



2022 Call for Caving Proposals BLM Roswell Field Office

November 2021

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Roswell Field Office (RFO), is now accepting proposals for project work in caves within our field office that require a Special Recreation Permit (SRP), for the 2022caving season (April 15 - October 31).

In addition to proposals being submitted for SRP managed caves,the RFO encourages proposals to be submitted for non-SRP caves on BLM managed public lands. In addition to the SRP, a collection permit is required for collecting samples on public lands. Please request collection permit(s) in your SRP application proposal. Proposals will be accepted from today's date until January 7, 2022.

Proposals can be submitted to the Field Office by email, the postal system or hand delivered. If submitting by email, please use the subject line "2022 RFO Caving Proposal". The proposal should be either a pdf or aMicrosoft Word document and be an attachment to the email.

Please send to the following email address: blm_nm_rfo_caves@blm.gov. All email submissions MUST be sent to this email address.

If submitting in person, please deliver to the RFO address below, no later than January 7. If submitting through the postal system, the envelope must be received by the Field Office no later thanJanuary 8.

Please mail to:

Bureau of Land Management
Roswell Field Office
Attn: Knutt Peterson, Cave & Karst
Specialist2909 West 2nd St.
Roswell, N.M. 88201

Criteria for Proposals.

The proposal should address all the information requested in Cave Project Proposal document **(pages 4-6 of this document)**. The RFO requests this information as it helps us better understand the proposal (found in the Special Notes section of this document). Also included in this section is some additional guidance for proposals. The Field Office is looking for proposed project(s) that help BLM fulfill its cave management priorities. Proposals will be evaluated by the RFO Cave Specialist and the BLM NM Cave Management Team (CMT), then approved or denied by the Field Office Manager.

Special notes:

Fort Stanton Cave (FSC): The Roswell Field Office (RFO) would like to see a variety of proposals for 2022. If Snowy River becomes flooded again in 2022, the focus will be work in the historic part of the cave. In the historic part of the cave, priority will be given to proposals that offer to clean up old survey and restoration.

Currently, recommendations from the NM BLM CMT have limited the total individual entries to 275 for 2022 and are planned to increase to 350 in 2023. Ninety-six of those entries for 2022 and 2023 are reserved for youth guided educational entries. BLM RFO will approve proposals that fulfill our highest management priorities. A ranking system will be used to evaluate proposals on several criteria. The ranking will be based on how well the proposal meets the criteria and our management priorities. BLM management priorities for the 2022 caving season are:

1. White Nose Syndrome (WNS) and other scientific research
2. Mapping and monitoring of Snowy River Passage
3. Hydrologic analysis of the cave system.
4. Cave restoration
5. Archaeological analysis in and around the cave system.
6. Data gathering for Caver Quest and Caver Quest Academy
7. Other in-cave mapping and projects.

If you are writing a proposal to do science in the cave and you are not a subject matter expert, it is recommended that you have a subject matter expert work with you and be a coauthor on your proposal. If you anticipate needing to collect samples, please mention in your proposal that you are also applying for a sample collection permit(s).

All trip proposals to far Snowy River South (Midnight Junction) must be camp trips. With the current entry limits each trip needs to be maximized for in-cave productivity, impact mitigation, and safety.

Proposals for Snowy River exploration should describe the areas that your team would like to explore. The BLM RFO, the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project and trip leaders will work with all survey teams to coordinate areas of interest and operations as new passage become known during the caving season.

Trips beneath lands managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS) will be evaluated by the USFS Cave Specialist. Remember, all trips under the forest cannot be longer than 16 hours, unless an 8-hour rest period takes place. If your trip proposes to do work under USFS lands, **YOU MUST OBTAIN A PERMIT FROM THE USFS** and submit a copy of it to the BLM Cave Specialist on, or before, the day you enter the cave.

Trip dates can be changed due to circumstances as they arise (i.e., Snowy River flooded, overlapping trips, Covid concerns, etc.).

As hydrologic and scientific exploration has progressed, so to have the impacts to FSC cave and in particular to Snowy River Passage. The BLM's philosophy is that with the undertaking of mapping this incredible resource, it is our responsibility to mitigate and repair the inevitable impacts that occur. During the 2022 caving season, the Field Office is emphasizing mapping/restoration trips to Snowy River. In addition to further exploration, please include in your proposal(s) where you recommend cleanup or mitigation or where restoration should occur.

