



SAINT LOUIS COUNTY
Parks and Recreation

CAVES AND SPELUNKING DEPARTMENT POLICY

PURPOSE:

To regulate the access to caves located in several County Parks and to manage them in such a manner as to protect their natural integrity and the wildlife within them.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation to permit the access to certain caves located within County Parks. However, several caves are not available for public exploration due to two primary factors:

1. When a cave system may contain fragile geology and/or biology
2. When a cave system is known to be dangerous or may have vertical entrances requiring rappelling and specialized climbing skills.

PROCEDURE:

The caves listed below are the only caves available for public exploration for educational purposes. These caves are considered safe for general access as they do not require highly skilled spelunking knowledge and abilities. All safety rules must be obeyed.

General Rules

1. Access to any cave in a County Park is permitted if the activity results in no damage or loss to plants, animals, historical, archaeological and cultural sites, geological or ecological features.
2. These caves are available for access only during open park hours.
3. Spelunkers must travel in groups of at least 3.
4. A helmet and three (3) independent sources of light are required for each member of the group. *Note:* A helmet-mounted light allows you to keep your hands free. Carry extra batteries and have (2) two additional sources of light.
5. No flammable liquids are allowed.
6. You must establish contact with someone before and after you enter the cave so that verification exists that you exited the cave. You may use the St. Louis County Park Rangers for this purpose. They can be contacted at (314) 615-8911.

Safety Tips for Spelunkers

1. The most significant risks associated with spelunking include: hypothermia, falling, flooding and physical exhaustion. Plan your trip taking these hazards into account and know how you will address such problems were they to occur.
2. It is important that you notify family or friends about your plans, location and expected return time, so that a search party can be mobilized, if required.
3. Spelunkers are encouraged to wear protective clothing such as a gloves, and knee and elbow pads.
4. Spelunkers are recommended to assemble a cave pack, which may include: a first aid kit, water, food, extra clothing or space blanket, extra batteries, a liquid-waste bottle, removable cave markers and carry a means to communicate with a person outside the cave such as a cell phone.
5. Please do not drink any cave water at any time.

Mud Cave - Located in Greensfelder County Park.

1. Mud Cave may be explored for its full length of approximately seventy-five (75) feet.
2. As the name implies the cave contains reddish clay mud that will stain clothing when visiting this cave system.
3. No special permission, reservation or fee is required to access Mud Cave.

Unnamed Cave - Located in Greensfelder Park near the Abe Phillips Trail

1. No special permission, reservation or fee is required to access the unnamed cave
2. Use sound judgement and follow all general rules and safety tips listed when choosing to enter the unnamed cave.

Cliff Cave - Located in Cliff Cave County Park. In 2009 endangered species of bats were found in Cliff Cave. A bat friendly cave gate was constructed blocking off access to the cave to protect the bats.

1. Cliff Cave may be accessed only during regularly scheduled caving programs offered in late summer and early fall by St. Louis County Park Rangers.
2. Special event fees will apply.

Effective Date: 03/2010
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