

APPENDIX AJ

CAVE and KARST PRESERVATION POLICY

Caves and areas of karst and pseudokarst development are sensitive environments that often interact with surface and subsurface waters and ecosystems. They frequently harbor recreational, historical, and natural resources of considerable significance.

The National Speleological Society believes that all caves and cavernous areas are important; that cave wilderness, like surface wilderness, is a valuable resource that should be protected regardless of official designations or boundaries; and that caves and cavernous areas, with their unique environment and development, may require management measures that are independent of geographic boundaries or designations established for the management of other surface or subsurface resources.

Accordingly, the Society endorses, supports, and advocates the implementation of the following precepts:

- ∃ No cave or cavernous area should be altered or modified without a full, balanced, and conservative study of the impact of such action, including input from knowledgeable persons specifically experienced in the exploration and scientific study of caves and cave resources.
- ∃ Cave resources should be protected by keeping wild caves wild and free from human manipulations and alterations that hamper the free play of natural forces, endanger cave and karst ecosystems, or diminish the pleasure of future visitors.
- ∃ Special efforts should be made to preserve the integrity of ecological and hydrologic systems within caves and cavernous terrains.

Where formal designation of Cave Wilderness is a useful tool in protecting this resource, the National Speleological Society will support such designation through actions of its Board of Governors.