

**INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT**

**For**

**COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION**

**In**

**CAVE and KARST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

**Among**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**U.S. FOREST SERVICE**

**INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT  
FOR COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION  
IN CAVE AND KARST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

**SECTION I - PURPOSE**

The purpose of this agreement is to achieve more effective and efficient management of cave and karst resources through cooperative action by the Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), National Park Service (NPS), and the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (FS), collectively known as the Agencies. The agreement identifies areas of mutual concern and establishes avenues for collaboration and cooperation in the management, research, protection, and conservation of cave and karst resources.

**SECTION II - NEED FOR COOPERATION**

Action is needed based on the following:

- A. The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act (FCRPA) of 1988, 16 U.S.C. §§ 4301-4310, requires Federal agencies to secure, protect, and preserve significant caves on Federal lands for the perpetual use, enjoyment, and benefit of all people. Further, the FCRPA authorizes the Agencies to foster increased cooperation and exchange of information.
- B. A large number and diversity of caves and karst lands are managed by the BLM, USFWS, NPS, and the FS.
- C. The BLM, USFWS, NPS, and the FS recognize the need for consistent management of cave and karst resources to ensure consistent service to the public and protection of cave and karst resources.
- D. Visitation and land use pressures, which are expected to increase, are accelerating the deterioration of cave and karst environments by disrupting biological, geological, hydrological, archeological, paleontological, cultural, recreational, and other speleological resources.
- E. Through interagency collaboration and coordination the Agencies will be able to:  
1) more efficiently and effectively solve similar problems and issues associated with cave and karst resource protection and visitor safety, 2) share information to ensure that activities on their respective lands do not adversely impact cave and karst resources on adjacent lands, and 3) provide a consistent message to the public about the value of cave and karst resources and steps the public can take to protect these resources.
- F. The USGS has the capability to provide crucial scientific support for the cave and karst programs of the land management agencies.

### SECTION III - AUTHORITY

- A. The FCRPA, 16 U.S.C. §§4301(b), 4301(c), and 4303(c)(2), authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to secure, protect, and preserve significant caves on the Federal lands under their management and to foster communication, cooperation, and exchange of information between land managers, those who utilize caves, and the public.
- B. Existing laws restricting information disclosure include, but are not limited to: 16 U.S.C. §4304, Archeological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. §470hh, and
- C. Paleontological Resources Preservation Act of 2009, P.L. 111-11, Title VI.
- D. **Bureau of Land Management -**  
The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended (43 U.S.C. §§ 1701 *et seq.*), requires the BLM to manage public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, while managing the public lands to protect, among other resources, the long-term health of the lands and related waters. This responsibility extends to the cave and karst resources on those lands.
- E. **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -**  
The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. §§ 661-667e), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1956, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 742(f) *et seq.*), give the USFWS the authority to conserve cave and karst resources where such resources provide habitat for threatened and endangered species. The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. §§ 668dd-668ee), gives the USFWS the authority to manage cave and karst resources in National Wildlife Refuges.
- F. **National Park Service -**  
The Organic Act of August 25, 1916, as amended (16 U.S.C. §§ 1 and 17j-2(b) provides the NPS with the authority to manage and conserve cave and karst resources within units of the National Park System, and other Federal lands under the administration of the NPS. The NPS Omnibus Management Act of 1998, 16 U.S.C. §§ 5901 *et seq.*, requires the Secretary of the Interior to continually improve the NPS's ability to provide management, protection, and interpretation of NPS resources.
- G. **U.S. Geological Survey -**  
The Organic Act of March 3, 1879, as amended, and supplemental legislation (43 U.S.C. § 31-50d) directs or authorizes the USGS to classify the public lands and examine the geological structure, mineral resources, and products within and outside the national domain; monitor streams and underground water resources; conduct topographical surveys; establish a national geologic database; and conduct other functions. Under this authority, the USGS carries out research to assist Federal land management agencies in the discharge of their administrative responsibilities.

**H. Forest Service -**

The Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (16 U.S.C. § 471), the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. §§ 1600 and 528-531), the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. §§ 600-1614), and the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. §§ 2101-2114) direct the FS to protect and manage natural resources on National Forest System Lands by providing for multiple uses of these natural resources, including cave and karst resources.

