Hosterman’s Pit Update

By Keith Wheeland

On April 18, 1995, the Environmental Quality Board voted to eliminate Unsuitable For Mining (UFM) for the Hosterman’s Pit area. The vote to rescind was 14 yes, 5 no.

This vote was taken after the UFM petition had gone through the regulatory review process, and been approved. (Stover Caves #1 and #2 continue to have protection under UFM.)

The Nittany Grotto and the Penns Valley Conservation Association contend that the EQB had no legal authority to re-vote on this issue. I was at the meeting and heard the DER lawyer try to explain why they had legal authority to act. His reasoning was rather feeble and was based upon the fact that the Attorney General had raised objections. However, the Attorney General did not raise objections, but did ask four questions. One question concerning the Mining Permit process showed that the Attorney General’s office had not done their homework.

It’s interesting to note that there were representatives on the Environmental Quality Board who raised the question of legality. Some members of the Board agree that the action was illegal and would encourage a suit be filed in Commonwealth Court. One member of the Board (favorable to Hosterman’s) was called out of order by the Chair, even though the member made a legitimate motion. DER lawyers are looking into the matter.

The whole matter of rescinding the UFM has been a carefully orchestrated political maneuver. This was the first EQB meeting being chaired by the new Secretary of DER, James M. Self. He had to win this vote.

The Board is made up of the Secretaries of Health, Commerce, Transportation, Agriculture, Labor & Industry, and Community Affairs. Also represented are the Fish & Boat Commission, the Game Commission, the Public Utilities Commission, and the Historical & Museum Commission. In addition there is a representative from the Governor’s Policy Office, the Co-Chairs of the Senate and House committees which deal with environmental issues, plus five representatives from the Citizens Advisory Council. The administration made sure that Senator Brightbill attended the meeting (it is often the case that the senators send alternates). Senator Brightbill is a senator who has powerful influence over the purse strings of several of the members of the Board. He spoke against using UFM to save Hosterman’s Pit. Also affecting the outcome was the fact that the Director of the Governor’s Policy Office attended in person. He was there to see that the Secretaries voted with the new administration.

"So, you can see that we have not given up on our efforts to save the cave and we will continue to do our part."

One member who voted for Hosterman’s Pit, Dr. Brent Glass Executive Director of the Historical & Museum Commission, showed courage in his conviction. He could lose politically, for his vote. The others who voted for UFM were Rich Thomas representing Representative Camille George; plus three members of the Citizens Advisory Council, Mrs. Gail Rockwood, Ms. Cindy Dunn, and Mr. Bernard Hoffnur.

The Nittany Grotto is encouraged by the fact that there are persons in DER that agree that Hosterman’s Pit should be saved. They also see the rescinding action as without precedent, and without statutory authority. They think the action should be contested.

WHAT NEXT?

We have noticed that in this short time since the illegal vote, we have raised the consciousness of persons or groups who may be in a position to help us save Hosterman’s. The Nittany Grotto has sent thank-you letters to the five members of the Board who voted for UFM. In those letters, we also asked for their help in suggesting ways to save the cave.

A letter was sent to Senator Brightbill who, in the meeting, mentioned that there were other ways (besides UFM) to protect the cave. We have asked him to give us details on the procedures he mentioned.

We have sent a letter to the NSS asking if the Society would be open to being a signatory to a lawsuit to be filed in Commonwealth Court. (The Nittany Grotto cannot file a lawsuit.)

We will contact The Nature Conservancy to see if they could approach Con-Stone about purchasing the property. (The Nittany Grotto sent Con-Stone a letter in January 1994 to which there was no reply.) There is a feeling that Mr. Confer may respond to a group who has not been actively opposed to him. He is not fond of the Nittany Grotto nor the Penns Valley Conservation Association.

The last mailing we made to 512 cavers in Pennsylvania, cost us in excess of $200. We hope that the response from cavers was substantial enough to show the new administration that there is interest in saving Hosterman’s Pit.

So, you can see that we have not given up on our efforts to save the cave and we will continue to do our part.

We sincerely thank all of you who have done your part.

Keith D. Wheeland
Conservation Chairman, Nittany Grotto
2191 Mt. View Ave.
State College, PA 16801 - 7214
(814) 238-2057
Spring M.A.R. Meet Outlined

By John Cheng

As you know, the Spring M.A.R. meet is coming soon May 19-21. The site location, nestled in the big woods of Fayette "don't forget your shotgun" County, is also perched above Pennsylvania's largest cave, Laurel Caverns.

