



NSS Policy for Cave Conservation

The National Speleological Society and the Cave Diving Section believes; that caves have unique scientific, recreational, and scenic values; that these values are endangered by both carelessness and intentional vandalism; that these values, once gone, cannot be recovered; and that the responsibility for protecting caves must be assumed by those who study and enjoy them.

Accordingly, the intention of the Society is to work for the preservation of caves with a realistic policy supported by effective programs for: the encouragement of self-discipline among cavers; education and research concerning the causes and prevention of cave damage; and special projects, including cooperation with other groups similarly dedicated to the conservation of natural areas.

Specifically: All contents of a cave – formations, life and loose deposits – are significant for its enjoyment and interpretation.

Therefore, caving parties should leave a cave as they find it. They should find means for the removal of waste; Limit marking to a few, small and removable signs as are needed for surveys; and, especially, exercise extreme care not to accidentally break or soil formations, disturb life forms or unnecessarily increase the number of disfiguring paths through an area. Scientific collection is professional, selective and minimal. The collecting of mineral or biological material for display purposes, including previously broken or dead specimens, is never justified, as it encourages others to collect and destroy the interests of the cave.

The Society encourages projects such as: establishing cave preserves; placing entrance gates where appropriate; opposing the sale of speleothems; supporting effective protective measures; cleaning and restoring over-used caves; cooperating with private cave owners by providing knowledge about their cave and assisting them in protecting their cave and property from damage during cave visits; and encourage commercial cave owners to make use of their opportunity to aid the public in understanding caves and the importance of their conservation.

Where there is reason to believe that publications of cave locations will lead to vandalism before adequate protection can be established, the Society will oppose such publication.

It is the duty of every Society member to take personal responsibility for spreading a consciousness of the cave conservation problem to each potential user of caves. Without this, the beauty and value of our caves will not long remain with us.

“I have read the nss conservation policy, and in support thereof, I hereby apply for membership.”

SIGNATURE: _____ **Date:** _____