

THE CAVE CONSERVATIONIST

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The Cave Conservation and Management Section of the NSS

Congress Proposes to Enhance Protections For Oregon Caves National Monument

National Parks Conservation Association press release, June 19, 2008:

Grants Pass, OR - In order to expand economic development opportunities, increase recreation and protect the drinking water for some 80,000 visitors a year, Congress is proposing to enhance protections for the Oregon Caves National Monument in southwest Oregon. The legislation, introduced today, would add approximately 4,000 acres to the Monument by transferring land from the U.S. Forest Service to the National Park Service.

Known primarily for its vast marble caves, the 480-acre Monument was established in 1909 by proclamation of President William Howard Taft. The National Park Service formally proposed adjusting the Monument boundary to encompass nearby caves and the surrounding Cave Creek Watershed several times - first in 1939, then in 1949, and most recently in 2000.

The legislation would also designate about seven miles of streams within the Monument as "wild," "scenic," or "recreational" under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including the River Styx, which would be the first underground river in the country to receive such designation. This sub-surface stream maintains many of the caves' unique features.

"The increased protections for the Oregon Caves are a long time in coming, and we are extremely pleased," said Sean Smith of the National Parks Conservation Association. "This legislation recognizes Oregon Caves as an extraordinary national treasure and ensures that it remains protected for our children and grandchildren."

The proposal would also protect the drinking water of the Monument from possible contamination from cattle by allowing the buyout of grazing permits within the expanded boundary and upstream watershed. Grazing has long been a concern of the Park Service, which collects its water from a surface stream that flows through the Bigelow Lakes Botanical Area at the heart of the allotment. Funds for the buyout would come from private sources, and all parties involved are agreeable to the proposed grazing retirement.

"We are working with the rancher to come up with a solution that works for everyone," said Joseph Vaile of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center. "The Monument and the local economy will be enhanced by this proposal. In order to make it a reality, the rancher needs to be compensated for the money he stands to lose from his investment in the operation. We're doing everything in our power to make sure that happens."

The legislation, which is part of the Oregon Treasures legislative package, also encourages restoration that would enhance the Monument's forest to make it more fire resilient. Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers protections are also included for Mount Hood, as well as Wild and Scenic protections for tributaries to the Rogue River.

"I want to thank Representative DeFazio and Senator Wyden for championing this legislation that will greatly benefit the communities in Josephine County," said Greg Walters, Cave Junction resident, historian, and co-owner of Jefferson State Financial, a local insurance company.

(More on this story, page 4)



Cave Conservation and Management Section of the National Speleological Society



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Congress Hears Testimony on Bill to Help Cave & Karst Institute Receive Federal Funds

Sen. Bingaman press release, June 17, 2008:

WASHINGTON – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee today heard testimony in favor of legislation sponsored by U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman that would help the National Cave and Karst Research Institute in Carlsbad successfully compete for increased federal funding. U.S. Senator Pete Domenici is a cosponsor of the bill.

In 1997, Bingaman introduced the bill -- which was later signed into law -- that created the National Cave and Karst Research Institute. The bill required the Institute to seek outside funding to match the federal dollars invested in the research performed there.

While the Institute has been successful in securing federal funds, the 50 percent matching requirement has prevented it from competing for additional federal grant opportunities. The Senator's legislation before the committee today seeks to eliminate the matching requirement in order to help the Institute achieve its full potential.

In her testimony, Karen Taylor-Goodrich, Associate Director of Visitor and Resource Protection at the National Park Service acknowledged that the 50 percent matching requirement "has had a chilling effect on the ability of the Institute to partner and collaborate on mutually beneficial projects and initiatives with federal agencies."

"I am pleased that the administration agrees that federal funding is vital in helping advance the Cave and Karst Institute's goals, and is willing to make it easier to invest federal dollars in research performed there," said Bingaman, Chairman of the Energy and Natural Resource Committee.