**SECTION IV - DEFINITIONS**

For purposes of this agreement the terms listed below shall have the following meanings. The definitions of the terms “cave” and “cave resources” are based on their definitions in the FCRPA:

**Authorized Officer -** The agency employee delegated the authority to perform the duties described in 43 CFR Part 37 implementing the FCRPA.

**Cave -** Any naturally occurring void, cavity, recess, or system of interconnected passages, which occurs beneath the surface of the Earth or within a cliff or ledge, and which is large enough to permit an individual to enter, whether or not the entrance is naturally formed or man-made. Such term shall include any natural pit, sinkhole, or other feature which is an extension of the cave entrance.

**Cave Resources -** Includes any material or substance occurring naturally in caves on Federal lands, such as animal life, plant life, paleontological deposits or cultural resources, sediments, minerals, water, speleogens, and speleothems.

**Karst -** A land form generally developed in soluble rock types which is characterized by a system of interconnected subsurface drainage conduits, and contains sinkholes, sinking streams, swallets, resurgences, and caves, but few, if any, surface streams.

**Significant Caves -** A cave located on Federal lands that has been determined to meet, as applicable, the provisions of 43 CFR § 37.111.

## **SECTION V - POLICY**

In working to achieve the purposes of this agreement, we recognize that each Agency intends, in accordance with its authorities and policies, to take the following actions with regard to cave and karst resources:

### **A. Bureau of Land Management**

1. Identify, evaluate, manage, and protect caves and karst resources on public lands for the purpose of maintaining their unique, nonrenewable, and fragile biologic, geologic, hydrologic, cultural, paleontologic, scientific, and recreation values for present and future uses.
2. Integrate the identification and management of caves and karst lands and their associated resource values into resource management and planning efforts, and avoid or minimize conflicts between the resource management of caves and karst lands and other surface and subsurface resource management activities.
3. Encourage volunteer involvement of qualified and experienced individuals and caving organizations in cave and karst management projects, through the use of volunteer and cooperative management agreements.
4. Provide user opportunities compatible and consistent with objectives set forth in Resource Management and Activity Plans. These may include recreation, education, research, or commercial activities, when those activities can be adequately managed.
5. Promote awareness of cave and karst resources among users and managers of public lands through development of informational and educational materials concerning conservation methods and potential hazards.

### **B. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

1. Protect cave and karst resources found on lands within the National Wildlife Refuge System to the extent needed for their maintenance as healthy, fully functioning components of these systems and allow secondary uses, such as recreation, only where they are compatible with the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the individual refuge purpose.
2. Work closely with other Federal agencies to ensure that the agencies meet the consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the coordination requirements of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

**C. U.S. Geological Survey**

1. Conduct scientific research on cave and karst resources. For example, the USGS will aid in the evaluation of paleontologic, biologic, and speleologic resources and provide geologic and hydrologic frameworks for evaluating karst hazards and resources through USGS scientists' expertise in a wide variety of technical disciplines, including water-tracer tests, water quality, numeric (computer) modeling, geochemistry, aquatic biology, habitat evaluation and restoration, population ecology, remote sensing, mineralogy, geologic mapping, and applications of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology.
2. Facilitate information transfer on cave and karst resources through published reports, maps, electronic databases, professional conferences or workshops, and individual training.

**D. National Park Service**

1. Manage and protect cave and karst resources for the perpetuation of their natural systems including: geological, paleontological, hydrological, biological, and ecological conditions, and historic associations.
2. Develop, provide, and facilitate cave and karst research, education, interpretation, and sound management practices.
3. In cooperation with other agencies, develop and implement protocols for monitoring the condition and health of cave and karst systems.
4. Provide recreational opportunities for cave exploration through a permit system that regulates or restricts cave use if necessary to protect and preserve cave resources.

