory in Orange County focusing around Orangeville and the Lost River Cave system.

"I had a fascinating tour of the Lost River Cave and learned so much about it," Hill said. "It truly is one of Southern Indiana's treasures and we must do all we can to preserve it."

* * * * *

Lost River Karst System, Mammoth Cave National Park Included in Sierra Club's "52 Places to Save"

The Sierra Club publication entitled "*America's Wild Legacy*," issued in September 2007, reports on 52 significant, environmentally sensitive wild places – one for each of the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C.

Included in the "52 places" are Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky and the Lost River Karst system in Indiana. Also on the list is Hawaii's Maha'ulepu beach, the last accessible undeveloped coastal area on Kaua'i and the home to native plants and endangered animals, including reclusive cave-dwelling species.



Cave Conservation and Management Section of the National Speleological Society



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Senate Committee Passes Salazar-Allard Bill on South Park National Heritage Area

July 25th, 2007 - Washington, D.C. – [Press Release excerpt] – U.S. Senators Ken Salazar (D-Colo.) and Wayne Allard (R-Colo.) announced that the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources passed their bill to create the South Park National Heritage Area.

“South Park is a unique region in Colorado; its people, its geography and its history make Colorado a better place,” said Senator Salazar. “I am proud of the work of local residents and leaders to try to preserve South Park’s rich culture and heritage. That is why, this National Heritage Area designation, which will help to rehabilitate old structures and increase public awareness of the area, is vital.”

“The proposed South Park National Heritage Area represents profound religious, cultural and historical significance,” said Senator Allard. “The language included in this legislation not only preserves the important historic value of the area, but will protect and strengthen water rights within the South Park National Heritage Area boundaries. I will continue to work to ensure that this legislation is signed into law.”

The bill would designate an area in Central Colorado as a National Heritage Area, which makes the area eligible for federal grants and funding, and will help to preserve its unique character.

“The Park County Board of County Commissioners unequivocally supports Senate designation of the South Park National Heritage Area,” said Doc McKay, District 3 Park County Commissioner. “Designated in 1997, the South Park State Heritage has become one of the most successful local heritage programs in the Rocky Mountain Region, with more than 70 active partners and \$17 million in project accomplishments. We are extremely pleased that our bipartisan National Heritage Area bill is moving forward in the Senate.”

Porcupine Cave Discussed in Senate Committee Report on South Park Bill

Excerpt from Senate Report No. 110-171, 110th Congress, 1st Session (Sept. 17, 2007):

“The mountainous region in the southwest corner of South Park. . . includes Porcupine Cave, one of the richest and most diverse paleontological sites in North America. At an elevation of 9,400 feet, Porcupine Cave contains a vertebrate faunal collection from the Middle Pleistocene Era in North America.”

Tennessee Cave was Under a Waterfall – But Now the Water’s Gone

The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* wrote on October 21 that the abundant mountain spring water that had supplied the town of Orme, Tennessee (pop. 140) now has dried up to little more than a trickle. The town’s spring used to cascade down a limestone wall in a 200-foot waterfall, with a popular cave beneath it.

Today, beset by drought, the town draws its water from a fire hydrant two miles away across the Alabama border. Using a couple of old trucks, the town transports the water to its 17,500-gallon tank, from which the mayor releases water to the citizens for a three hour period every evening. Understandably, having water for only a short, specific time late in the day affects the lives of everyone in town.

The *Journal-Constitution* reports that the people of Orme have learned two big lessons: “Never take water for granted, and prepare for the long haul.” Fortunately, Orme has gotten an emergency federal grant, and soon should have a pipeline connected to the Bridgeport, Alabama water system.

Short Scoops

Imported fire ants sting people and animals, and damage agriculture to the tune of \$67 million a year in Texas alone, says the USDA in the September issue of its publication *Agricultural Research*. (Although the article doesn't say it, fire ants also threaten rare cave fauna.) The good news is that some help is on the way. Approaches that the USDA has supported, in cooperation with universities and state agencies, include the release of tiny insects called "phroid flies." A phroid fly lays a single egg inside a fire ant's body, where the immature fly, or maggot, grows – ultimately resulting in the fire ant's head falling off. Scientists also are working on the possibility of exposing fire ants to deadly pathogens, such as protozoan parasites and viruses, but need to be certain that the pathogens infect only imported fire ants.

Another invasive species was the subject of an article in the October 26 *Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter*. Garlic mustard, an edible green plant brought to this country from its native Europe, has become a threat to the ecology of American woodlands. The 76-acre Cherney Maribel Caves County Park in Maribel, Wisconsin now has about 32 acres overgrown with garlic mustard. Garlic mustard has become dominant in the U.S. because it lacks natural controls, and it continues to crowd out native wildflowers and compete with tree seedlings. The plant's seeds stick to pants legs and shoes, and are spread easily: One volunteer who had been helping to pull up garlic mustard at Maribel Caves soon found some growing in her own garden. Supporters of Maribel Caves have plans to install a boot brush and trail sign to help prevent the spread of seeds by visitors.

LiveScience.com wrote on October 3 that researchers from Georgia Tech had used vertical cross-sections of stalagmites collected from caves in Borneo to produce a high resolution, continuous record of the rainforest region's climate over the past 25,000 years

The *Helena Independent Record* reported on October 7 that Montana has thousands of abandoned mines, and that nobody seems to know where many of them are. Old mining claims were issued in 20-acre parcels, and became private property when the people with the claims made them valid by working them. These parcels are great for subdivisions, but as more people move into mined areas they keep finding more mineshafts, and sometimes falling into them. It's not just new residents who stumble across long-forgotten mines, however. One man who had lived on his family's property for 60 years was lucky to recover from the injuries he suffered when he drove his four-wheeler through some sagebrush on his ranch and crashed into an abandoned mine.

In an October 10 editorial, the *St. Petersburg Times* urged state officials and a local golf course owner to revisit the possibility of a land purchase that could preserve a spectacular cave. The *Times* expressed doubt that the owners of World Woods golf course, located in northern Hernando County, Florida, had done enough to protect Brooksville Ridge Cave, which lies on their property. Vandals have "desecrated" the cave, considered a geologic marvel by experts, with the loss of dozens of 30,000-year-old stalactites and helectites taken from the cave. An earlier effort by the Nature Conservancy to broker a purchase of the land failed when the owners rejected the (still-undisclosed) offer, but since then development plans for the property have languished and the paper thinks the parties should try again to reach a deal.

Just for fun: "So if you want to avoid being bit by a vampire bat, do not be a cow near a South American rainforest."
(Cate Marquis, "Let's go bats for Halloween," *The Current* (UM-St. Louis student newspaper), Oct. 29, 2007)

The Cave Conservationist

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Membership in the Conservation and Management Section

The Conservation and Management Section is open to all members of the National Speleological Society as well as those interested in cave conservation and management. 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 section membership application can be found in select issues or on our website <http://www.caves.org/section/ccms> Membership dues may be sent to the Treasurer, Eugene Vale eugenevale@socket.net Newsletter printing or postal distribution information may be obtained from Robert Hoke bob@rhoke.net The Section presents two annual awards to an NSS Grotto and an NSS Group that have made significant contributions towards conservation or management of cave or karst resources. For more information concerning The Cave Conservation and Management Section of the NSS please visit our website. <http://www.caves.org/section/ccms>



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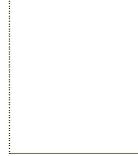
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