Sponsors Jim Kennedy and I are making sure that this meet will be the best caver gathering at Laurel Caverns since the 1976 NSS Convention. To give everyone an idea of the event, below is a general agenda.

Friday, May 19 6:00 p.m.-12:00 am. Follow signs to Laurel Caverns Park from Route 40 east of Uniontown. Drive through the heavily closed gate at the campground. Stop in at the lighted picnic pavilion and register. This is where you can sign up for Saturday and Sunday's trips, pick up the guidebook, make friends and find old ones.

There is free camping in the designated MAR area. Do not pull into the commercial campground unless you wish to pay an additional charge. Follow signs to the MAR camping area. There will also be a designated "quiet" camping area.

All MAR vehicles MUST ultimately park in the gravel overflow parking lot after unloading. This helps our security watch over them, and helps Laurel Caverns manage their self-guided explorers.

Saturday, May 20—8:00 Registration opens again with coffee in the picnic pavilion. At 10:00 at least three trips will organize and depart from the picnic pavilion, including a fossil hunt, Laurel Caverns cleanup, and another local cave trip. During the afternoon the climbing wall on the visitor center will be open with some loaner gear available. There is no fee for these activities.

Saturday night will feature dinner (BYOB), door prizes, at least two cave gear suppliers, and a guest speaker.

Sunday May 21—9:30 a.m. a special guided tour of Laurel Caverns will depart. Once again, there is no fee for this activity. At 11:00 a.m. a group will leave for Ohiopley State Park for a half-day whitewater tour. There is a small outfitting charge per person.

If you have not yet registered for the M.A.R., please do so that we can plan a more efficient meet. Contact Jim Kennedy (412) 246-9838 for more information.

Invertebrate Update

By Jim Kennedy

The following is an excerpt from a letter to Jim Kennedy from John Holstinger. It is included as an update to last issue's cave invertebrate article.

Just a quick note to inform you of my determination of the amphibians you sent me from Lemon Hole in Westmoreland Co., PA. The three specimens belong to Stygobromus allegheniensis, a widespread subterranean species fairly common in Pennsylvania and New York. However, your locality in Westmoreland marks a new county record for the species.

The small critters that you found in the water in Schofer Cave are all collembolans, representing three families: Entomobryidae, Onychiuridae, and Isotomidae. All three families are represented in caves. None of the specimens you collected appear to be modified and are probably troglobous or accidental.

Thanks for the amphibians.

CCLUM PROJECT UPDATE

By Jim Kennedy

(from phone conversations with Keith Christenson)

Several exciting events have occurred since the brief write-up on the Upper Susquehanna Basin MAR Bulletin was announced in the last issue of the MAR Breakdown. Nicknamed the CCLUM Project after the counties being investigated (Columbia, Clinton, Lycoming, Union, and Montour), most of the recent fieldwork has centered on Sugar Valley in Clinton County. Digs spearheaded by a group of eager Nitany Grotto members known as Foom and the Boonehole Rangers have so far yielded two caves.

Boone's Shower Cave is a new cave situated in a large, active sink. So far, 350' of passages have been surveyed and about 200' of known passage is left to be mapped. The cave has 71' of relief and the lowest point is 102' below the surface. A few tight leads are still going.

Spider Sink Cave is an old cave that has been re-opened and pushed. Also in an active sink, lots of trash and debris had washed into the entrance over the past few decades. About 120' of passages have been survey so far with another 50' or so to mop up. There is lots of airflow with great potential in the lowest portion of the cave.

More work is being done in the area between Logan Mills and Tylersville. All of Sugar Valley has great cave potential. Upper Nitany Valley and Nippnose Valley also have their secrets. Anyone interested in fieldwork in this area or anyone having information to share please contact Keith Wheeland or Keith Christenson.
SPRING '95 N.R.O.

MAY 12-14, 1995
NEWTON, NEW JERSEY
HOSTED BY:

REGISTRATION INCLUDES:
GUIDE BOOK TO CAVING AND NON-CAVING EVENTS
SEMI-RUSTIC CAMPING FROM FRIDAY THRU SUNDAY NOON
SATURDAY NIGHT DINNER HOSTED BY THE NJ-IRT
SATURDAY NIGHT BONFIRE
SUNDAY MORNING BREAKFAST HOSTED BY THE MET GROTTO
DOOR PRIZES
MUCH MORE!!!

