

**Escabrosa Grotto, Inc.**  
**of the**  
**National Speleological Society**

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE  
PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT  
OF THE ONYX CAVE ECOSYSTEM**

**Santa Cruz County, Arizona**

**Escabrosa Grotto, Inc.  
P.O. Box 41651  
Tucson, Arizona 85717-1651**

**December 13, 2013**

**This document was originally approved by the EGI Board of Directors on April 8, 1997, and was ratified by the EGI membership on May 9, 1997**

**Subsequent revisions approved and ratified on March 9, 2012**

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## **1. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS/DEFINITIONS**

Adult	.....	A person over 18 years of age.
ARA	.....	Arizona Regional Association of the NSS
BoD	.....	Board of Directors, EGI.
Conservation Chair	.....	EGI BoD member responsible for conservation issues.
EGI	.....	Escabrosa Grotto, Inc. Tucson, Arizona
Key Holder	.....	Person authorized to issue the Onyx Cave gate key to Onyx Cave visitors.
NSS	.....	National Speleological Society
Onyx	.....	Onyx Cave, Santa Cruz County, Arizona
SARA	.....	Southern Arizona Rescue Association
Speleothem	.....	A secondary mineral deposited by the action of water; a cave formation.
Youth	.....	Person (minor) 8-17 years of age.
Child/Children	.....	Person/Persons (minors) under 8 years of age.

## **2. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE AND RATIONALE**

**2.1. PURPOSE.** The purpose of this document is to define and publish the policies and procedures established by the Escabrosa Grotto, Inc., of the National Speleological Society for the protection and management of Onyx Cave. Since 1973, EGI has held a lease, which allows EGI to control access into Onyx and to provide for the cave's management and protection. EGI intends that these policies and procedures ensure that Onyx will be managed in a consistent and reasonable manner that will preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the delicate natural ecosystem that is Onyx, while also recognizing the realities of the human desire for recreation, exploration, and research.

**2.2. RATIONALE.** As the lease-holder, EGI has the right to establish policies and procedures to manage Onyx to accomplish EGI's goals for the cave, while also remaining consistent with the wishes/goals/purposes of the owner. The goal of EGI is to strike a balance between aggressively protecting Onyx while also allowing reasonable entry for recreation, exploration, and research. EGI is responsible for establishing policies and procedures for the management of Onyx. While receptive to, and even welcoming, the ideas and concerns of other cavers in the local community, the ultimate responsibility for the drafting, adoption and execution of this Management Plan rests with the EGI membership. Should any situation or question arise concerning the management of Onyx that is not covered in this document, the issue will be resolved by the BoD.

## **3. PENALTIES**

Violations of any of the rules and policies as stated in this document, or the rules and policies as expressed on the Onyx Cave release form or entry permit, or any misrepresentation or omissions of information on the release form or entry permit, may result in forfeiture of future access privileges into Onyx Cave. Any forfeiture or penalty resulting from these types of violations will be at the discretion of the BoD. Any questions or appeals concerning a forfeiture or penalty will be referred to the BoD.

## **4. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ONYX CAVE**

Onyx is a moderately large cave in Santa Cruz County, Arizona, with an estimated two miles of total passage. It is primarily horizontal, but has some attendant verticality, with a number of pits up to 150 feet deep. The main passage has a rift about 20 feet deep not far from the entrance, and at least minimal climbing skills are required to travel into the cave for any appreciable distance. The cave is fairly well decorated with many speleothems, including shields and helictites. While moist in many places and wet in some, there is no running stream and only a few pools.

## 5. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

**5.1. JUSTIFICATION.** Due to concerns about vandalism/littering/damage to Onyx, EGI has concluded that the requirements for entry into Onyx must be expressly defined and published in this document.

**5.2. RESPONSIBILITY.** EGI carries no liability insurance and will not assume responsibility for the safety of visitors entering Onyx Cave. It is therefore the responsibility of every Onyx visitor to obtain adequate equipment and proper training. Risks may include, but are not limited to, misinformation; lack of proper instruction; equipment malfunction; equipment misuse by either the participant or other participants or owners or managers of Onyx Cave; slippery surfaces; dislodged rocks; falling; dangerous animals; unimproved roads or trails; and other risks, with consequential injuries received that may be compounded by negligent rescue operations or procedures of the released parties or others. This list is by no means complete and does not exclude any other risks that may arise but are not listed.

### 5.3. RESERVATIONS.

**5.3.1. Requests.** All requests for entry into Onyx *must* be made through the Conservation Chair by either contacting him/her directly or by writing to: EGI, PO Box 41651, Tucson, AZ 85717-1651. This initial request must identify the Trip Leader. Although additional trip members may be identified at a later date, the Permit must list the finalized roster of trip participants and be reviewed by the Conservation Chair and the Key Holder prior to key issuance.

