



The world's largest land conservancy solely dedicated to preserving and protecting caves and karst environments.



ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

CONSERVATION. EDUCATION. RECREATION.



June 10, 2017

This 2017 Annual Report highlights just some of the accomplishments of SCCi throughout the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Running a successful land conservation organization requires a delicate balance of increasing awareness while ensuring visitation does not damage the resources we are charged with protecting. SCCi is unique among many conservation organizations in that we encourage recreational access whenever possible.

Through numerous outreach efforts including personal speaking engagements, increased Facebook outreach, the monthly newsletter, Bats Beer & Bluegrass, etc., SCCi gained over 300 new donors in fiscal year 2017. That is a 30% increase from the previous year. Sustaining donations increased by 6%.

As with any nonprofit organization, money is important. However, this increase in donors represents more than an increase in revenue. It represents an increase in the public's awareness and support of SCCi's mission of conserving caves.

For all of SCCi's new and long-time supporters, we thank you.

Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'BK', is positioned above the typed name of the signatory.

Brian Krebs
Board Chair

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Vice-Chair: Tom Whitehurst

Secretary: Mark Whitmer

Treasurer: Buddy Lane

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Marketing Manager: Amber Lehmann (Volunteer)

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Stewardship: Steve Davis

Directors

Steve Davis

Kris Green

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Bill Stringfellow

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Mark Whitmer

History

It all started in 1991 with a small group of cavers who wanted to create something new; a land conservancy dedicated solely to cave protection and access. 25 years later, their idea has turned into something much bigger than they ever imagined. The Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCi) is now the largest land conservancy devoted specifically to caves. SCCi owns and leases more than 170 caves on 31 preserves in 6 states. It has succeeded through the hard work of many individuals, good timing, and patience.

SCCi's founding members saw several reasons to create SCCi. In the late '80's and early '90's, cavers were witnessing the breakup of large land tracts that, for generations, had open access



for recreation. Cave owners were closing caves over their concerns of liability. Hunting clubs were leasing large tracts of land, and prohibited access for anyone but their members.

In 1990, at a Dogwood City Grotto Executive Committee meeting, Jeff Harris suggested there should be an organization where cavers would actually own caves. Over the course of the next few months, SCCi founders (Diane Cousineau, Steve Davis, Greg Eck, Kris Green,

Jeff and Alexis Harris, Kenneth Huffines, Bill Putnam, Bill Stringfellow and others) met to discuss the formation of an organization that could accept the donation of caves, sign leases, and buy cave properties.

SCCi was incorporated as a Georgia not-for-profit corporation in 1991.

Stewardship

While the purchase of a new cave is exciting and makes the news, something many people take for granted is the ongoing stewardship requirements in owning a property and making it available for recreational use. Taking care of the land and caves are just as important as protecting them from indiscriminant closure, development and destruction.

SCCi accomplishes this through a network of volunteer preserve managers. In addition to the people needed, stewarding SCCi's large cave holdings requires a significant financial commitment. Gravel for parking lots, erosion control, signage, informational kiosks, property taxes, insurance, online permitting system, education and development for preserve managers, etc., all compete for resources.

SCCi Chief Scientist

As part of SCCi's 5-year goals, the Board of Directors has named Dr. C. Robertson (Robert) Handford as our first Chief Scientist. In this volunteer capacity, Dr. Handford will help guide SCCi's research and education efforts. He will serve a 2-year term at which time another scientist will be selected from a different discipline related to cave science.

Dr. Handford has conducted extensive geological research in the Southeast, including his doctoral dissertation on the Monteagle Limestone in the TAG area. His research on the Monteagle Limestone and Hartselle Sandstone is ongoing. Dr. Handford's professional career includes ongoing research for several oil companies, teaching as an assistant professor of geology, working as an international consulting geologist, publishing numerous papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals and books, and receiving several best-presentation awards at professional conventions. He has also served as a distinguished lecturer for the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

Online Permit System

As of January 1, 2017 all preserves required permits. Permitting helps SCCi address many issues including liability protection, monitoring visitation rates and facilitating outreach to non-member visitors. To make permitting as easy as possible on visitors and preserve management teams, the Board voted to fund the development of an online permit system (OPS).

