

## **Caves and Other Karst Features**

- \* Prohibit timber harvesting and prescribed burning within 200 feet of cave entrances.
- \* Do not discharge drilling muds into a karst hydrologic system.
- \* Do not conduct surface disturbing activities on any slopes steeper than 30 percent adjacent to cave entrances without use of mitigation measures.
- \* Do not promote caves as available for general public use unless the Forest develops adequate protection measures to control and manage this use and can clearly establish that no substantial risk, harm, or vandalism of the cave would occur.
- \* Do not conduct seismic surveys within 200 feet of known cave passages or conduits.
- \* Location of caves on NFS lands will not be disclosed.
- \* Cave management will be integrated into general land management practices to protect cave resources from subterranean and surface impacts.
- \* Inventory and evaluate caves in accordance with the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act, Forest Service Manual direction, and Memorandum of Understandings with other organizations.
- \* All caves and karst features shall be excluded from leasing and mineral activities and no drilling will occur within the boundaries of any cave. Boundaries are defined as the area within the known cave plus a buffer zone of 200 feet around the cave.

Cease drilling operations and notify the authorized officer when anyone encounters previously undiscovered voids (more than 12 inches) within 300 feet of the surface.

Do not allow sediment from access roads and other activities to wash into caves or karst features.

Examine and inventory to the extent possible each cave and karst feature. Prepare management prescriptions and plans describing considerations and criteria for protection of cave resources whenever feasible.

Where practical and beneficial, restore cave and karst hydrologic systems choked with debris from non-natural causes or sediment.

Take corrective action if damage to karst or other resources exists and is likely to continue.

Whenever possible, remove non natural debris from sinkholes to improve water quality entering directly into karst systems.

Gating of cave entrances will only be considered as a last resort on a case-by-case basis for safety, and after evidence demonstrates this to be the only option to protect cave species and other resources.

Under normal circumstances, do not place signs with cave names or other information that would reveal cave locations outside of caves. Small signs or registers inside caves (20 to 100 feet) that discuss cave conservation or safety are acceptable.

The Forest will be careful not to promote or dissuade the recreational use of caves; unless it becomes necessary to control access to protect cave resources.

Information on caving basics, ethics and safety, and locations of broad regions of karst topography may be provided. Information about a particular cave may be exchanged with individuals who demonstrate a pre-existing personal knowledge of a cave's location, extent, and layout.

## **Provide a Useable Landbase**

### **Land Ownership and Adjustment**

Give high priority to land adjustments through purchase or exchange that consolidate forest ownership, provide access to existing NFS land and water, and protect or enhance threatened and endangered species habitat or other special areas.

Give high priority to obtaining lands to protect significant cultural sites; acquire or retain areas with caves or outstanding examples of karst features; permit protection, development, and management of wetlands, lakes, and ponds or recreation facilities; and protect water quality (See Appendix E).

Satisfy one or more of the following purposes when implementing land adjustments:

- Accomplish objectives of Federal law or regulation
- Meet demand for national forest resources, including recognized special areas
- Result in more efficient land ownership patterns
- Result in lower resource management costs

Land adjustments, such as purchases, exchanges, or donations, should assume the land allocation of the surrounding area, unless circumstances warrant placement into Management Area 9.2 for study as a special area or nomination of a research natural area.

Avoid encumbering land available for exchange with land uses that compromise land exchange opportunities.

Do not acquire land by condemnation except in extreme cases to acquire right-of-ways or clear title, if all other reasonable efforts fail. Land acquisition program deals with willing sellers and exchange proponents.

Consider acquiring subsurface rights under NFS land when the rights and funding are available.

Whenever possible, landlines will be located and marked to standard.

### **Transportation System**

Avoid new road construction within 125 feet of a cave or karst feature.

Maintain effective closures (to public motorized vehicles) on Maintenance Level 1 (See Appendix A, Glossary) roads. Closure devices should be visually compatible with the surrounding area.

Decommission unneeded roads when possible.

Follow guidelines in Appendix G for Hoosier National Forest road design.

### **Access Rights**

Consider on an individual basis requests for easements or special-use permits for new or improved road access across NFS land by State or local units of government, private landowners, or other interests.

Consider requests for access to other ownerships across NFS land when no other reasonable access exists. Consider alternative access, management area objectives, and public input when evaluating access requests.

### **Public Parking**

Parking lots may be provided.

Avoid locating new parking sites and access points within sight distance of springs, seeps, and mineral licks to minimize disruptions to wildlife.