



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 24, 2018

**Cave exploration and conservation group partners with land trust to protect, preserve resources**

Huntsville, AL – A new partnership between the National Speleological Society (NSS) and Land Trust of North Alabama (LTNA) will help ensure protection of numerous caves and the fragile life that inhabits them on preserves owned by the land conservancy.

Earlier this month, the NSS—the world’s largest non-profit membership organization dedicated to cave education, exploration, conservation and management—signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with LTNA. This agreement paves the way for creation of management plans for caves located on the over 7,000 acres of North Alabama land preserved by the Land Trust and opens up more partnership opportunities for further conservation projects.

Among LTNA assets are several caves considered significant from an exploration, conservation or educational standpoint. The NSS, which owns 15 cave and nature preserves across the United States, pledges to bring its considerable expertise for protecting these delicate underground ecosystems to LTNA properties.

“We are very excited to take these important steps together with the organization that’s helping to save North Alabama’s great natural places for future generations,” said Geary Schindel, NSS president, of San Antonio, Texas. “We’ve identified broad areas of common interests and objectives and look forward to helping each other with management and protection of current cave resources as well as future acquisitions.”

Among activities featured in the MOU, the NSS and LTNA will also:

- Share the latest cave management practices, cave protection and management plans, details of potential acquisitions and other information
- Work together to develop, coordinate and manage a permitting system for accessing caves on land trust properties to avoid adverse impacts
- Support careful, conscientious use of cave and groundwater resources, agreeing to make visitation as low-impact as possible, and follow a “leave no trace” policy for visitors and researchers where possible
- Look for opportunities to jointly develop cave-related educational opportunities

"The caves and karst features of our area are fascinating—but often fragile—environments. This partnership with the NSS creates new opportunities to collaborate on stewardship efforts and provide the community with educational programs that highlight the unique geology of North Alabama," said Marie Bostick, LTNA executive director.

Additionally, each organization will now be able to provide their respective memberships a number of special benefits and programs that leverage the new agreement.

**About the National Speleological Society (NSS)**

The NSS, headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama, has more than 8,500 members nationwide and 250 grottos (or chapters). The NSS is the largest organization in the world working every day to further the exploration, study, and protection of caves and their environments, and foster fellowship among cavers. For 70+ years, the NSS has promoted safe and responsible caving practices, effective cave and karst management, speleology, and conservation. Our members, representing a wide spectrum of explorers, cave scientists and conservationists, are bound together by their love of caves and caving and their desire to learn about the underground wilderness and protect it for future generations. The NSS provides cavers access to information about discoveries and developments in caving, speleology, equipment, and techniques through publications, annual conventions,



## NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

DEDICATED TO THE EXPLORATION, STUDY, AND CONSERVATION OF CAVES

regional meetings, grottos and other internal organizations, and NSS-sponsored projects, expeditions, and surveys.

### **About the Land Trust of North Alabama (LTNA)**

This nonprofit organization is dedicated to preserving natural lands, water resources, and wildlife habitat in 10 counties of North Alabama, one of the nation's fastest growing areas. The LTNA preserves and protects land and its legacies—including wildlife habitats, farms, historic sites, waterways and mountains—for conservation, public recreation, and environmental education to enhance quality of life in North Alabama. Residents and visitors alike enjoy outdoor adventure on 70+ miles of free public trails on seven public nature preserves. The largest of these, Monte Sano Nature Preserve, is among the biggest U.S. urban nature preserves and located only two miles from Huntsville City Hall. Dedicated to connecting people with nature and developing appreciation of vulnerable natural spaces, the land trust provides environmental education programs and guided hikes to encourage future stewards and ensure resource preservation.

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