

# The Federal Cave Protection Act of 1988

United States Code:  
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BE IT ENACTED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED,

**SEC. 1. SHORT TITLE.** This Act may be referred to as the "*Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988*"

## **SEC. 2. FINDINGS, PURPOSES, AND POLICY.**

**a) FINDINGS.** ) The Congress finds and declares that )(1) significant caves on Federal lands are an invaluable and irreplaceable part of the Nation's natural heritage; and (2) in some instances, these significant caves are threatened due to improper use, increased recreational demand, urban spread, and a lack of specific statutory protection.

**(b) PURPOSES.** ) The purposes of this Act are )(1) to secure, protect, and preserve significant caves on Federal lands for the perpetual use, enjoyment, and benefit of all people; and (2) to foster increased cooperation and exchange of information between governmental authorities and those who utilize caves located on Federal lands for scientific, education, or recreational purposes.

**(c) POLICY.** ) It is the policy of the United States that Federal lands be managed in a manner which protects and maintains, to the extent practical, significant caves.

## **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

For purposes of this Act:

**(1) CAVE.** ) The term "cave" means 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 (including any cave resource therein, but not including any vug, mine, tunnel, aqueduct, or other manmade excavation) and which is large enough to permit an individual to enter, whether or not the entrance is naturally formed or manmade. Such term shall include any natural pit, sinkhole, or other feature which is an extension of the entrance.

**(2) FEDERAL LANDS.** ) The term "Federal lands" means lands the fee title to which is owned by the United States and administered by the Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary of the Interior.

**(3) INDIAN LANDS.** ) The term "Indian lands" means lands of Indian tribes or Indian individuals which are either held in trust by the United States for the benefit of an Indian tribe or subject to a restriction against alienation imposed by the United States.

**(4) INDIAN TRIBE.** ) The term "Indian tribe" means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community of Indians, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in, or established pursuant to, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.).

**(5) CAVE RESOURCE.** ) The term "cave resource" includes any material or substance occurring naturally in caves on Federal lands, such as animal life, plant life, paleontological deposits, sediments, minerals, speleogens, and speleothems.

**(6) SECRETARY.** ) The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary of the Interior, as appropriate.

**(7) SPELEOTHEM.** ) The term "speleothem" means any natural mineral formation or deposit occurring in a cave or lava tube, including but not limited to any stalactite, stalagmite, helictite, cave flower, flowstone, concretion, drapery, rimstone, or formation of clay or mud.

**(8) SPELEOGEN.** ) The term "speleogen" means relief features on the walls, ceiling, and floor of any cave or lava tube which are part of the surrounding bedrock, including but not limited to anastomoses, scallops, meander niches, petromorphs and rock pendants in solution caves and similar features unique to volcanic caves.

#### **Sec. 4. MANAGEMENT ACTIONS.**

**(a) REGULATIONS.** ) Not later than nine months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue such regulations as he deems necessary to achieve the purposes of the Act. Regulations shall include, but not be limited to, criteria for the identification of significant caves. The Secretaries shall cooperate and consult with one another in preparation of the regulations. To the extent practical regulations promulgated by the respective Secretaries should be similar.

**(b) IN GENERAL.** ) The secretary shall take such actions as may be necessary to further the purposes of this Act. These actions shall include (but not be limited to)

(1) identification of significant caves on federal lands;

(A) The Secretary shall prepare an initial list of significant caves for lands under his jurisdiction not later than one year after the publication of final regulations using the significance criteria defined in such regulations. Such a list shall be developed after consultation with appropriate private sector interests, including cavers.

(B) The initial list of significant caves shall be updated periodically, after consultation with appropriate private sector interests, including cavers. The Secretary shall prescribe by policy or regulation the requirements and process by which the initial list will be updated, including management measures to assure that caves under consideration for the list are protected during the period of consideration. Each cave recommended to the Secretary by interested groups for possible inclusion on the list of significant caves shall be considered by the Secretary according to the requirements prescribed pursuant to this paragraph and shall be added to the list if the Secretary determines that the cave meets the criteria for significance as defined by the regulations.

- (2) regulation or restriction of use of significant caves, as appropriate;
- (3) entering into volunteer management agreements with persons of the scientific and recreational caving community; and
- (4) appointment of appropriate advisory committees

**(c) PLANNING AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

The Secretary shall )

- (1) ensure that significant caves are considered in the preparation or implementation of any land management plan if the preparation or revision of the plan began after the enactment of this Act;
- (2) foster communication, cooperation, and exchange of information between land managers, those who utilize caves, and the public.