**E. U.S. Forest Service**

1. Manage caves as nonrenewable resources to maintain their geological, scenic, educational, cultural, biological, hydrological, paleontological, and recreational values.
2. Classify caves containing outstanding values as Geological or Historical Areas (Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2372).
3. Emphasize wild cave management with few or no facilities to aid or facilitate use.
4. Develop management prescriptions for caves of significant value.
5. Integrate the identification and management of cave and karst lands and their associated resource values into resource management planning and management

efforts and avoid or minimize conflicts between caves and karst lands resource management and other surface and subsurface resource management activities.

6. Protect threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. §1531) and FSM 2670.
7. Protect cultural sites and deposits in accordance with FSM 2361.03.
8. Develop and foster communications, cooperation, and volunteerism with interested Federal, State, and local governments, as well as the public.

## **SECTION VI - AREAS OF COOPERATION**

The intent of this agreement is to achieve cooperation and collaboration in solving mutual problems related to cave and karst resources management in the most efficient and consistent manner possible. To achieve this, all the Agencies will endeavor in good faith to cooperate with each other to the extent practical, subject to individual agency constraints and applicable laws, in the following aspects of cave and karst management and resource protection.

- A. **Protection of Sensitive Information** - No Agency or Agency employee shall disclose cave locations or other information concerning resources found within caves and karst areas which are exempted from release under the Freedom of Information Act, or are exempted, limited, or prohibited from release by other laws or regulations now in existence or that are enacted during the life of this agreement without prior approval of an authorized officer for that specific land management unit.
- B. **Environmental Education** - The Agencies will cooperate in the development and production of mutually beneficial environmental education materials such as brochures, pamphlets, programs, videos, and the Leave No Trace Program.
- C. **Training** - The Agencies will cooperate in developing, offering, and teaching training courses and seminars related to cave and karst resources management and other aspects of speleology, including biology, geology, hydrology, mineralogy, paleontology, cave search and rescue, and will cooperatively sponsor the National Cave & Karst Management Symposiums.
- D. **Issue Identification, Information Sharing** - The Agencies will work closely with each other and other interested parties to identify and address cave and karst management opportunities and issues, and will share information concerning cave and karst resources management.
- E. **Research** - The Agencies will, when appropriate, develop and coordinate research needs and projects, including the monitoring of cave and karst resources.
- F. **Regional Agreements** - The Agencies will, when appropriate, enter into additional regional and local agreements for specific programmatic involvement and cooperation.

- G. **Publications** - Publications (including distribution to the world wide web) documenting cooperative efforts may be prepared by any agency, or jointly, provided that all parties involved have an opportunity to review manuscripts prior to publication. To the extent possible, decisions involving authorship and review of reports will be addressed during the preparation of work plans or work agreements. Should differences of viewpoint occur, an effort will be made to reconcile dissenting views. This shall not prohibit any agency from publishing the data, provided that it does not disclose certain types of information prohibited by laws and regulations and that the agency assumes sole responsibility and gives appropriate credit to the other agency(ies). All parties agree that sharing credit is mutually beneficial, and will make every effort to ensure that appropriate credit, including the use of official agency visual identifiers, is provided for work performed under this agreement.
- H. **Protection of Cave and Karst Resources on Adjacent Federal Lands and Minerals** – The Agencies agree to cooperate and collaborate early on land use planning and site specific permitting decisions to ensure sound stewardship of cave and karst resources on adjacent Federal lands and minerals. The Agencies will work together to implement mitigation measures to protect these resources.
- I. **National Environmental Policy Act** – The Agencies will cooperate in preparation of NEPA documents analyzing activities of or permitted by one Agency that may affect or impact cave and karst resources managed by another Agency.

#### **SECTION VII - OTHER PROVISIONS**

- A. **Scheduling** - All parties agree to meet at the national level at least annually or more often as mutually agreed upon. The purpose of the annual meeting will be to provide a national interagency forum to identify issues concerning implementation of applicable Federal laws and policies and to facilitate issue resolution. This meeting can occur in conjunction with the annual National Cave & Karst Management Symposium Steering Committee meeting, in which the Agencies are already involved.
- B. **Subject to Laws** - It is agreed by all parties that actions taken pursuant to this agreement will be taken in accordance with the laws of the United States and in keeping with appropriate delegated authority relative to each Agency.
- C. **Obligating Funds** - None of the items covered in this agreement are to be construed as requiring any party to obligate or expend funds. The joint funding of special projects, however, is encouraged. Should any specific project require reimbursements between Agencies under the Economy Act or any other applicable authority, the parties will coordinate such reimbursements in appropriate agreements. Nothing in this agreement will be construed as affecting the authorities of the participants.
- D. **Disputed Issues** - Disputed issues resulting from this agreement may be resolved at the national level.

