

**SCCi Cave Visitation Policy
for WNS Concerns**

Adopted: November 14, 2009

Hibernating bats are a critical component of the cave ecosystems that SCCi members have committed so much to help protect. While the causes, effects, and transmission mechanisms of the White Nose Syndrome (WNS) are presently unknown, the estimated 95% mortality rate among affected bats mandates serious consideration and deep concern.

The SCCi Board of Directors has adopted this policy in order to help reduce the potential that cavers could inadvertently introduce the fungus associated with WNS into our caves. If you have any questions, please contact the appropriate SCCi Property Manager or Management Team.

All SCCi Cave Preserves

Before and after visiting any Preserve, thoroughly clean and inspect all clothing and caving equipment, to avoid carrying soil, water, or other substances from one cave to another.

SCCi Cave Preserves With Significant Bat Populations

All SCCi Cave Preserves containing significant populations of hibernating bats are closed until such time as the SCCi Board of Directors determines that it is safe to reopen them. This includes:

- Tennessee – Hardins, Holly Creek, Rattling, and Wolf River Caves.
- Alabama - Anderson and Fern Caves (Surprise Pit and Fern Sink Entrance; others closed by the USFWS.).
- Georgia - Fricks Cave.
- Kentucky - Frenchman Knob Cave.
- West Virginia - Lobelia Saltpeter Cave.

SCCi Cave Preserves in WNS-Affected States¹ (currently West Virginia)

- Obtain an Access Permit. In addition to any permit requirements contained in the Cave Preserve Management Plan, complete and return Attachment 1 to the SCCi Property Manager.
- Before and after visiting the Preserve, thoroughly clean and decontaminate all clothing, footwear or gear previously used in a WNS-Affected State or Adjacent² State, following the procedures outlined in the latest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidelines (see Attachment 2).
- Do not use any clothing, footwear or gear that you cannot adequately decontaminate.

SCCi Cave Preserves in Adjacent States² (currently Tennessee and Kentucky)

- Obtain an Access Permit. In addition to any permit requirements contained in the Cave Preserve Management Plan, complete and return Attachment 1 to the SCCi Property Manager.
- Before and after visiting the Preserve, thoroughly clean and decontaminate all clothing, footwear or gear that has been previously used in a cave in an Adjacent State (or in a WNS-Affected State prior to 2006), following the procedures outlined in the latest USFWS guidelines (see Attachment 2).
- Do not use any clothing, footwear or gear that you cannot adequately decontaminate.
- Do not use any clothing, footwear or gear that has been used since January 1, 2006 in any cave in a WNS-Affected State, regardless of decontamination protocols followed.

SCCi Cave Preserves Outside the WNS Region (currently Alabama, Georgia, and Florida)

- Before and after visiting the Preserve, thoroughly clean and decontaminate all clothing, footwear or gear that has been previously used in a cave in a Adjacent State (or in a WNS-Affected State prior to 2006), following the procedures outlined in the latest USFWS guidelines (see Attachment 2).
- Do not use any clothing, footwear or gear that you cannot adequately decontaminate.
- Do not use any clothing, footwear or gear that has been used since January 1, 2006 in any cave in a WNS-Affected State, regardless of decontamination protocols followed.

¹ **WNS-Affected States:** currently New York, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

² **Adjacent States:** currently Rhode Island, Maine, Maryland, Delaware, Ohio, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky.

ATTACHMENT 1.

**Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc.
White Nose Syndrome (WNS) Permit Questionnaire and Compliance Statement**

Due to concerns regarding the possible introduction of White Nose Syndrome (WNS) into caves owned or managed by the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCi), the SCCi Board of Directors has instituted some new requirements for access to our caves in WNS-Affected States (currently West Virginia) and Adjacent States (currently Tennessee and Kentucky).

The SCCi takes the WNS issue very seriously. In choosing to keep some preserves open, we must be more proactive in our management. This includes collecting data about visitors to our preserves and advising all visitors of the importance the SCCi places on having clean clothing and equipment in compliance with US Fish & Wildlife Service standards. All of the preserves we have re-opened are now managed under these conditions. Most already had a permit process to access them, and those that did not are being placed under appropriate permitting systems.

Thank you for your understanding and compliance with these requests and procedures. We are doing our best to balance the management and protection aspects of cave conservation in accordance with the SCCi mission and purpose. We appreciate your help and your continued support of the SCCi.