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:
GUIDED AND WILD CAVE TRIPS INCLUDING A CAVE AT THE NRO SITE!
GEOLGY FIELD TRIP
SPEleo-OBSTACLE COURSE
VERTICAL WORKSHOPS
RE-BELAY COURSE
VENDORS

AREA ATTRACTIONS INCLUDE:
RAILS TO TRAILS HIKING/BIKE PATH SYSTEM
STERLING HILL MINEMUSEUM TOURS (addl. charge)
VERNON VALLEY/ACTION PARK AMUSEMENT PARK (addl. charge)
MANY OTHER LOCAL POINTS OF INTEREST

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:
MARK SKOVE
21 HUNTS SCHOOL ROAD
NEWTON, NEW JERSEY 07860
TELEPHONE: 201-383-8048
201-579-5864
FAX 201-383-0049

DAY PASSES WILL BE AVAILABLE FRIDAY SATURDAY AND SUNDAY @ $5.00/DAY

SPRING '95 NRO PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

NAME ____________________________

NSS MEMBER? Y N

ADDRESS ____________________________

PRIMARY GROTTO AFFILIATION ____________________________

PHONE (__) ____________________________

ADULTS: #_____ X $18.00 _______

CHILDREN: #_____ X $ 5.00 _______

DOGS: #_____ X $10.00 _______

TOTAL ____________________________

NOTE: IF MEALS ARE NOT DESIRED ADULT PRE-REGISTRATION WOULD BE $9.00 ($11.00 AT GATE) CHILDREN WOULD BE $3.00 ($4.00 AT GATE)

MARK SKOVE
21 HUNT'S SCHOOL ROAD
NEWTON, NJ 07860

PHONE 201-383-8048 OR 579-5864
FAX 201-383-0049

AT THE GATE: ADULTS $20.00 CHILDREN $6.00

$3.00 ($4.00 AT GATE)
Upcoming Events:

May 12-14, 1995 SPRING V.A.R. MEET, Camp Kidd, Parsons, WV. Contact Doug Moore (304) 594-2600.

May 12-14, 1995 SPRING N.R.O., Newton, NJ. Contact Mark Skов'e (201) 383-8048.


May 19-21, 1995 S.E.R.A. SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL, Lafayette, GA. Contact Don Hunter (706) 788-2051.

May 26-29, 1995 SPELEOFEST '95, Fort Knox, KY. Contact Glenn Drifik (502) 862-4054.

June 17-25, 1995 ER-NCRC WEEKLONG CAVE RESCUE SEMINAR, Dailey, WV. Contact John Appleby (213) 541-4994.

July 12-15, 1995 RASS PRE-CONVENTION FIELD CAMP, Bath County, VA. Contact Mike Friedenberg (804) 282-5138.

July 17-21, 1995 N.S.S. CONVENTION, Blacksburg, VA. Contact Carol Tiderman (410) 792-0742.


August 31-September 4, 1995 OLD TIMER'S REUNION, Dailey, WV. Contact Bill Wolford.

August 3-9, 1996 N.S.S. CONVENTION, Salida, CO. Contact Skip Withrow (303) 693-0997.


---

M.A.R. Bullets Available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>County in Pennsylvania</th>
<th>Cost (without postage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Blair</td>
<td>6.50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Huntingdon</td>
<td>(Out of print)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Snyder</td>
<td>2.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>9.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mifflin</td>
<td>7.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Perry</td>
<td>5.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>3.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lehigh</td>
<td>3.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>5.50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>5.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Berks</td>
<td>7.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>5.50*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Add U.S. Postage $1.25 each copy; $0.50 each additional to same address.
** Add U.S. Postage $1.75 each copy; $0.50 each additional to same address.
Non-U.S. postage is $2.00 each copy; $1.50 each additional to same address.

Make checks payable to M.A.R.: Order from Bette White, 542 Glenn Road, State College, PA 16803

---

Breakdown Editor
Jim "Crash" Kennedy

Layout/Design
John "And Burn" Chenger

Circulation
Keith "Postman" Wheeland

---

Bulk Rate
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 107
State College, PA

---

Forwarding and address correction requested