- E. **Limitations of Benefit** - No member of, or delegate to Congress, or Resident Commissioner, shall be admitted to any share or part of this agreement, or to any benefit to arise there from.
  
- F. **Supplemental Agreements** - BLM Field Office and State Office Managers, Refuge Managers, National Park Superintendents, USGS State, Regional, and national program managers, and Forest Supervisors are encouraged to enter into supplemental agreements that describe detailed procedures and respective roles, consistent with the general provisions listed in Section VI and other sections of this agreement.
  
- G. **Effective Date, Amendments and Termination** – The effective date of this agreement will be the date that the last Agency signs the document. This agreement shall remain in force for a period of 5 years, or until notification by any party upon 30 days notice in writing to the others, of its intention to terminate upon a date indicated. It may be renegotiated and/or renewed prior to its expiration date. Amendments to this agreement may be proposed by any party and shall become effective upon approval by all parties, and may be incorporated as appendices to this agreement.

## SECTION VIII - PRINCIPAL CONTACTS

BLM            Senior Cave & Karst Resources Specialist  
                 Bureau of Land Management  
                 620 E. Greene Street  
                 Carlsbad, New Mexico 88220  
                 (575) 234-5929

USFWS        Field Supervisor  
                 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
                 Eastern Idaho Field Office  
                 4425 Burley Drive, Suite A  
                 Chubbuck, Idaho 83202  
                 (208) 237-6975 ext. 105

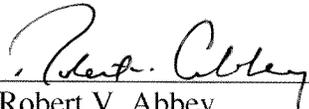
USGS         Research Geologist  
                 U.S. Geological Survey  
                 926A National Center  
                 Reston, VA 20192  
                 (703) 648-6897

NPS           National Cave & Karst Program Coordinator  
                 Geologic Resources Division  
                 National Park Service  
                 P.O. Box 25287  
                 Denver, CO 80225-0287  
                 (575) 785-3107

FS            National Cave & Karst Coordinator  
                 U.S. Forest Service  
                 200 Sycamore Street  
                 Elkins, WV 26241  
                 (304) 636-3400

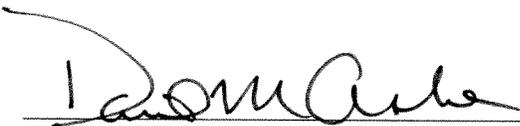
INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT  
FOR  
CAVE AND KARST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Original signed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert V. Abbey  
Director, Bureau of Land Management

2-23-12  
Date

Original signed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Daniel M. Ashe  
Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service

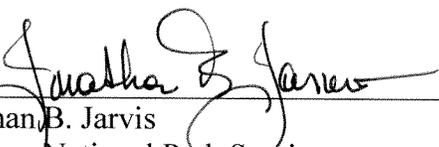
14 December 2011  
Date

Original signed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Marcia McNutt  
Director, US Geological Survey

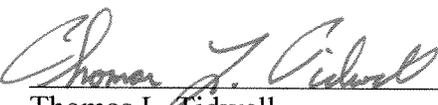
2 February 2012  
Date

Original signed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jonathan B. Jarvis  
Director, National Park Service

1/4/2011  
Date

Original signed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas L. Tidwell  
Chief, USDA Forest Service  
FS Document Number

1/26/12  
Date

The authority and format of this instrument has been reviewed and approved for signature



ALISON LEIMAN  
U.S. Forest Service Grants & Agreements Specialist

11/11/2011  
Date

**Burden Statement**

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0596-0217. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-733-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-8992 (voice). TDD users can contact USDA through local relay or the Federal relay at (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8612 (relay voice). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.