**Sec. 5. CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION CONCERNING NATURE AND LOCATION OF SIGNIFICANT CAVES.**

**(a) IN GENERAL.** ) Information concerning the specific location of any significant cave may not be made available to the public under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, unless the Secretary determines that disclosure of such information would further the purposes of this Act and would not create a substantial risk of harm, theft, or destruction of such cave.

**(b) EXCEPTIONS.** ) Notwithstanding subsection (a), the Secretary may make available information regarding significant caves upon the written request by Federal and state governmental agencies or bona fide educational and research institutions. Any such written request shall, at a minimum:

- (1) describe the specific site or area for which information is sought;
- (2) explain the purpose for which such information is sought; and
- (3) include assurances satisfactory to the Secretary that adequate measures are being taken to protect the confidentiality of such information and to ensure the protection of the significant cave from destruction by vandalism and unauthorized use.

**Sec. 6. COLLECTION AND REMOVAL FROM FEDERAL CAVES.**

**(a) PERMIT.** ) The Secretary is authorized to issue permits for the collection and removal of cave resources under such terms and conditions as the Secretary may impose, including the posting of bonds to insure compliance with the provisions of any permit.

(1) Any permit issued pursuant to this section shall include information concerning the time, scope, location, and specific purpose of the proposed collection, removal or associated activity, and the manner in which such collection, removal, or associated activity is to be performed must be provided.

(2) The Secretary may issue a permit pursuant this subsection only if he determines that the proposed collection or removal activities are consistent with the purposes of this Act and with other applicable provisions of law.

**(b) REVOCATION OF PERMIT.** )Any permit issued under this section shall be revoked by the Secretary upon a determination by the Secretary that the permittee has violated any provision of this Act, or has failed to comply with any other condition upon which the permit was issued. Any such permit shall be revoked by the Secretary upon assessment of a civil penalty against the permittee pursuant to section 8 or upon the permittee's conviction under section 7 of this Act. The Secretary may refuse to issue a permit under this section to any person who has violated any provision of this Act or who has failed to comply with any condition of a prior permit.

**(c) TRANSFERABILITY OF PERMITS.** )Permits issued under this act are not transferable.

**(d) CAVE RESOURCES LOCATED ON INDIAN LANDS.** )

(1) (A) Upon application by an Indian tribe, the Secretary is authorized to delegate to the tribe all authority of the Secretary under this section with respect to issuing and enforcing permits for the collection or removal of any cave resource located on the affected Indian lands.

(B) In the case of any permit issued by the Secretary for the collection or removal of any cave resource, or to carry out activities associated with such collection or removal, from any cave resource located on Indian lands (other than permits issued pursuant to subparagraph (A)), the permit may be issued only after obtaining the consent of the Indian or Indian tribe owning or having jurisdiction over such lands. The permit shall include such reasonable terms and conditions as may be requested by such Indian or Indian tribe.

(2) If the Secretary determines that issuance of a permit pursuant to this section may result in harm to, or destruction of, any religious or cultural site, the Secretary, prior to issuing such permit, shall notify any Indian tribe which may consider the site as having significant religious or cultural importance. Such notice shall not be deemed a disclosure to the public for purposes of section 5.

(3) A permit shall not be required under this section for the collection or removal of any cave resource located on Indian lands or activities associated with such collection, by the Indian or Indian tribe owning or having jurisdiction over such lands.

**(e) EFFECT OF PERMIT.** ) No action specifically authorized by a permit under this section shall be treated as a violation of section 7.

## **Sec. 7. PROHIBITED ACTS AND CRIMINAL PENALTIES.**

### **(a) PROHIBITED ACTS. )**

(1) Any person who, without prior authorization from the Secretary, knowingly destroys, disturbs, defaces, mars, alters, removes or harms any significant cave or alters the free movement of any animal or plant life into or out of any significant cave located on Federal lands, or enters a significant cave with the intention of committing any act described in this paragraph shall be punished in accordance with subsection (b).

(2) Any person who possesses, consumes, sells, barter or exchanges, or offers for sale, barter or exchange, any cave resource from a significant cave with knowledge or reason to know that such resource was removed from a significant cave located on Federal lands shall be punished in accordance with subsection (b).