Additionally, **trips to Snowy River will photo document certain changing stations and high impact areas before they enter the station or the impact zone and after they leave the station or zone. Teams will be notified of these photo monitoring points before their trip.** Proposals focused primarily on restoration or with an element of restoration will be weighted higher than those without. All restoration projects must be cleared by the Field Office Cave Specialist.

To increase protection to the bat population and other unique lifeforms in FSC, BLM would like to see ALL cavers using dedicated cave gear during the 2022 season. The gear that would fall into the dedicated gear category are, helmets, gloves, pads, outer layer of clothing used to travel through the historic section of the cave, boots, and packs. Instruments, cameras, and other gear carried in a pack would need to be wiped down with approved wipes at the bunkhouse before the trip. There are several options for the caver in regard to dedicated gear. First, the BLM can loan gear that is dedicated to FSC, and available for checkout with the Cave specialist. Second, a caver can dedicate their own gear by decontaminating their personal gear onsite, have it certified by the BLM Cave Specialist, and then put it in an individual bin with their name on it, to be stored on site at the NCA. The use of dedicated gear by all cavers bolsters the BLM's commitment to protect all cave biota.

During the 2017 season, two assessment trips were conducted on Snowy River. On both occasions a new formation called "Detritus" was found. These formations turned out to be calcite encrusted human hair, bits of thread, lint, and rubber found at its core (basically, shredded cave gear). A significant amount of this "trash" was observed during these two trips. To diminish the anthropogenic trash in the cave and in particular on Snowy River, it is important to assess your gear and how you cave. If your gear is starting to fray, then it needs to be replaced. Shoe Goo is not approved for use on high contact surfaces, such as knee pads, as it eventually can become detached. Additionally, before entering the cave, it is recommended that the caver take a shower and thoroughly comb their hair. All cavers should be aware of how they move in the cave. An important part of being on a team that gets to go to Snowy River is that YOU are a mindful caver and are mindful of every step and movement. If you drag your knees or feet while crawling on Snowy River, you will leave bits of gear behind. This trash is nearly invisible, until it becomes calcified. These efforts will REDUCE the amount of material shed in the cave. If anyone has any other ideas to help address this issue, please make them known.

Expedition leaders are ultimately responsible for the personnel on their expeditions. Expedition leaders should do their best to recruit cavers who are willing to follow the caving guidelines that have been established. Expedition leaders should select cavers who are physically fit, psychologically prepared and who have the proper caving skills. Every team entering the cave will have one designated team leader. Team leaders have enormous

responsibilities. They are responsible for the safety of their team and for the actions of their team members. **However, EVERY team member is responsible for bringing issues to the team leader's attention.** If a team member is acting in an unsafe manner or not being careful and causing damage the cave, then it is the team leader's responsibility to correct that person's actions. If problems persist, then the team leader must abort the trip and have the team leave the cave. A team leader should gear team activities to the least experienced member of the team. This pertains to speed of travel, impact mitigation, exiting the cave on time, exposed climbing, and all other aspects of the trip.

A team should also stay together unless an emergency requires different actions. Everyone entering the cave is responsible for their actions while in the cave. They are also responsible for reporting to the team leader acts by other team members that are unsafe or unnecessarily impact the cave. It is everyone's responsibility to assure that Fort Stanton Cave remains as pristine as possible and that each team member acts in a safe manner while in the cave.

Travel on Near Snowy River Passage, (Snowy River North and Snowy River South to Bliss Borehole) requires at least two cavers experienced with travel on those sections of Snowy River. Travel to Far Snowy River South (Past Bliss Borehole) requires a team to have at least three accomplished Strong and Light cavers with camp experience. To bring new cavers into the Strong and Light cadre, it is encouraged to include an experienced non-Snowy River caver on a Snowy River South trip. The new caver must demonstrate that they have the stamina to make the trip to Midnight Junction. Otherwise, a phased set of progressively longer trips must be accomplished to be included on a Midnight Junction camp trip. Two or three trips out to Midnight Junction, without any issues, will add a caver to the Strong and Light Cadre.

For the 2022 caving season, BLM has approved giving permits to teams wishing to explore beyond the NCA boundaries under private property. To receive a permit from BLM to explore beyond the NCA boundary, the trip leader must present BLM with a written permission from the private property owner(s) before issuance of a permit. This permission must include language to the effect that ALL data collected on the trip (photos, mapping data, logger data, etc.) WILL be shared with the BLM and other partners. A legal property description, the owners name and contact information must also be included. The team will also be covered by an insurance policy with the BLM named as an additionally covered entity. This insurance policy shall be submitted with the proposal asking to do the work.

