



Cave River Valley

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the Cave River Valley acquisition located?

The 316-acre acquisition is located near Campbellsburg in Washington County, Indiana. This property is a subterranean priority in the watershed of the East Fork of the White River.

Why is Cave River Valley important to The Nature Conservancy?

The Nature Conservancy has recognized this area for the presence of six globally rare cave species, including the northern cavefish, golden cave harvestman, and Youngs cave beetle. Two scenic and significant caves accentuate the valley. The first, River Cave, has 3900 feet of underground stream passages where a population of the state-endangered northern cavefish is found. The second, Endless Cave, is 6,900 feet in length harboring an important colony of hibernating Indiana bats.

In recent years the area has become increasingly important for its Indiana bat hibernaculum. Prior to 1990 few Indiana bats were known to hibernate here, but since that time the number has grown significantly. By 2007, 1,689 Indiana bats were found here along with an additional 1,500 little brown bats, making this area the eighth most important Indiana bat hibernaculum in the state and the second largest little brown hibernaculum. Areas that contain populations of both Indiana bats and northern cavefish are extremely rare and therefore the protection of these areas presents the Conservancy with a nearly unparalleled opportunity for cave conservation in Indiana.

What else is on the property?

The property is largely wooded with two semi-open areas (approximately 5 acres) that are only partially wooded. The remaining forested acres are considered to be “a well-stocked stand of hardwoods, pine and mixtures of the two” by a recent forest inventory. The land is very rolling with steep slopes and sinkholes present throughout. There are several other smaller caves on the property.

Were there partners involved with the acquisition?

Yes. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Department of Natural Resources' Division of State Parks and Reservoirs, Division of Fish and Wildlife and Division of Nature Preserves are partners.

What are the Conservancy's plans for the property?

The Division of State Parks and Reservoirs is applying for Indiana Heritage Trust funds that will allow the DNR to purchase the property from The Nature Conservancy in the coming months. Spring Mill State Park will be assuming temporary management during this process.

Will there be access to the property?

Yes, but the property will be temporarily closed to the public beginning next week as all partners further assess the management needs and plan the work needed to reopen it next year.

Will cavers still be able to enjoy the caves located on the property?

Yes. The Conservancy and the DNR understand the significance of this site, both from a natural heritage perspective and from a human perspective. We want to provide recreational opportunities and access for the caving community. However, we are also accepting responsibility for managing the unique and fragile natural communities at the site. That will likely result in some restrictions, including the closing of Endless Cave during the hibernation season of the Indiana bat.

The DNR's Division of State Parks and Reservoirs has diligently contacted many individuals and groups who might have been expecting to visit the site in the next six months.

www.nature.org/indiana

www.dnr.IN.gov