

CLEAN CAVING GUIDELINES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

IN A NUTSHELL

Tennessee State Parks requires cave-level dedication or decontamination of cave gear (including everything worn or taken into a cave) as detailed below:

1. Incoming cave gear that has been in a cave will require decontamination or cave-level dedication.
2. Gear will require decontamination between all caves within the Park
3. Incoming and outgoing gear will require decontamination, use of disposable coverings, or cave-level dedicated gear in cave areas and caves with colonial bats at any time of year.
4. Outgoing cave gear will require decontamination before use in any off-Park caves.

ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS FOR ACTIVITIES WITH INTIMATE CAVE SEDIMENT CONTACT

The minimal acceptable decontamination standards for caving are the current acceptable standards available from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. At the time of the preparation of this plan, standards for cave work are available at the USFWS's partner WNS website at:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/org.whitenosesyndrome.assets/prod/7a93cc80-b785-11e8-87bb-317452edc988-National_WNS_Decon_UPDATE_09132018.pdf

<https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/static-page/decontamination-information>

THE PROCEDURES CAN BE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

TRANSPORT AND STORAGE

After gear is decontaminated, people must take care not to let it come in contact with gear that has not been decontaminated or to storage containers, car trunks, etc. that have been used to haul dirty cave gear.

Decontaminated gear should be segregated from other cave gear (either by placing in sealed bags or by placing it in separate containers to keep it clean).

Vehicles that have been used to haul dirty gear not properly stored should also be decontaminated.

Careful double bagging of potentially contaminated gear after exiting the cave but before placing it in vehicles is essential to reduce the potential for contaminating vehicles and other gear.

DECONTAMINATION OF OUTGOING GEAR

Gear (including clothes, footwear, and caving gear) that has come in substantial contact (more intimate contact than normal walking tours on trails) with the sediments of a park cave must be decontaminated before use in any other cave.

Footwear must be decontaminated even if it comes into only minimal contact with the cave.

We expect that our cooperators and researchers will comply with park decontamination requirements. Our relationship with researchers and cooperators is built on a shared desire to understand and protect cave resources. We would hope that there would not be a need for park personnel to individually examine each participant for signs of appropriate decontamination.

We expect groups to police themselves. However, park personnel working with groups will be watching for signs of potentially contaminated gear. If we find evidence that groups or individuals are not complying with gear restrictions and decontamination procedures, we would immediately need to re-evaluate our decisions to allow certain activities to continue because our assumptions about our ability to continue them in a biologically responsible manner would potentially be invalid.