

**INTERIM MANAGEMENT PLAN
DEEP AND PUNKIN NATURE PRESERVE
CARTA VALLEY, TEXAS**

September 12, 2004

Version 2.6

The Interim Management Plan for the Deep and Punkin Nature Preserve was prepared by the Management Planning Committee and was approved by the Texas Cave Management Association on September 12, 2004. The Members of Deep and Punkin Nature Preserve Management Planning committee were:

Geary Schindel, Committee Chairman
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The following Interim Management Plan was adopted by the Board of Directors of the Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) at a regular meeting in Austin on September 12, 2004. The intent of this plan is to provide the terms of access to the preserve, as well as to protect the preserve and preserve the good relationship the TCMA has established with the neighboring landowners and members of the Carta Valley community. Please observe the rules so that all may enjoy this unique and beautiful natural site. Contact the Deep and Punkin Nature Preserve, Preserve Manager if you have any questions or recommendations in helping to better manage this preserve.

The Deep and Punkin Nature Preserve

The Texas Cave Management Association has noted the absence of caves open to visitation for recreational caving in Texas and committed to acquiring preserves to meet this demand. On September 10, 2004, the TCMA acquired the Punkin and Deep Nature Preserve. We are fortunate to have found a property containing not one, but two exceptional caves. However, this is a dry and fragile landscape and the two caves are very special biologically and geologically. The TCMA Board of Directors decided that it was appropriate to develop a management plan to protect these resources for current and future generations of cavers. While we hope that you will visit and enjoy this great property, be aware that there are those that have come before, and there are those that will come after you. Please respect the preserve and leave it better than you found it.

Management of the Preserve

The management of the preserve will be carried out by the Preserve Manager. The Preserve Manager will be nominated by the TCMA President and approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. Only the TCMA Board of Directors may dismiss the Preserve Manager. The Preserve Manager may be advised by and delegate tasks to a preserve management committee that is composed of volunteers selected by the Preserve Manager with advice and consent of the TCMA Board. However, the Preserve Manager is ultimately responsible for the preserve. Questions or suggestions on management of the preserve should be submitted to the Preserve Manager

Deep and Punkin Nature Preserve Access and Use Policy

1. **PRESERVE ACCESS** - Access to the preserve will be available during the dates and periods determined and announced by the Preserve Manager. There may be

some dates when the preserve closed to visitation. These dates and reasons will be posted as far in advance as possible.

2. **RESERVATIONS** - Reservations must be made in advance before visiting the preserve. Reservations may be made by contacting the Preserve Manager by phone or email. The reservation should include the name of the Trip Leader responsible for the group along with the approximate group size, dates, duration and nature of the visit (preserve management, recreation, exploration, survey, scientific, camping with off site caving, etc). The Preserve Manager will issue a visitation permit that must be displayed in the visitors' car dashboard while on the preserve.
3. **TRIP LEADER** – All trips to the preserve must have a Trip Leader. The Trip Leader is responsible for the actions of the people they lead to the preserve. A Trip Leader must be a TCMA member and approved by the Preserve Manager. The Trip Leader must provide a short trip report within two weeks of the visit detailing the caves visited, names of all visitors, and any problems encountered.
4. **CONSERVATION OR MAINTENANCE WORK REQUIREMENTS** - Past land activities have not necessarily been directed toward the best land stewardship ethic. We are asking that all visitors to the preserve practice good conservation ethics by performing a conservation or maintenance task while at the site. A list of tasks or projects will either be given to the trip leader with their permit or selected from a list posted on the preserve Kiosk. Conservation work may also be preformed on neighboring preserve with owner permission.
5. **LEAVE NO TRACE ETHIC** – A Leave No Trace Ethic is in effect for the preserve.
6. **VEHICLE ACCESS/ROAD EASEMENT** - Vehicle access from Carta Valley to the preserve shall be limited to the most direct right of way across the private ranches to the TCMA preserve. The ranch road leading to the preserve is not owned by TCMA and the easement does not allow for access to neighboring property for any reason. The ranch road to the preserve is rough, and currently, only high clearance and 4 wheel drive vehicles will make it to the preserve. The road to the preserve includes a rocky steep hill and areas of deep ruts. We do not have permission to leave cars parked along the easement. Travel along the ranch roads during wet conditions can cause severe damage to the road and vehicles.