**5.3.2. Group Size and Number of Trips per Day.** Any group entering Onyx will be limited to a minimum of three (3) persons and maximum of eight (8) persons. No more than two groups may enter Onyx per day. Exceptions to this policy (for special events such as ARA gatherings, rescue practices, etc.) will be at the discretion of the Conservation Chair or the BoD. The second group must not enter the cave until at least 1 hour after the first group to avoid joining up at places such as the “gorge.” Groups may not join up in the cave and travel together, or switch group members.

**5.3.3. Scheduling.** A two-week notice to the Conservation Chair will be required of all regular-sized groups (3-8 persons) requesting a key. This notice will allow more turn-around time for checking the Post Office box, giving out releases and getting the paperwork signed before issuing a key. Key requests with a less than two-week notice will be handled, if possible, on a first-come/first-served basis if it can be coordinated between the Conservation Chair and a Key Holder. If the U. S. Postal Service is used for a request by an out-of-town group, a three week lead time is required. The use of email or phone calls instead of the postal service is encouraged. The key shall be sent/returned via U.S. Postal Service certified mail with a return-receipt requested, or a traceable commercial carrier like FedEx, UPS, etc.

**5.3.4. Priority.** Priority for reservations is given to EGI members and other organized caving groups so long as it does not interfere with another group’s previously scheduled reservation.

**5.3.5. Confirmation.** If the requesting group qualifies, and the requested date is available, it will receive a reservation and a Key Holder will be notified by the Conservation Chair. Key Holders must check with the Conservation Chair before issuing a key to ensure that the reservation is valid.

**5.3.6. Key Deposit.** A \$100 deposit (cash or check) is required of every requester (except for EGI

members). The key must be returned by the date agreed upon on the Permit or the deposit may be forfeited. If a delay in returning the key at the agreed upon time is unavoidable, then the issuing Key Holder or Conservation Chair must be contacted via telephone or email as soon as possible.

**5.3.7. Lost Keys.** As it costs up to \$150 to replace the gate lock and keys, a lost key will likely result in forfeiture of the key deposit and possible forfeiture of future access privileges to Onyx.

## **5.4. GROUP PERSONNEL**

### **5.4.1. Trip Leader.**

**5.4.1.1.** The Trip Leader is the most important member of any group entering Onyx, and by agreeing to serve as Trip Leader, must also agree to accept the numerous responsibilities that come with the role.

**5.4.1.2.** The Trip Leader must either: (1) have been in Onyx at least three times within the previous five years, or (2) in the case of long-time cavers who have visited Onyx dozens of times over many decades, obtain approval from the Conservation Chair.

**5.4.1.3.** By signing the Onyx Cave Permit and accepting the Onyx gate key, the Trip Leader is attesting to possessing sufficient caving skill and knowledge to assure the safety of his/her group and the preservation of the cave.

**5.4.1.4.** The Trip Leader shall be a participating member of the group entering the cave and shall be the person to pick up the key, unless the Conservation Chair authorizes another person to pick up the key in the Trip Leader's stead.

**5.4.1.5.** The Trip Leader will be provided a copy of this Management Plan, and is expected to read it and be knowledgeable about its contents.

**5.4.1.6.** The Trip Leader is required to brief the members of his/her group on the Onyx Safety, Etiquette, and Conservation Rules contained in Appendix A of this Management Plan – a paper copy of this Appendix (entitled “Onyx Cave Trip Leader Briefing Guide”) will be provided to the Trip Leader by the Key Holder at time of key issuance. If the Trip Leader would like to preview this Appendix prior to key issuance, it may be (1) viewed on the EGI web page, or (2) a copy may be requested via email from the Conservation Chair.

**5.4.1.7.** The Trip Leader shall be held responsible to EGI for supervising the actions of his/her group while the group is in Onyx. It is also required that members of the group follow the guidance and judgment of their respective Trip Leader while in Onyx Cave.

**5.4.2. Beginning/Inexperienced Cavers.** As Onyx Cave presents many challenges and hazards to even the experienced caver, beginning or inexperienced cavers will not normally be allowed to visit Onyx. Exceptions to this policy will be at the discretion of the Conservation Chair or the BoD.

**5.4.3. Youths.** For any group entering Onyx which includes youths, a ratio of one adult for every one youth will be maintained. Example: For a maximum group size of eight (as per

paragraph 5.3.2.), there can be a maximum of four youths on any single Onyx visit (i.e. four youths and four adults). Exceptions to this ratio will be at the discretion of the BoD. There may also be instances where youths visit Onyx as a member of a recognized “Youth Group” (such as Scouts). A Youth Group of this type is usually comprised of designated adult leaders and youths who, for the most part, are not legally related to each other (although there may be parents with their children). A Youth Group entering Onyx may consist of not less than four (4) members, may have up to eight (8) members (as per paragraph 5.3.2.), but at least two of the group must be qualified adult Trip Leaders (as defined in paragraph 5.4.1. above), and the Adult/Youth ratio specified at the beginning of this paragraph must be followed. A Youth Group wishing to make a reservation to visit Onyx must contact the Conservation Chair a minimum of four weeks prior to the proposed visit date.