Since going live in June 2016, OPS has over 1300 registered users and 3,269 permits have been issued. As preserves were brought onto OPS different times throughout the year, the number of permits do not include manual permits issued before the online system

Preserve Management Retreat

Preserve Management Teams are a key part of SCCi's plans for protecting our current resources and preparing for future growth. Managing preserves across six states is a monumental task.

On March 11, SCCi held its first Preserve Management Retreat. Over 30 people from all aspects of preserve management attended with more than half of our 30 preserves represented.



The all-day session focused on SCCi's 5-year plan, preserve management strategies, incident response procedures, communications, and the new online permit system. In addition, Preserve Management Teams provided suggestions on how preserves and preserve management can be improved.

With input from Preserve Managers, SCCi created a Preserve Management Portal to better communicate with volunteers and to provide a one-stop location for preserve reporting, preserve document retrieval and permit administration.

Based on feedback from attendees, SCCi will continue this annual event and keep striving to be a world-class conservancy.

Tumbling Rock Management

On February 25, the Board of Directors decided to terminate the management agreement with Tumbling Rock, Inc. (TRI) and bring management of the Tumbling Rock Cave Preserve back under SCCi. For many years, Tumbling Rock Cave Preserve was managed by TRI under an exclusive management agreement.

With 25 years of successfully managing cave preserves, SCCi is now in a better position to manage this well-loved and frequented cave preserve. Many Tumbling Rock visitors are first time cave visitors. This is an important audience for SCCi in providing education and conservation messages that they will carry with them for a lifetime.

SCCi made no changes to how the preserve operates other than moving it to the online permit system and establishing a daily quota to limit the number of visitors. Nathan Williams will continue as part of the Preserve Management Team at Tumbling Rock with assistance from Alexander Dobrowolski.

PRESERVE IMPROVEMENTS

Caring for 31 preserves across six states can sometimes be a Herculean task. Preserve improvements are often planned and sometimes issues arise that demand immediate attention. Following are just some of the improvement made to SCCi preserves over the past year.

Road to Valhalla



In September, The Birmingham Grotto and Valhalla Preserve Management Team regraded and improved the road leading to the pit at Valhalla. The road had deteriorated and had developed large ruts that made driving impossible for most vehicles especially in wet weather. Once again, vehicular traffic is possible on the road. Maintaining the road will be an ongoing project.

Howards Waterfall Parking Area



Significant improvements to the parking area at Howards Waterfall Cave Preserve were completed in September. The deep drop off from the roadway was corrected and space was created to allow for pull in parking. These changes make it possible for cars to park safely at the preserve.

Neversink Parking Area



The driveway entrance to the parking area at Neversink had to be rerouted when our neighbor fenced off the adjoining field, cutting off a portion of the existing entrance that was off our property. At the same time, the parking area was enlarged to allow more cars to park (eliminating the need to park on the road) and making it easier to exit the parking area. Also, the improvements provide line of sight from the surrounding area improving security for the preserve and for parked cars.

Howards Waterfall Passage Gate



With funding from the Eastern Band of Cherokee and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, SCCi installed a gate in one section of Howards Waterfall Cave. This area protects a section of Cherokee syllabary. The gate allows for the ongoing conservation of this historic and cultural artifact while not impeding general visitation to the cave.

ACQUISITIONS

Each cave SCCi acquires is significant in its own way and SCCi prides itself on acquisition analysis. While not every cave is significant in every way, each acquisition represents the preservation of either biological habitat and the life it contains, historic artifacts, geologic features or access for recreational cavers.

