



File Code: 2300

Date: March 22, 2011

Route To: (2800), (2600), (2500)

Subject: Significant Cave Data Call and Nomination

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

**REPLY DUE MAY 2, 2011 AND SEPTEMBER 30, 2011**

Approximately 25 percent of the United States is underlain by caves, and over 40 percent of the United States population depends on karst groundwater. The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 (FCRPA) directs us to (1) 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 the exchange of information between those who use caves for scientific, educational, or recreational purposes.

An initial listing of Significant Caves was created in 1995. Since then very few national forests have designated additional caves as significant. Quality management of cave resources on National Forest System lands is consistent with our agency mission and our responsibilities under the FCRPA. As a result, please ask your line officers to update information on significant caves and to consider designating new significant caves.

Update List of Existing Significant Caves.

Each forest should use the enclosed spreadsheet (Enclosure 1) as a template to submit an updated list of significant caves by May 2, 2011. Completed spreadsheets should be forwarded to the Regional Cave and Karst Coordinator who will forward the information to the Washington Office. The spreadsheet does not request confidential information but will provide the number of significant caves and why the caves have been designated significant.

Submit List of Newly Designated Significant Caves.

A list of newly designated caves should be submitted to and maintained by Regional Cave and Karst Coordinators and copies forwarded to Cynthia Sandeno, National Cave and Karst Coordinator using Enclosure 1. This list should be submitted by September 30, 2011, and annually thereafter at the end of each fiscal year.

Designation of New Significant Caves.

Forest supervisors make the determination whether to designate a cave as significant. Nominations for designating a cave as significant may be submitted by private individuals, organizations, and agencies using a nomination worksheet (see Enclosure 2). To be nominated a cave must meet one of the following six criteria listed in Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 290: biological, cultural, hydrologic, geologic/mineralogic/paleontologic, recreational, and/or educational/scientific. The finding of significance must be recorded in a finding/decision document (Enclosure 3) signed and dated by the forest supervisor. National Environmental



Policy Act documentation is not required. Also, please do not confuse a “significant cave” under the FCRPA with a “significant bat cave,” which is sometimes used in the context of bat conservation and/or White-nose Syndrome response.

Confidential Information.

The finding/decision document is retained locally in a confidential cave file, which is the official listing of significant caves for that national forest or grassland. All location information submitted with nominations must be kept confidential throughout the evaluation and listing process. No copies shall be made of the nomination or of materials submitted in support of the nomination. The FPRCA specifically exempts the disclosure of cave location information from provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. It is essential that personnel handling these documents be aware of the sensitivity of the information and guard against any breach of confidentiality.

*/s/ James M. Pena (for)*

JOEL D. HOLTROP

Deputy Chief, National Forest System

Enclosures (4)