**5.4.4. Children.** Due to the many challenges and hazards present in Onyx, EGI has decided as a general policy to not allow children to enter/visit Onyx. Exceptions to this policy will be at the discretion of the Conservation Chair or the BoD.

## **5.5. RELEASES AND DOCUMENTATION.**

**5.5.1. Onyx Cave Release and Waiver of Liability.** Each waiver is valid for one person and only for one trip. The Trip Leader shall ensure that every member of his/her group receives and reads a copy of the waiver (including the Trip Leader), and legibly signs and fills out all required information in dark ink. The Trip Leader will give the waivers (original version if copies are made) to the Key Holder before receiving the key. Before issuing the key, the Key Holder will ensure that names on the waivers match those on the Onyx Cave Permit.

**5.5.2. Onyx Cave Permit.** The Trip Leader shall (1) ensure that the names, addresses, and phone numbers of every member of his/her group have been clearly and legibly printed in dark ink onto the permit, and (2) that every member of his/her group has signed the permit. Before issuing the key, the Key Holder will also ensure that (1) the permit has been properly and legibly filled out in dark ink, (2) that all participants have signed (not printed) and dated their signatures, (3) that no one who has a ‘forfeiture of access’ is on the roster or planning to visit the cave and (4) in all cases, if at all possible, the Conservation Chair should be notified of all participants in advance. No substitutions may be made after key issuance, and the names of any “no-shows” will be deleted from both copies of the permit.

**5.5.3. Parental Permission.** The Trip Leader will ensure that any youth intending to enter Onyx as a member of his/her group has the signed permission of a parent or guardian. This permission must be presented to the Key Holder prior to issuance of the Onyx Key.

**5.5.4. Copies.** Two copies of the completed Permit are required. Either two separate permits are accomplished, or the original completed permit may be photocopied. The original copy will remain with the Key Holder, and the other copy must remain in the Trip Leader’s possession while in Onyx.

**5.5.5. Onyx Cave Register.** A cave register is located in the entrance room of Onyx. An additional condition for entry into Onyx is that ALL visitors will agree to legibly sign in the Onyx Register upon entering the cave AND to sign out upon exiting. It is the Trip Leader’s responsibility to ensure that all members of the visiting group sign the register.

**5.6. PAY-FOR-PLAY.** Paid guided trips into Onyx, whether by a company or by an individual, are prohibited.

## **6. CAVE ETIQUETTE**

### **6.1. EQUIPMENT.**

- 6.1.1. Lighting.** Everyone entering Onyx must have at least three sources of light on their person or in their cave pack. Electric lamp use is preferred. Carbide lamps are allowed if handled and used with care. Absolutely no dumping of spent carbide in Onyx is allowed and all spent carbide will be safely packed out and removed from Onyx and disposed of properly. Great care will be taken during re-carbiding to ensure that no carbide is spilled into the Onyx environment. The use of candles, flares, torches, oil lanterns, or Coleman-type (i.e. with a mantle) lanterns as a light source within Onyx is prohibited.
- 6.1.2. Helmets.** All persons entering Onyx are required to wear a protective helmet, with chin-strap. Each person's helmet is required to have a light mounted to the helmet.
- 6.1.3. Cave Packs.** EGI requires that every person entering Onyx carry a hands-free cave pack (e.g., equipped with shoulder straps or attached to a belt around the waist) for such items as extra batteries and bulbs for lights, water, pee bottles, snacks, first aid kit, etc. The pack is also useful for carrying out any trash generated by the group.
- 6.1.4. First Aid Kit.** Each Group entering Onyx is required to have at least one first aid kit.
- 6.1.5. Footwear.** EGI recommends the wearing of sturdy hiking/climbing boots with lug-pattern soles - tennis/sneaker-type street shoes are not recommended.
- 6.1.6. Gloves.** EGI requires the wearing of gloves while visiting Onyx to (1) protect the hands from cuts, scratches, & rope abrasions, (2) prevent or reduce the amount of skin oils left on cave surfaces. Exceptions shall be limited to instances when the visitor is eating or when gloves would impede manual dexterity for tasks such as rigging, for adjusting or using gear or equipment, or for specific hand holds.
- 6.1.7. Clothing.** Clothing worn in Onyx should be selected to minimize the shedding of lint, loose threads, etc. within the cave. Clothing with bangles, glitter, rhinestones, etc. is prohibited.
- 6.1.8. Ropes, Technical Rigging, and Climbing Equipment/Hardware.** All rope and technical rigging will use only natural rigging points - the installation of new permanent anchors such as expansion bolts is prohibited, as are temporary anchors such as grappling hooks. To reduce scratches/damage to Onyx surfaces, visitors are prohibited from traveling through Onyx passages with climbing equipment/hardware (such as carabiners, racks, ascenders/descenders, etc.) attached to their harness or person. Personal climbing equipment/hardware will only be worn while actually in use.
- 6.1.9. White-nose Syndrome (WNS) Protocols.** WNS has had a severe lethal impact on bat populations throughout a wide swath of caves and mines in the eastern portion of the United States. The fungus (and spores) associated with WNS appears to be a cold-adapted/loving organism, and EGI recognizes that it is unlikely that the fungus will become established within the much warmer environment of Onyx. However, it is also known that the spores are fairly robust and, while not likely to propagate within Onyx, may remain in a latent/dormant state for many years. It has also been confirmed that bats use Onyx in the summer as a maternity roost, and then in the winter travel to hibernate elsewhere. EGI holds that, while admittedly unlikely, it is still possible that any WNS spores introduced into