Elroy and Marilyn Daleo Cave Preserve

On April 21, 2017, SCCi announced the purchase of the Daleo Entrance to the Roppel section of Mammoth Cave, the longest cave system in the world. The land surrounding the entrance, now named the Elroy and Marilyn Daleo Cave Preserve, is one mile east of Mammoth Cave National Park and protects 88 acres of classic karst on the Mammoth Cave Plateau. The Daleo Entrance is



now the only entrance to the Mammoth Cave system outside the national park owned by a conservation organization.

The preserve includes a number of caves, most notably the Daleo Entrance to the Roppel section of Mammoth Cave. The Daleo entrance is a significant portal into much of the cave system, and its acquisition is important in the overall goal of protecting the unique resources of the longest cave on earth.

As part of National Park Week, SCCi held a formal announcement at the Mammoth Cave National Park Visitor's Center. The Cave Research Foundation (CRF) hosted a reception and meet & greet with SCCi following the announcement.

The National Speleological Society awarded SCCi a \$5,000 grant toward the purchase of the Elroy and Marilyn Daleo Cave Preserve.

Howards Waterfall Preserve Expansion



In an effort to continue to protect an SCCi cave as much as possible, SCCi recently purchased a second entrance to Howards Waterfall Cave known as E3. By acquiring additional entrances, SCCi is capable of better preventing pollution of groundwater and the interior of the cave.

This approximate 3-acre purchase further protects the cave and expands the preserve. The expansion cost \$13,000 including purchase, closing and future needed improvements. SCCi raised \$5,000 and the rest is financed by short-term debt.

Valhalla Preserve Expansion



In January, SCCi purchased a 41-acre addition to the Valhalla Cave Preserve in North Alabama. This purchase increases the size of the Valhalla Preserve to 186 acres and was the last privately owned tract of land inside the western end of Goshen Hollow. All of that area is now owned by either the State of Alabama's Forever Wild program or SCCi.

The land had not been logged since the early 1970's and contained very valuable timber. The Wooldridge family had been in negotiations to license logging on the land that would have been detrimental to SCCi's property. If logged, it would have damaged the access road to Valhalla, destroyed acres

of trees, and likely would have led to sedimentation issues in both Valhalla and Goshen Hollow Cave (on the new tract).

SCCi negotiated a price of \$60,000 based on the Wooldridge family's share of the potential timber proceeds and land values in the area. That is a small price to pay to protect our Valhalla preserve forever.

The Dogwood City Grotto granted SCCi \$1,000 toward this acquisition.

OUTREACH

Bats Beer & Bluegrass



The first annual Bats, Beer, & Bluegrass fundraiser was held in September at Fricks Cave Preserve. Barefoot Nellie and Co. played to a sold out crowd. Over \$20,000 was raised for SCCi's Stewardship Endowment Fund from event sponsors, ticket sales and beer sales. This event was only possible because of a number of volunteers who did everything from attending Fricks cleanup days to manning the parking lot during the event.

Bats, Beer & Bluegrass provided an opportunity for SCCi's mission to be featured on television, radio, magazines and newspapers.

Events like Bats Beer & Bluegrass provide SCCi with an opportunity to reach wider audiences with the message of cave conservation. The second annual Bats Beer & Bluegrass will be held September 13, 2017.

Presentations

Presentations about SCCi and cave conservation were made to:

- Birmingham Grotto
- Chattanooga Grotto
- Sewanee Mountain Grotto
- Clock Tower Grotto
- Huntsville Grotto
- Pigeon Mountain Grotto
- Blue Ridge Archaeological Guild
- Alabama Wildlife Museum
- 2016 NSS Convention
- TN Trails Association – Nashville Chapter

Bounce Newsletter

In its inaugural year, SCCi's monthly newsletter, Bounce, was delivered 11 times. It currently reaches over 3,000 people each month.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

FY2017 Income	\$253,688
FY2017 Expenses	\$251,963
FY2017 Net Income	\$1,725
Total Assets (Property and Equipment)	\$2,407,200
Total Liabilities	\$416,763