



WILLIAM J. STEPHENSON NATURE PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN
(Madison County, Alabama)

The following Preserve Management Plan was adopted by the Board of Governors of the National Speleological Society to define management of Williams J. Stephenson Nature Preserve. The intention of this plan is to protect the property and promote good relations between the NSS and neighboring landowners. Please observe the rules and encourage others to do the same so that this unique and outstanding cave may be enjoyed by all. Contact the NSS Property Managers at StephensonPreserve@caves.org if you have any questions or need to request special arrangements.

INTRODUCTION

Sixty acres of the new National Speleological Society's headquarters property, which lies within the city limits of Huntsville (AL), has been designated as a nature preserve. In the early 1800's the Davis family were the first recorded owners of this parcel of land granted from the government office in Nashville, TN. Various members of this family held ownership until the 1950's when it was sold to the Shriners'. This organization maintained the property until it was purchased by the NSS.

RESOURCES

Underground

Two caves and one pit are confirmed within the preserve which reaches from just behind the headquarters building to the top of Drake Mountain. Blue Balloon Cave has a crawl entrance and extends horizontally for 173 feet, while nearby Tree Root Cave has a chimney climb entrance, is 592 feet long, and 60 feet deep.

Biological

Although a formal critter count has not yet been done, bats and salamanders have been sighted.

Archeological/Paleontological

No significant findings have been reported at this time

Hydrological

No continuous flowing stream is known to exist on the property

ACCESS POLICY

- No special permission shall be required. However, notification of intent to visit the Preserve (or the NSS grounds in general) should be given to the Preserve Manager for Register data collection, and for individual's safety. Visits to the Preserve should coincide with NSS Office hours; Monday-Friday 8am-5pm (not open on major holidays).
- No recreational tours for pay will be permitted.

- No campfires permitted.
- Disturbing plants or animals on the property is not allowed without express permission.
- Trash/waste must be carried out by the visitor
- Parking available in designated paved areas only

MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Further research on the property will be done to expand the knowledge of its history.
- Further exploration for caves and karst features will be ongoing.
- Formal trails will be established and monitored for erosion.
- A biodiversity inventory of the caves and surface features will be conducted with local University assistance. An information kiosk will be placed at the trail head with information related to the property caves, caving safety, etc.

Commercial Use Statement: The Board of Governors of the National Speleological Society reaffirms its standing policy that bans the commercial use of our properties, and specifically, prohibits any activity where a charge of any type is made or a payment of any type made to anyone organizing or leading a trip to the cave preserve.