Fort Stanton Cave is an important bat hibernaculum that the BLM is tasked with protecting. Decontamination procedures are now commonplace within the caving community and are strongly encouraged by national caving organizations like the National Speleological Society. Current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cave decontamination procedures apply to all persons and equipment entering FSC is subject to inspection prior to every trip. All non-dedicated gear will be decontaminated after caving in FSC. This prevents cross contamination of FSC biota to other caves. No cave gear used in WNS infected states or areas of New Mexico may be used in any non-infected New Mexico BLM caves. Currently Lincoln County New Mexico is considered a WNS positive county. If you use gear in Lincoln County, you may not use it in uninfected counties. If you regularly cave at Fort Stanton Cave, you are encouraged to use the BLM dedicated gear or dedicate your own gear.

If you have any questions regarding the RFO proposal process, please email or call RFO Cave Specialist Knutt Peterson at knuttpet@blm.gov or (575) 626-5076.

Cave Project Proposal Contents

When writing your proposal, please try to be as clear as possible about what you are proposing. If it is a science proposal, why should this study be carried out? What information will it provide that can't be gleaned from another cave.

1. Who

- What group, institute, organization will be conducting the activity
- Project Investigator (PI) name, phone number, address, email address, caving experience.
- Trip leader name, phone number, address, email address, caving experience (If PI is not going into the cave).
- Total number of cavers per trip or project.
- Proposed team members' caving experience regarding safety, survey, inventory, cartography and exploration skills. Include any medical training of proposed team members as well. Include potential backup team members.
- Contact information for all team members including address, email address and phone numbers.

2. What, When, Where, How

- A detailed description of the activity proposed.
- Why it is needed.
- Where in the cave is the proposed work area?
- Proposed tasks.
- Proposed logistics to accomplish tasks.
- Total number of trips needed to accomplish tasks.
- A description of how this proposal will further BLM management objectives for the cave.
- Potential impacts from this activity.
- Proposed mitigation for potential impacts.
- Duration of the project
- A description of how this proposal will achieve BLM's management goals while utilizing minimum impact caving techniques and maintaining safety as the highest priority.
- If any collecting will be necessary, what is proposed to be collected, how much, need for collection, where collections will take place, what research will be done on the collected material, disposition or storage location of the collected materials. **Please request a collection permit be generated for the materials to be collected.** Collection permits require Field Office Manager approval and can take up to two weeks for approval. Plan ahead.

3. What benefit will be to the public or to cave/karst resources on BLM lands?

4. What the BLM will receive in the form of reports, photos, survey notes, etc.

5. What is the timeframe in which BLM will obtain the receivable?

6. **Biotic management:** How will the team manage the introduction and departure of biotic materials, like WNS, fungi, molds, and others (think decontamination and dedicated gear)?

7. **Comments**

Selection Criteria: Proposals will be evaluated by the RFO Cave Specialist and the e BLM New Mexico CMT based on the need for the work proposed and following three criteria.

Proposal contents: Are all questions from all 7 sections clearly answered from the Proposal Contents section above. A proposal content rank of four is achieved by fully answering all questions. A rank of three is achieved by answering almost all of the questions. A rank of two is achieved by answering most of the questions. And a rank of one is achieved by answering questions in a vague manner, leaving many questions amongst the evaluation committee.

Restoration Component: Proposals focused primarily on restoration or with an element of restoration will be weighted higher than those without. No restoration = 1, restoration when impact is made by the team = 2, additional restoration task while accomplishing other tasks = 3, trip focused on completing several restoration tasks = 4.

Team Success: This indicates the quality of an expedition leader to lead and participate in expeditions and our best judgment as to the applicant's and their teams' past efforts to conduct and participate in safe expeditions, **minimize resource impacts** while in Fort Stanton Cave, and to provide the RFO with accurate data in a timely manner. A rank of four indicates that the applicant has always led or contributed to successful expeditions and data has been turned over to BLM within two weeks. A rank of three indicates that the applicant has typically led or participated in successful expeditions with some minor lapses, and data was turned over to BLM after two weeks. A rank of two indicates that there have been some problems that reduced the success of past expeditions and data was handed over to BLM past three weeks. A rank of one indicates that there have been serious problems with success on past expeditions and data was handed over to BLM over a month late.