

Cave Conservation & Ethics

Every entry into a cave, by any person, creates disturbance. The cumulative impact of even slight changes and disturbances, whether deliberate or otherwise, can lead to dramatic alterations of the cave environment, or to people's enjoyment of the cave. As you enter and enjoy caves remember that your actions while caving will be one of the greatest determining factors in the condition of cave resources and enjoyment of the caves by future generations. It's everyone's responsibility to respect cave environments.

A boot scuff mark on rocks is one example of the types of signs of human usage. Boot marks are very difficult, if not impossible, to remove; and, thus, the use of non-marking boots is strongly encouraged. Do not track mud through the cave. Periodic cleaning of hands and boot soles can contribute greatly to the wild caving experience for everyone else that follows.

Bats use many caves, and several bat species live in BLM caves. Some of these species are extremely sensitive to the presence of humans. To reduce stress and mortality levels in bats, please do not disturb them. This is best accomplished by avoiding bats altogether. If you are visiting a cave and come upon a bat or a colony of bats leave the area as quickly and quietly as you can, reduce the amount of time near bats, do not shine lights directly on them, and do not make any sudden movements or loud noises.

Besides bats and cavers, other creatures inhabit caves. Often neglected or overlooked, cave invertebrates are often more sensitive than many other cave adapted species. There are over 200 species of invertebrates found in BLM caves. Please watch out for them and leave them undisturbed.

BLM caves are being managed both to perpetuate the cave and its associated values, and to provide for educational and recreational and scientific uses now, and in the future. You can affect not only the cave environment, but also future management decisions. People can impact caves far faster than nature can repair them, or create new ones. Please cave softly and practice **Leave No Trace**.

- Plan ahead, be prepared, and know what to expect from the cave you are visiting.
- Choose appropriate clothing, equipment, and safety gear.
- Move carefully through the cave to avoid damaging cave features.
- Stay on established trails.
- Pack it in; pack it out – including all human waste. Take out everything you take in, and leave nothing in the cave.
- Leave what you find; never remove natural or historic features from cave. These resources are protected under the **Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988**.
- Respect wildlife, and avoid disturbing or killing cave wildlife, including bats, cave crickets and all other living things in the cave.
- Respect other visitors – while in the cave area, stay quiet and keep a clean camp.