Onyx could be either (1) picked up by these bats and possibly transported to their winter hibernacula, or (2) be picked up on the clothing/equipment of human visitors and then be subsequently introduced into other caves in Arizona where the winter conditions or higher overall cave elevation produces conditions conducive to spore growth. Therefore, to help prevent the inadvertent introduction of any latent spores into the Onyx environment, EGI has determined that these WNS protocols are necessary.

**6.1.9.1.** Effective 5/1/2012, NO equipment which has been used in a cave, mine, or bat roost environment east of the main New Mexico/Texas border (being that line of longitude 103°W extending north and south) after 1 April 2005 may be used in Onyx Cave. This includes helmets, lights, packs (and contents), climbing ropes & hardware, clothing, and boots.

**6.1.9.2.** Equipment used west of the New Mexico/Texas border and extended line, including western Colorado and western South Dakota, must be decontaminated following the most current protocols established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and adopted by the U.S. Forest Service.

**6.1.9.3.** Equipment used only within 10 miles of Onyx Cave need not be decontaminated, but clean caving practices (to remove dirt and mud and prevent the spread of microorganisms from cave to cave) should be applied.

**6.1.9.4.** In cases where visitors from outside Arizona don't have gear/equipment that qualifies for use in Onyx, EGI will attempt to make available some EGI-owned loaner gear.

**6.1.9.5.** This policy will be reviewed annually, or as new WNS data (including range extension data) becomes available, and adjustments made as deemed appropriate.

## **6.2. TRAILS, TRAVEL, AND ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS.**

**6.2.1. Onyx Cave Gate.** The gate must be kept locked during the group's visit, and upon exiting the Cave. In case of emergency, the upper bar can be removed from inside the cave. The Trip Leader shall ensure safe keeping of the key at all times while within Onyx.

**6.2.2. Group Movement through the Cave.** To preclude groups from crowding up at such places as the "Gorge", each group will wait 60 minutes before following the previous group into the cave. Once inside, the separate groups are not to join up anywhere in the cave, travel together, or switch members. While traveling through the cave's passages, visitors are expected to limit their footsteps to the middle of the previously well-established trail, and are urged to be mindful that their carelessly-placed footsteps can leave muddy bootprints over a delicate and pristine surface. Likewise, a muddy hand may leave an ugly blemish on a beautiful wall or formation. While in Onyx, visitors are expected to adhere to the concepts of: "**CAVE SOFTLY**" and "**LEAVE NO TRACE**".

**6.2.3. Trail Marking.** The use of string to mark the trail in Onyx is prohibited, and any other non-permanent method of trail marking (such as plastic flagging tape, reflectors, etc.) shall not damage or mark the cave and shall be completely removed as the group leaves the cave. The use of paint, chalk, or any other form of permanent sign or arrow to mark the trail in Onyx is prohibited.

**6.2.4. Access Restrictions.** There may be areas within Onyx, by virtue of their uniqueness, fragility, biological, paleontological, or historical significance, etc., that EGI has deemed it necessary to restrict access. These restricted areas will be marked-off and are not to be entered. These areas may be marked-/cordoned-off by surveyor's tape, plastic cones, plastic cutlery, or by other means. Visitors to Onyx are to respect and to abide by these restrictions and are prohibited from entering any cordoned-off area.

**6.2.4. Mud Chutes.** To reduce the tracking of mud throughout the rest of Onyx, any group planning to visit the "Mud Chutes" section of Onyx is required to: (1) notify the EGI Conservation Chair prior to entering Onyx; (2) bring along a change of clean clothing and clean boots (or means to clean the mud from the original boots); (3) change into the clean clothing/boots and to pack up the muddy clothing/boots before re-entering the rest of the cave.