Please complete the following (use additional pages if needed):

Complete Personnel List and Recent Caving Experience by State

	Name	Residence (City, State)	States caved in over the last 12 months.		Name	Residence (City, State)	States caved in over the last 12 months.
1.				7.			
2.				8.			
3.				9.			
4.				10.			
5.				11.			
6.				12.			

Compliance Statement

I have read, and have advised all participants of, the SCCi Cave Visitation Policy for WNS Concerns. All participants hereby agree to comply with the requirements of the policy, and understand that future permits to any of us may depend on full compliance by all of us.

Signature of Trip Leader

Printed Name

Date

ATTACHMENT 2.

Quick Reference for White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) Containment and Decontamination Procedures for Cave Activity U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – June 2009

The USFWS asks that people please follow all cave closure advisories; i.e. recreational caving should not occur in WNS affected and adjacent states. The main goal for this protocol is to put in place reasonable practices that reduce the transfer of infectious agents, which potentially affect bats, from one cave to another cave. We recommend that you follow these practices any time you plan cave activities outside the WNS affected zone. Inside and adjacent to WNS affected zone, the USFWS recommends that no recreational caving activity occur.

You should not handle bats. If you come across live or dead bats with WNS, click on these links to contact your state wildlife agency (<http://www.fws.gov/offices/statelinks.html>), e-mail WhiteNoseBats@fws.gov, or contact your nearest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services Field Office (<http://www.fws.gov/offices/>).

Prior to each caving outing, please check <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/wnscavers.html> for updates to these procedures and for cave closures.

Before caving:

A cave should only be entered with clothing, boots, and equipment that have been fully cleaned using the protocol below. We ask that you not take gear into a cave if that gear cannot be thoroughly decontaminated or disposed of (i.e. if harnesses, ropes or webbing, etc. cannot be decontaminated, we advise that you not enter caves or parts of caves requiring use of this gear).

After EVERY caving trip please abide by the following steps.

Step #1: Upon exiting a cave...

- Thoroughly scrape or brush off any dirt and mud from your clothes, boots, and gear and then place them in a sealed plastic bag or plastic container with lid to be cleaned and disinfected off site.
- Outer clothing should be removed prior to entering a vehicle after/between a site visit. A clean change of clothing is recommended. Surface cleaning of exposed skin (arms, face, neck, hands, etc.) with antibacterial hand sanitizer (i.e. Purell[®]) should occur prior to entering the vehicle's cab.

Step #2:

- **For clothing** – Wash all clothing and any appropriate equipment in washing machine using the hottest cycle possible for material and conventional detergents. Laboratory testing has found Woolite[®] fabric wash to be the best surfactant for clothing. Rinse thoroughly, and then follow by soaking with sodium hypochlorite bleach (i.e. household bleach) solution diluted to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water in a tub or plastic container. Soak for 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry.
- **For submersible gear** (i.e. soft-sided gear.) – Disinfect any equipment that can be submersed in a solution with an appropriate and compatible disinfectant such as sodium hypochlorite bleach (i.e. household bleach) solution diluted to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water in a tub or plastic container or $\geq 0.3\%$ concentration of quaternary ammonium compounds (i.e. Lysol[®] All-purpose Professional Cleaner or the antibacterial form of Formula 409[®]). Keep submersed for 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry.
- **For non-submersible gear** (i.e. hard-sided gear) – Disinfect any equipment that cannot be submersed by applying an appropriate and compatible disinfectant to the outside surface by using $\geq 0.3\%$ concentration of quaternary ammonium compounds such as Lysol[®] All-purpose Professional Cleaner, Lysol[®] disinfecting wipes or the antibacterial form of Formula 409[®]; or use sodium hypochlorite bleach (i.e. household bleach) solution diluted to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Keep on surface for 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry.
- **For boots** – Boots need to be fully scrubbed and rinsed so that all soil and organic material is removed. The entire rubber and leather boots, including soles and leather uppers, can then be disinfected with an appropriate disinfectant such as $\geq 0.3\%$ concentration of quaternary ammonium compounds (i.e. Lysol[®] All-purpose Professional Cleaner or the antibacterial form of Formula 409[®]) or sodium hypochlorite bleach (i.e. household bleach) solution diluted to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Keep on surface for 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry.
- **For ropes and harnesses** – This equipment should be dedicated to one cave or not used at all. Decontamination of vertical equipment is recommended. However, the performance integrity may be compromised by using these disinfecting agents mentioned above repeatedly. Laboratory testing is ongoing.

Note: This protocol is updated as of 6-9-09. Please visit http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html for a more comprehensive containment and decontamination protocol.