

3/90

Standard Operating Procedures for Cave Information Requests

The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 provides protection for significant caves located on Federal property. Interagency criteria for cave significance are being developed by a national joint (Dept. of Interior and Dept. of Agriculture) committee. The regulations are expected to be finalized in the spring or summer of 1990. Once the regulations are finalized, agencies and the public will have one year to identify significant caves. In the interim period before significance is determined, Craters of the Moon will manage all caves as significant.

To ensure preservation of federal cave resources, the act provides for protection of the confidentiality of information concerning the nature and location of significant caves. It states that information may not be made available to the public unless the Secretary determines that disclosure of such information would further the purposes of the act and would not create a substantial risk of harm, theft, or destruction of such cave. The term "nature" of caves is not defined in the act or in the draft regulations. For CRMO purposes, nature will be defined as features that are specific to only one or a few caves. If a feature is a general feature of most lava tubes, that is not the "nature" of a specific cave or set of caves.

Information on the following caves will be freely given to the public:

- Buffalo Caves
- Arco Tunnel
- Beauty Cave
- Boy Scout Cave
- Surprise Cave
- Indian Tunnel
- Dewdrop Cave

Information concerning all other caves in the monument will not be given to the public. Information includes location and nature of caves. The name of a cave will not be given out if that name will reveal the nature or location. When visitors ask about other caves, personnel will inform them about the act and explain that information is not given out in order to protect the cave resources. Remember, caves are not really a renewable resource... it takes another eruption to create new lava tubes!

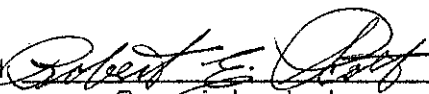
If visitors ask about other caves which are currently designated on the park topo map, such as Amphitheater Cave, explain that entry into these caves is discouraged in order to protect this valuable non-renewable resource. Do not give information about the nature of a specific cave. You can also explain about the difficulty of access to Amphitheater and Great Owl. If a visitor indicates they are going to one of these caves, let the Chief Ranger or Resource Management Specialist know. The cave can then be checked for any damage after the visitors trip.

Any park records on caves, such as the Jex reports, should not be shown to the public. A decision will be made concerning security of these types of records when the Cave Management Plan is written.

Requests received from federal/state government agencies or educational/research institutions for information about other caves will be handled by the Chief Ranger or the Resource Management Specialist.

A copy of the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act is attached.

Approved


Superintendent

Date 3-23-90