**6.3. MEALS/EATING.** As mold tends to form on any organic material in a cave environment, great care must be taken whenever food or snacks are consumed while in Onyx. To prevent the dropping of crumbs or food particles, always eat over the opening of a large plastic bag, or at least over the opening of your cave pack. Do not eat "on the move" while traveling through Onyx.

#### **6.4. WASTE DISPOSAL.**

**6.4.1. Trash disposal.** Littering is strictly prohibited; all visitors will carefully pack and remove their trash/litter from Onyx and dispose of it in a proper receptacle. If any litter is found that was left by a previous Group, EGI asks that (1) the litter be packed up and removed from the cave, and (2) the littering be reported to the Conservation Chair.

**6.4.2. Human Waste Disposal.** The voiding of urine and/or solid waste into the Onyx environment is prohibited. Each person will carry a "pee bottle" and a sturdy bag/container for solid waste in their pack for use in the cave. Care must be taken to ensure that no waste comes into contact with any Onyx surface. All waste must be packed out and removed from the cave, and then disposed of properly (e.g., not in camping areas).

**6.5. SPITTING.** The spitting of saliva or any other liquid while in Onyx is prohibited.

**6.6. SMOKING.** The smoking or use of any tobacco product (cigarettes, cigars, pipes, snuff, chewing tobacco, etc.) or any other material (to include electronic cigarettes) within Onyx is prohibited.

**6.7. ALCOHOL/INTOXICANTS.** The consumption or use of any alcoholic beverage, or any form of illegal drug/intoxicant within Onyx is prohibited. It is the Trip Leader's responsibility to not allow any member of his/her Group who is in any way inebriated, drunk, or intoxicated to enter Onyx.

**6.8. COSMETICS, LOTIONS, AEROSOLS, ETC.** While in Onyx Cave, the use or release of any foreign chemical or scent (such as cosmetics, lotions, aerosols, insect repellents, sun block, etc.) into the Onyx environment is prohibited.

**6.9. GLASS BOTTLES/CONTAINERS.** Glass bottles or containers are prohibited.

**6.10. FIREARMS AND FIREWORKS.** The firing or discharge of any type of firearm or firework in Onyx is prohibited.

**6.11. FIRES.** Wood fires within any part of Onyx, to include the entrance area, are prohibited.



**6.12. BIVOUACKING.** Any overnight camping or bivouacs within Onyx past the entrance gate will require advanced written permission from the BoD. No BoD permission is required for camping/bivouacking in Onyx Annex.

**6.13. DIGS/EXCAVATIONS.** Any digging or excavating in Onyx for any purpose, to include digging for the purpose of revealing new passage, is prohibited without the express written approval of the BoD.

**6.14. PETS.** Pets are prohibited in Onyx.

**6.15. PHOTOGRAPHY.** By signing the Onyx Permit, all visitors entering Onyx agree that photos taken in Onyx, and written description and comments about photos, will not be published or distributed by any method (hard copy, email, social media, etc.) with the cave name or location attached. Remove all location metadata (i.e. longitude/latitude) from digital photographs before posting or distributing any photo.

## **7. SAFETY**

**7.1. MAJOR ACCIDENT.** In the event of serious injury or other major accident/emergency while in Onyx, call 911, which will bring the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department, and likely SARA. After resolution of the emergency, the Trip Leader will contact the Conservation Chair as soon as possible and provide a report detailing the scope and possible causes of the accident/emergency.

**7.2. MINOR ACCIDENT/INCIDENT.** In the event of a minor accident/incident while in Onyx, (such as sprains, cuts, minor falls, getting lost, etc.), the Trip Leader will contact the Conservation Chair as soon as possible and provide a report detailing the incident. This report is required even if the group was able to self-rescue and/or exit Onyx without outside assistance.

## **8. CONSERVATION**

**8.1. GRAFFITI.** The writing, marking, or placing of words, names, arrows, or any other type of graffiti on any wall, ceiling or surface within Onyx is prohibited. It is also illegal (see paragraph 8.5.) and could result in fines and/or imprisonment.

**8.2. MUD SCULPTURES/SCRIBING.** The creation of sculptures or figures out of mud, or any other form of scribing, furrowing, or marring any mud surface, is prohibited.

**8.3. THROWN MATERIALS.** The throwing of mud, mud balls, or any other kind of material within Onyx is prohibited.

**8.4. WILDLIFE.** The deliberate disturbance of any wildlife within Onyx, be it vertebrate, invertebrate, or plant, is prohibited. It is also illegal (see paragraph 8.5. below) and could result in fines and/or imprisonment. Bats within Onyx are a special concern. Disturbing bats within or at the entrance to Onyx is prohibited. Visitors encountering roosting bats should immediately become quiet, avoid shining lights on or near the bats, not approach any closer, and quickly leave the area. If a few flying bats are encountered, visitors should avoid shining lights near or at the bats, and quietly give the bats room to fly by. If 5 or more flying bats are encountered in an area (about 30 feet), it is likely the visitors have disturbed a colony of roosting bats and the visitors should quickly and quietly leave the area. Photographing bats is prohibited unless prior approval is obtained by the BoD. The BoD will determine the time period for which permission is granted (e.g., 1 trip per season). If bats are encountered, the Trip Leader is requested to provide written details (date, location, description of observations, etc.) to the Key Holder when the key is returned, or send them to the Conservation

Chair within one (1) week of the trip.