"This bill would make it easier for the Cave and Karst Institute to carry out its important work. Today's testimony should allow us to move forward with gaining Senate approval of this bill," said Domenici, ranking member of the committee.

The goals of the Cave and Karst Institute are to maintain a scientific knowledge of cave resources, participate in and facilitate research projects, and promote environmentally sound, sustainable resource management practices. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is expected to vote on the bill this summer.

Bell Witch Cave Added to National Register

Excerpts from Tennessee Dept. of Environment and Conservation news release, May 6, 2008:

Nashville, Tenn – The Tennessee Historical Commission has announced seven Tennessee sites have been added to the National Register of Historic Places. That National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. It is part of a nationwide program that coordinates and supports efforts to identify, evaluate and protect historic resources.

Sites recently added to the National Register of Historic Places include:

Bell Witch Cave – Many people know the Bell Witch legend, but few realize that the cave is an important example of recreation and tourism in the state. Located about one-half mile from Adams (Robertson County), the cave became a popular spot for tourists or thrill seekers as early as 1817. Tennessee has thousands of caves, but none of them compares to the Bell Witch Cave for having an enduring legend. Early in its history, the story remained regional in interest, but the legend has extended much further over the years. Now, approximately 17,000 visitors come to the cave each year.

Bills Seek Greater Protection for Rogue River and Oregon Caves Monument

Excerpted from Sen. Wyden press release, June 18, 2008:

Washington, D.C. – Working to ensure that the natural beauty of Oregon is perpetually protected, U.S. Senator Ron Wyden introduced two separate pieces of legislation today to extend Wild and Scenic River protections to waters that feed the lower Rogue River and to expand the boundary of the Oregon Caves National Monument. Companion legislation is being introduced today in the House of Representatives by U.S. Reps. Peter DeFazio, Earl Blumenauer, Darlene Hooley, and David Wu.

“Protecting Oregon’s special places sometimes means you have to protect the surrounding land and waterways that affect them. You can’t keep the Rogue pure and wild if the waters that feed it aren’t – and you can’t protect the underground parts of the Oregon Caves unless you take care of the land above and around them,” said Wyden.

The Lower Rogue Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2008 will extend the protection of Wild and Scenic Rivers designation beyond the Rogue River itself to waterways that feed the river, including Galice Creek, Little Windy Creek, Jenny Creek, Long Gulch and 36 other tributaries of the Rogue. In 2008, American Rivers named the Rogue River and its tributaries as the second most endangered river in the U.S. Wyden’s proposal would help address the issues threatening the Rogue by protecting 143 miles of Wild and Scenic tributaries that feed the river with cold, clean water.

The Rogue River is one of our nation’s premier recreation destinations, famous for its free flowing waters, which provide a wealth of rafting and fishing opportunities. The river’s headwaters start in one of Oregon’s other great gems - Crater Lake National Park - and ultimately empty into the Pacific Ocean near

Gold Beach on the Southwest Oregon coast. The Rogue River is home to runs of coho, spring and fall chinook, winter and summer steelhead – and it has the special distinction of being one of only several rivers in the country with runs of green sturgeon.

The Oregon Caves National Monument Boundary Adjustment Act of 2008 will protect the majesty of the natural treasures both above and under the ground at the National Monument. The bill would expand the Monument boundary by 4,084 acres to include the entire Cave Creek Watershed, management of which would be transferred from the United States Forest Service to the National Park Service. In addition, the bill would designate at least 9.6 miles of rivers and tributaries as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including the first subterranean Wild and Scenic River, an underground portion of Cave Creek known as the River Styx.