In addition, the road to the cabin also provides access to neighboring preserve. Please do not block the main road through the preserve. The Preserve Manager reserves the right to cancel trips if travel on the road may result in excessive damage.

The TCMA does not have an easement or permission to drive on the road located to the west of the preserve that can be used to access Punkin Cave. If you must

drive to Punkin Cave, please use the road by the cabin. This road will not be passable during wet weather and we do not recommend travel on this road 24-48 hours after a heavy rain.

Vehicles may only use existing flagged roads on the preserve. ATV and motorcycle use on the preserve may occur by permission of the Preserve Manager.

A road log to the preserve can be provided by the Preserve Manager to the Trip Leader.

7. **CAMPING** - Camping is permitted in the vicinity of the cabin. Please practice Leave No Trace Camping practices and keep noise to a minimum to avoid disturbing other visitors.
8. **CABIN** – Currently, the cabin is in need of repair and may not be used for camping. However, TCMA intends to open the cabin to camping in the near future. The Preserve Manager will determine when that will occur. The cabin may be used for cooking, meetings, and relaxing; however, the toilet system is not functioning and can not be used.
9. **CAMPFIRES** - Campfires are allowed only in existing fire rings, and no fires are allowed during dry or windy conditions. No green wood may be collected for campfires.
10. **FIREARMS** – Firearms, BB Guns, Paintball guns, bows, crossbows, explosives, and other implements of death or destruction may not be used on the preserve without the written permission of the Preserve Manager.
11. **HUMAN WASTE** - A latrine has been provided by TCMA and must be used for all fecal matter. The soil is thin and there is little capacity to absorb waste. One person's private latrine might be someone else's campsite a week later. If you can't use an outdoor privy, don't visit the site.
12. **SOLID WASTE** – Anything brought to the preserve that is considered trash must be removed from the preserve upon leaving. This includes charcoal ash, paper, food scraps, etc. as it will attract mice, rats, snakes, skunks, hogs, wild dogs, vermin, or even other cavers.
13. **WATER** – Do not expect to find any water on the preserve. In addition, we do not have the right to any sources of water from any surrounding preserve. Please bring all of the water needed during your visit which includes enough to extinguish any fires you may build. Extra water may be placed in two storage tanks at the site.

14. **PUNKIN CAVE** – Punkin Cave is closed during bat maternity season. Generally, this is the spring and summer months. Specific dates will be posted.
15. **CLOSURE OF SENSITIVE AREAS** - Some areas within Punkin and Deep Cave may be closed because of unusual or delicate formations and areas of active survey that have not had a resource inventory. Areas of restricted access will be identified with flagging and notes. Please note that more than 1 mile of cave is open in Deep Cave and that as areas are assessed, they will be inventoried and will generally be opened for visitation as quickly as possible. To help preserve the cave, those restricted areas should not be entered. The TCMA has an active mapping project. If you would like to assist with this project, please contact the Preserve Manager.
16. **LARGE GROUPS** - All large groups (over three vehicles or twelve people) need to make reservations at least two weeks in advance. To prevent problems with the neighbors whose land has to be crossed to reach the preserve, and prevent adverse impacts to the caves, the Preserve Manager will generally limit the number of visitors on popular weekends to no more than 24 people entering Deep Cave. There are no restrictions to Punkin Cave during the season the cave is open for visitation. If a sufficient number of trip leaders are available to provide proper guidance, the number of visitors to the cave can be increased during special occasions. A ratio of 5 non-TCMA members to each TCMA member entering the cave is encouraged.
17. **COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY** – The preserve and associated caves may not be used for any type of commercial activity or purpose including guided or commercial caving. Any activity with a registration fee or paid guide, or that is included as part of any promotion (no matter how worthy or cave-related), must obtain permission in advance from the TCMA Board of Directors before using the preserve. The request should be directed through the Preserve Manager who will discuss the issue with the Board of Directors.
18. **UNAUTHORIZED VISITORS** - Unauthorized visitors encountered on the preserve should be reported to the Preserve Manager in the trip report. Unauthorized visitors should be encouraged to leave the preserve.
19. **RESOURCE DAMAGE** - Any visitor observed damaging the caves or preserve or threatening visitors should be reported immediately to the county sheriff and then reported to the Preserve Manager. The preserve is served by 911 emergency services. Cell phone service is sometimes available at the cabin. The closest private phone is located at the ranch house located at the intersection of Highway 377 and the ranch road.
20. **PRESERVE MODIFICATION** - Modification of the caves or preserve, including placement of bolts or other artificial anchors is not allowed without permission in advance from the Preserve Manager. There are many