**8.5. ARIZONA CAVE LAW.** In accordance with the Arizona Cave Law (here quoted), any form of damage or vandalism within Onyx is prohibited.

“Relating to Crimes: PROHIBITING, DEFACING OR DAMAGING OF CAVE: PROVIDING A PENALTY, AND AMENDING TITLE 13, CHAPTER 3, ARTICLE 14, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES, BY ADDING SECTION 13-1025.

Be it enacted by the legislature of the State of Arizona: Section 1. Title 13, Chapter 3, Article 14, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended by adding section 13-1025, to read:

13-1025. Defacing or damaging caves or caverns.

- A. IT SHALL BE UNLAWFUL FOR ANY PERSON, WITHOUT THE PRIOR PERMISSION OF THE OWNER, TO WILLFULLY OR KNOWINGLY COMMIT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:
1. BREAK, BREAK OFF, CRACK, CARVE UPON, WRITE OR OTHERWISE MARK UPON, OR IN ANY MANNER DESTROY, MUTILATE, INJURE, DEFACE, REMOVE, DISPLACE, MAR OR HARM ANY NATURAL MATERIAL FOUND IN ANY CAVE OR CAVERN, SUCH AS STALACTITES, STALAGMITES, HELICTITES, ANTHODITES, GYPSUM FLOWERS OR NEEDLES, FLOWSTONE, DRAPERIES, COLUMNS, OR OTHER SIMILAR CRYSTALLINE MINERAL FORMATIONS.
  2. KILL, HARM, OR DISTURB PLANT OR ANIMAL LIFE FOUND THEREIN.
  3. DISTURB OR ALTER THE NATURAL CONDITION OF SUCH CAVE OR CAVERN.
  4. BREAK, FORCE, TAMPER WITH, REMOVE, OR OTHERWISE DISTURB A LOCK, GATE, DOOR, OR OTHER STRUCTURE OR OBSTRUCTION DESIGNATED TO PREVENT ENTRANCE TO A CAVE OR CAVERN, WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE OWNER THEREOF, WHETHER OR NOT ENTRANCE IS GAINED.
- B. ANY VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE PUNISHED BY A FINE OF NOT MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS, BY IMPRISONMENT IN THE COUNTY JAIL FOR NOT MORE THAN TWELVE MONTHS, OR BOTH.”

**8.6. REPORTING DAMAGE.** Any person visiting Onyx who notices any apparently new damage or littering is asked to immediately contact the Conservation Chair and provide details of the incident.

## **9. CAVE MANAGEMENT**

**9.1. ONYX MAP.** For any group to properly manage a resource such as Onyx, a fairly detailed map is necessary. EGI has initiated a program to survey Onyx and draft the necessary map. Mapping in Onyx requires BoD permission; unauthorized “wildcat” mapping is prohibited.

**9.2. PHOTO MONITORING.** In order to monitor condition of trails, speleothem breakage, cave restoration projects, and other aspects of the cave interior, EGI will develop a written plan (added as an appendix to this management plan), to photographically record this type of information. This photographic record will aid in developing corrective or preventive procedures.

**9.3. ONYX CAVE DATA BASE.** As an important tool in tracking visitation into Onyx, EGI will maintain an up-to-date computerized record of all visitors.

**9.4. CAVE CLEANUP, MAINTENANCE, AND RESTORATION.** EGI will develop a written plan (added as an appendix to this management plan) covering policies and methods for Onyx cave cleanup, maintenance, and restoration.

**9.5. BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY.** To better understand, manage, and protect the resource, EGI will initiate a Biological Inventory of the animals (both vertebrate and invertebrate) and plants/molds/fungi, etc. within Onyx Cave.

**10. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

Onyx has numerous research opportunities in a number of fields, and EGI encourages research that will further the science of speleology. Qualified groups or individuals who wish to pursue some investigation in Onyx are invited to submit their proposal to the BoD for approval. Prior to any activity within Onyx, the principal investigator must submit this research proposal to the BoD, listing the goals of the investigation, the methods employed, number of personnel requiring entry, and the probable time duration of the investigation. Additionally, the BoD will likely request that the principal investigator submit a resume of his/her vocational, avocational, or academic credentials pertinent to the desired area of study. This opportunity is not limited to professionals; graduate students and non-professional research workers are also welcome to apply. Because of conservation considerations, research personnel unfamiliar with the underground environment of Onyx would be required to make one or more orientation trip(s) with EGI members. Once the active investigation in Onyx begins, after each visit into Onyx a brief report listing the personnel, the time of entry and exit, the areas in Onyx visited, and a short synopsis of the research activity conducted will be submitted to the BoD.