Established by a Presidential Proclamation in 1909, the Oregon Caves National Monument is a 480-acre natural wonder located in the botanically rich Siskiyou Mountains. It was originally set aside because of its unusual scientific interest and importance. The cave ecosystem provides habitat for numerous plants and animals, including some state-sensitive species such as Townsend’s big-eared bats and several cave-adapted species of arthropods found only in the Oregon Caves and nowhere else. The caves possess a significant collection of Pleistocene aged fossils, including jaguar and grizzly bear. The National Park Service has formally proposed a boundary modification numerous times, first in 1939, again in 1949, and most recently in 2000.

Maps of the areas affected by the bills introduced today can be found at:

http://wyden.senate.gov/newsroom/0608oregon_caves_expansion.pdf

http://wyden.senate.gov/newsroom/0608rogue_proposed_additions.pdf .

Short Scoops, Part 1 . . .

A report published in the Jan./Mar. 2008 issue of the journal *Neotropical Ichthyology* describes a new species of cave trichomycterid catfish discovered in the Lapa do Sumidouro Cave in the Mambai karst area of Central Brazil. The population of the species is relatively large, and the cave is not currently visited by tourists, but the researchers see future risks to the catfish and recommend creation of a conservation unit encompassing all of the Mambai karst area.

DNA from dried human feces recovered from Oregon's Paisley Cave dates to 14,300 years ago, some 1,200 years before Clovis culture, according to a team of scientists whose findings were discussed in an April 3, 2008 article at *ScienceDaily.com*. During two summers of field work in four caves, researchers retrieved threads of sinew and plant fibers, hide, basketry, animal remains, and diverse kinds of feces. The late Professor Cressman of the University of Oregon had investigated Paisley Caves during the 1930s but had found little acceptance of his findings. Armed with more modern science, researchers from the University of Oregon and other institutions now have vindicated Cressman's discovery that, in the caves, human cultural remains were associated with Pleistocene animals such as now extinct camels, horses and bison. Without the current DNA evidence, the pre-Clovis age of the human artifacts recovered with the animal remains could not have been proven.

The May 16, 2008 *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported that recent occurrences of mammoth sinkholes in Texas and Florida had gotten major media attention, but that some residents across parts of Kentucky's cave terrain have been coping with big sinkholes for years. Kenneth Lowe, whose herd grazes on 1,200 acres in Warren and Edmonson counties, loses almost as many cattle to sinkholes as to all other causes. A few years ago, he saw a sinkhole appear overnight and grow to 80 feet in diameter and 60 feet deep by the next day. Sinkhole collapse is a fairly common occurrence in most of Kentucky's cave country. Much of the new sinkhole activity might be attributable to a drought followed by above-normal rainfall.

In order to open Timpanagos Cave National Monument for cave tours as scheduled in early May, the Monument needed lots of person-power to move 6- to 15-foot deep mounds of snow from along the trail. The May 14, 2008 *Salt Lake Tribune* wrote that staffers shoveled for 824 hours and volunteers added 304 hours of work to open the trail to the cave, which climbs more than 1,000 feet in elevation from the visitors center.

Now that officials have removed the remains of old dynamite, Crystal Cave at Sequoia National Park has been reopened, according to the May 22, 2008 *Visalia (California) Times-Delta*. On May 15, park workers looking for spots to install lights discovered three holes with wires sticking out of them. Park officials were concerned that the wires might be attached to explosives, so they closed the cave. The park's "chief blaster" – whose job usually is to blow up boulders that have fallen on roads – removed the wires and then set off blasting caps in an effort to detonate any dynamite in the holes. After nothing ignited besides the caps, park workers cleaned out the holes, removing inert remnants of dynamite and paper from a dynamite stick. A search of the cave revealed no additional dynamite holes. Civilian Conservation Corps members used dynamite in the cave during 1938. A National Park spokesperson said that the purpose of the dynamiting probably was to make more room along a path for visitors.

The Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) of Alaska is sponsoring DNA testing in a search for living relatives of a Native man whose remains were found in a cave in southeast Alaska. The May 24, 2008 *Rome (Georgia) News-Tribune* reported that the remains, estimated to be more than 10,000 years old, were discovered in 1996 during a U.S. Forest Service archaeological survey related to a proposed timber sale on northern Prince of Wales Island. Last year, the federal government conveyed the remains to Native tribes. Alaska Natives who consent to the collection of genetic material will have DNA swabs taken, and SHI will contact anyone whose DNA is linked to the remains.

Short Scoops, Part 2 . . .

Montana state parks officials plan to begin construction in August on a visitor center for Pictograph Cave Park southeast of Billings. The May 28, 2008 *GreatFallsTribune.com* wrote that the site was used as a shelter by prehistoric hunters and contains pictographs depicting warrior figures and animals. The new building will employ “green” technologies, such as ground source heating and cooling, motion-sensor lighting, and soy foam insulation.

According to a June 17, 2008 report at the *Kansas City Star's* on-line site, Missouri state wildlife officials have found endangered cavefish and crustaceans in a natural spring on a state legislator's property. State Rep. Jim Viebrock first discovered the creatures when he ventured into the cave opening that leads to the spring, and saw “a big albino crawdad.” A state conservation official later confirmed the find and also discovered that the cave contained endangered blind Ozark catfish. The Missouri Department of Conservation said that there are 35 known cavefish sites in the greater Ozarks area. Conservation officials have studied the spring and performed tests to ensure that the nearby septic system is not contaminating the cave, but Rep. Viebrock is blocking other efforts to protect the spring. He is vice chairman of a House appropriations committee and wants to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest that might stem from state spending on his property.

The July 6, 2008 *Washington Post* reported that Lascaux cave in France, which contains Stone Age art from 17,000 years ago, has become the focus of a growing debate over whether heritage sites should be open to the public or reserved to scientists. To date, almost every effort to address problems in the cave has given rise to new dangers. For example, a formaldehyde foot wash used to disinfect cave visitors killed off friendly organisms that might have checked the growth of fungus. An air conditioning system intended to prevent the growth of microorganisms triggered an outbreak of white fungus. After the white fungus was under control, black spots began spreading throughout

much of the cave – possibly due to lighting used to support detailed recording of the cave art. Treatment with ammonia has stopped the spread of the black spots in most but not all of the treated zones, and the cave's scientific team is divided over how to proceed.

According to the World Health Organization, a Dutch tourist died from the Marburg virus after visiting a Ugandan cave inhabited by fruit bats. As a result, said the July 11, 2008 on-line *BBC News*, the WHO has warned people not to go into Ugandan caves with bats. There is no treatment or vaccine for Marburg, a virus related to Ebola with historical mortality rates of 80 to 90%. In a somewhat similar vein, the *Jerusalem Post* of August 12, 2008 reported that two boys who had visited the Carmel cave near Haifa had contracted “cave fever,” a disease caused by *Borrelia* bacteria, which live on cave ticks, which in turn sometimes are carried on the backs of porcupines. Both boys suffered from weakness and high fever, but have improved after antibiotic treatment. In rare instances complications from cave fever can be fatal.

Researchers at the University of Calgary report that “barotrauma” is a significant cause of bat fatalities at wind turbines. In the August 26, 2008 issue of *Current Biology*, the researchers observed that the relatively high fatality rate for bats at some wind energy facilities had been perplexing, given that echolocating bats detect moving objects better than stationary ones. The researchers proposed a hypothesis that bat deaths are caused by barotrauma resulting from rapid air pressure reduction near moving turbine blades. Based upon autopsies of dead bats, the researchers found that 90% of bat fatalities studied at wind facilities involved internal hemorrhaging consistent with barotraumas, and that direct contact with turbine blades only accounted for about half of the fatalities. They also suggested that one reason why there are fewer bird than bat fatalities might be that birds have respiratory anatomy less susceptible to barotraumas than that of mammals.

The Cave Conservationist

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Cave Conservation and Management Section of the National Speleological Society Membership Form



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