(3) Any person who counsels, procures, solicits, or employs any other person to violate any provisions of this subsection shall be punished in accordance with subsection (b).

(4) Nothing in this section shall be deemed applicable to any person who was in lawful possession of a cave resource from a significant cave prior to the date of enactment of this Act.

**(b) PUNISHMENT.** ) The punishment for violating any provision of subsection (a) shall be imprisonment of not more than one year or a fine in accordance with the applicable provisions of title 18 of the United States Code, or both. In the case of a second or subsequent violation, the

punishment shall be imprisonment of not more than 3 years or a fine in accordance with the applicable provisions of title 18 of the United States Code, or both.

## **Sec. 8. CIVIL PENALTIES.**

### **(a) ASSESSMENT. )**

(1) The Secretary may issue an order assessing a civil penalty against any person who violates any prohibition contained in this Act, any regulation promulgated pursuant to this Act, or any permit issued under this Act. Before issuing such an order, the Secretary shall provide such person written notice and the opportunity to request a hearing on the record within 30 days. Each violation shall be a separate offense, even if such violations occurred at the same time.

(2) The amount of such civil penalty shall be determined by the Secretary taking into account appropriate factors, including (A) the seriousness of the violation; (B) the economic benefit (if any) resulting from the violation; (C) any history of such violations; and (D) such other matters as the Secretary deems appropriate. The maximum fine permissible under this section is \$10,000.

**(b) JUDICIAL REVIEW. )** Any person aggrieved by an assessment of a civil penalty under this section may file a petition for judicial review of such assessment with the United States District Court for the District of Columbia or for the district in which the violation occurred. Such a petition shall be filed within the 30-day period beginning on the date the order assessing the civil penalty was issued.

**(c) COLLECTION. )** If any person fails to pay an assessment of a civil penalty

(1) within 30 days after the order was issued under subsection (a), or (2) if the order is appealed within such 30-day period, within 10 days after the court has entered a final judgment in favor of the Secretary under subsection(b), the Secretary shall notify the Attorney General and the Attorney General shall bring a civil action in an appropriate United States district court to recover the amount of penalty assessed (plus costs, attorneys' fees, and interest at currently prevailing rates from the date the order was issued or the date of such final judgment, as the case may be). In such an action, the validity, amount, and appropriateness of such penalty shall not be subject to review.

**(d) SUBPOENAS.** ) The Secretary may issue subpoenas in connection with proceedings under this subsection compelling the attendance and testimony of witnesses and subpoenas duces tecum, and may request the Attorney General to bring an action to enforce any subpoena under this section. The district courts shall have jurisdiction to enforce such subpoena and impose sanctions.

## **Sec. 9. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.**

**(a) AUTHORIZATION.** ) There are authorized to be appropriated \$100,000 to carry out the purposes of this Act.

**(b) EFFECT ON LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS.** ) Nothing in this act shall require the amendment or revision of any land management plan, the preparation of which began prior to the enactment of this Act.

**(c) FUND.** ) Any money collected by the United States as permit fees for collection and removal of cave resources; received by the United States as a result of the forfeiture of a bond or other security by a permittee who does not comply with the requirements of such permit issued under section 7; or collected by the United States by way of civil penalties or criminal fines for violations of this Act shall be placed in a special fund in the Treasury. Such moneys shall be available for obligation or expenditure (to the extent provided for in advance in appropriation Acts) as determined by the Secretary for the improved management, benefit, repair, or restoration of significant caves located on Federal lands.

**(d) EXISTING RIGHTS.** ) Nothing in this act shall be deemed to affect the full operation of the mining and mineral leasing laws of the United States, or otherwise affect valid existing rights.

## **Sec. 10. SAVINGS PROVISIONS.**

**(a) WATER.** ) Nothing in this Act shall be construed as authorizing the appropriation of water by any Federal, State, or local agency, Indian tribe, or any other entity or individual. Nor shall any provision of this Act:

(1) affect the rights or jurisdiction of the United States, the States, Indian tribes, or other entities over water of any river or stream or over any groundwater resource;

(2) alter, amend, repeal, interpret, modify, or be in conflict with any interstate compact made by the States; or



(3) alter or establish the respective rights of States, the United States, Indian tribes, or any person with respect to any water or water-related right.

**(b) FISH AND WILDLIFE.** ) Nothing in this Act shall be construed as affecting the jurisdiction or responsibilities of the States with respect to fish and wildlife.