improvements to be made on the preserve. Any improvements or modifications to the preserve must have permission from and coordination with the Preserve Manager.

21. **COLLECTION PERMITS** – The collection or removal of plants, animals, minerals or cultural artifacts, including scientific specimens, is not allowed without a collection permit from the Preserve Manager.
22. **REPORT OF PRESERVE MANAGER** – The Preserve Manager will make a yearly written report to the TCMA Board of Directors regarding the condition and visitation of the preserve. The annual report will be presented to the board at the TCMA Annual Board Meeting. At the request of the Board, the project manager will give periodic updates either verbally or in writing as requested.
23. **ENFORCEMENT OF THE INTERIM MANAGEMENT PLAN** – The Preserve Manager and their designees have full authority to enforce the TCMA Interim Management Plan outlined herein, which may include removal of persons in violation of the policy by law enforcement personnel. In addition, the Preserve Manager, with the approval of the Board of Directors, may also act to enforce the Access and Use Policy, as an agent of the TCMA, in a court of law. The Board of Directors may also temporarily or permanently ban persons from entering the preserve. Actions and decisions of the Preserve Manager may be appealed to the TCMA Board of Directors at either the next scheduled meeting or by convening an emergency meeting at the discretion of the TCMA President.
24. **REVIEW OF INTERIM MANAGEMENT PLAN** – The TCMA Board of Directors may modify this Interim Management Plan at any time at a regular, special, or emergency meeting of the Board of Directors. The TCMA President may make changes to the Interim Management Plan which will become effective immediately and will be in effect until the next meeting of the TCMA Board of Directors. At that point, the TCMA Board must either accept or reject the modification. The TCMA Board of Directors will review the Interim Management Plan at least once a year.

**INTERIM MANAGEMENT PLAN
DEEP AND PUNKIN CAVE NATURE PRESERVE
CARTA VALLEY, TEXAS**

SHORT VERSION

September 12, 2004

1. **Access** to the preserve will be available during the dates and periods determined and announced by the Preserve Manager.
2. **Reservations** must be made in advance before visiting the preserve by the Preserve Manager
3. All trips to the preserve must have a **Trip Leader**
4. All visitors are asked to practice good conservation practices and to **perform a conservation or maintenance task** while at the site.
5. **Leave No Trace** Ethic is in effect for the preserve
6. The TCMA has an **easement** to the preserve. We do not have a right to leave the easement or to park cars along the easement
7. **Camping** is permitted in the vicinity of the cabin.
8. Camping in the **cabin** is off limits until needed repairs are preformed.
9. **Campfires** may only be built in existing fire rings
10. Please use the **latrine** provided at the preserve
11. Do not leave any **trash** on the preserve.
12. **Water** is not available on the preserve. Please bring all your own water
13. **Punkin Cave is closed** during the bat maternity season.
14. Please obey the **closure notices** located on flagging in certain parts of Deep Cave until a resource inventory can be performed.
15. **Group size** should not exceed more than 24 people entering Deep Cave. A ratio of no more than 5 non-TCMA members to each TCMA member/trip leader is encouraged.
16. The cave and preserve may not be used for any **commercial activities** without direct permission of the TCMA Board.
17. **Unauthorized visitors** should be asked to leave and reported to the preserve manager. If they are damaging resources or posing a threat to visitors, they should be reported to the county sheriff.
18. **Preserve Modifications** should only be performed with permission of the Preserve Manager
19. **Collection** of any plants, animals, minerals, or cultural artifacts requires a collection permit from the Preserve Manager.