**11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Since the earliest days of EGI's lease, numerous workers have contributed to the development and evolution of EGI's policies and procedures for the management of Onyx Cave. These workers include: Rick Day, Eric Means, Roland Browne, Marty Wiggins, Elaine Garifine, Steve Holland, Marion Vittetoe, Scott Gibson, Randy Gruss, Jerry Orcutt, Dave Hamer, and many, many others. EGI and Onyx Cave are indebted to them and this document is a continuation of their fine work. EGI also wishes to thank the cavers who served on the 1996-1997 Onyx Management Plan Committee. Without their experience, insight, and dedication, this document could not have been produced.

The 1996-1997 Onyx Management Plan Committee members were:

Dave Hamer	Phyllis Hamer	Steve Smith	Sue King	Dennis O'Sullivan
Steve Daniels	Lang Brod	Dave Brown	Jerry Orcutt	Rebecca O'Sullivan
Roland Browne	Andy Menhenett			

The 2011-2012 Onyx Management Plan Revision Committee members were:

Sandy Wolf	Dave Dalton	Jerry Isaman	Phill Benjamin	Sarah Stephenson
Norm Ostensoe	Sarah Truebe	Steve Smith	Travis Feltman	Linda Isaman
Rebecca O'Sullivan				

The 2012-2013 Onyx Management Plan Revision Committee members were:

Dave Dalton	Steve Smith	Sandy Wolf	Marion Vittetoe	Andy Moreland
Phill Benjamin	Sarah Stephenson	Peter Lipa	Dylan Bixby	Bob Zimmerman

*The Escabrosa Grotto, Inc. of the National Speleological Society*

**Onyx Cave Trip Leader Briefing Guide**

1. **PURPOSE.** Escabrosa Grotto, Inc. (EGI) is dedicated to preserving and protecting the delicate natural ecosystem that is Onyx, while still allowing reasonable entry for recreation, exploration, and research. The information within this Briefing Guide has been extracted from a larger document entitled Policies and Procedures for the Protection and Management of the Onyx Cave Ecosystem. Any Trip Leader who will lead a trip into Onyx Cave **is required to:**
  - (1) read and be familiar with the larger Policies and Procedures document mentioned above, **and**
  - (2) read this Briefing Guide (beginning with this paragraph 1.) to his/her group **before** entering the cave.
2. **ONYX CAVE.** Onyx is a moderately large cave in Santa Cruz County, Arizona, with about two miles of total passage. It is primarily horizontal, but has some verticality with a number of pits up to 150 feet deep. At least minimal caving knowledge and climbing skills are required to safely travel through the cave.
3. **ASSUMPTION OF RISK.** EGI carries no liability insurance and will not assume responsibility for the safety of visitors entering Onyx – **thus it is the individual responsibility of every Onyx visitor to obtain adequate equipment and proper training before entering Onyx Cave.**
4. **PENALTIES.** Violations of any of the rules and policies EGI has established for Onyx Cave may result in forfeiture of future access privileges into Onyx Cave.
5. **TRIP LEADER.** The Trip Leader is the most important member of any group entering Onyx, and by agreeing to serve as Trip Leader, must also agree to accept the numerous responsibilities that come with the role. By signing the Onyx Cave Permit and accepting the Onyx gate key, the Trip Leader is attesting to possessing sufficient caving skill and knowledge to assure the safety of his/her group **and** the preservation of the cave. The Trip Leader shall be a participating member of the group entering the cave, and **shall be held responsible** for the actions of his/her group while the group is in Onyx. It is also required that members of the group follow the guidance and judgment of their respective Trip Leader while in Onyx Cave.
6. **EQUIPMENT.**
  - 6.1. **Lighting.** Everyone **must** have at least three approved (see management policy) sources of light on their person or in their cave pack.
  - 6.2. **Helmets.** Everyone is **required** to wear a protective helmet, **with** chin-strap, and **with** a mounted head light.
  - 6.3. **Cave Packs.** Every person entering Onyx will carry a **hands-free** cave pack (e.g., equipped with shoulder straps or attached to a belt around the waist) for water, snacks, pee bottle, and other supplies & equipment.
  - 6.4. **First Aid Kit.** Each Group entering Onyx is **required** to have at least one first aid kit.
  - 6.5. **Footwear.** EGI recommends the wearing of sturdy hiking/climbing boots with lug-pattern soles – tennis/sneaker-type street shoes are not recommended.
  - 6.6. **Gloves.** EGI requires wearing gloves to: (1) protect the hands from cuts, scratches, & rope abrasions, and (2) reduce the amount of skin oils left on cave surfaces (see 6.1.6. in policy).
  - 6.7. **Clothing.** Clothing worn in Onyx should be selected to minimize the shedding of lint, loose threads, etc. within the cave. Clothing with bangles, glitter, rhinestones, etc. is prohibited.
  - 6.8. **Ropes, Technical Rigging and Climbing Equipment/Hardware.** All rope and technical rigging will use only natural rigging points; the installation of new permanent anchors such as expansion bolts is prohibited, as are temporary anchors such as grappling hooks. To reduce scratches/damage to Onyx surfaces, visitors are prohibited from traveling through Onyx passages with climbing equipment/hardware (such as carabiners, racks, ascenders/descenders, etc.) attached to their harness or person. Personal climbing equipment/hardware will **only** be worn while actually in use.
  - 6.9. **White-nose Syndrome Protocols.** No equipment (e.g., helmet, light, pack and contents, ropes, climbing gear, clothing, boots) that has been used in a cave, mine, or bat roost east of the New Mexico/Texas border (longitude 103° W extended north and south) after 1 April 2005 may be used in Onyx. Equipment used west of 103° W longitude must be decontaminated per the most current US Fish and Wildlife protocols. Equipment used only within 10 miles of Onyx need not be decontaminated; however, all gear and clothing should be clean before entering Onyx.

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## **7. TRAILS, TRAVEL, AND ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS.**

- 7.1. Onyx Cave Gate and Register.** The gate must be kept locked during the group's visit, and upon exiting the cave. The Trip Leader shall ensure safe keeping of the key while within Onyx. The Trip Leader must also ensure all trip members legibly sign the register upon entering the cave and sign out upon exiting.
- 7.2. Group Movement through the Cave.** A second group on the same day must wait at least one hour after the first before entering. Groups may not join up in the cave and travel together, or switch group members. Visitors are expected to limit their footsteps to the middle of the previously well-established trail and to remember that carelessly-placed footsteps can leave muddy bootprints on a delicate and pristine surface. Likewise, a muddy hand may leave an ugly blemish on a beautiful wall or formation. Visitors are expected to follow the concepts of: "CAVE SOFTLY" and "LEAVE NO TRACE". Any person who notices any apparently new damage or littering is asked to immediately contact EGI.
- 7.3. Trail Marking.** The use of string to mark the trail in Onyx is prohibited, and any other non-permanent method of trail marking (such as plastic flagging tape, reflectors, etc.) shall not damage or mark the cave and shall be completely removed as the group leaves the cave. The use of paint, chalk, or any other form of permanent sign or arrow to mark the trail in Onyx is prohibited.
- 7.4. Access Restrictions.** There may be areas within Onyx that EGI has deemed it necessary to restrict access. These areas may be marked-/cordoned-off by surveyor's tape, plastic cones, plastic cutlery, etc. and are not to be entered.
- 7.5. Meals/Eating.** To prevent mold, great care must be taken whenever food is consumed in Onyx. To prevent dropping crumbs, always eat over the opening of a large plastic bag or the opening of your cave pack. Do not eat "on the move" while traveling through Onyx.
- 7.6. Waste Disposal.** Littering is strictly prohibited; all visitors will carefully pack and remove their trash/litter from Onyx. The voiding of urine and/or solid waste into the Onyx environment is prohibited. Each person will carry a "pee bottle" and a sturdy container for solid waste for use in the cave. Waste must not come into contact with any surface in Onyx. Pack out all waste.
- 7.7. General Prohibitions.** The following activities/items are PROHIBITED while in Onyx Cave:
- Spitting of saliva or any other liquid.
  - Smoking (including electronic cigarettes) or use of any tobacco product (such as snuff & chewing tobacco).
  - Consumption or use of any alcoholic beverage or intoxicant, or any other form of illegal drug.
  - Use/release of any foreign chemical/scent (cosmetics, lotions, aerosols, insect repellents, sun block, etc.).
  - Glass bottles or containers.
  - The firing or discharge of any type of firearm or firework.
  - Camping or bivouacking within Onyx without prior EGI permission.
  - Wood fires within any part of Onyx, to include the entrance area.
  - Any digging or excavating in Onyx for any purpose without EGI's express written approval.
  - Pets or other animals.
  - The writing/marketing of words, names, arrows, or any other type of graffiti on any wall, ceiling or surface.
  - The creation of sculptures or figures out of mud, or any other marring of any mud surface.
  - The throwing of mud, mud balls, or any other kind of material within Onyx.
- 7.8. Photography.** By signing the Onyx Cave Permit, all visitors entering Onyx agree that photos taken in Onyx, and written descriptions and comments about photos, will not be published or distributed (hard copy, email, social media, etc.) with the Cave name or location attached. Remove location metadata (i.e. latitude/longitude) from photos before posting or distributing.
- 7.9. Wildlife.** The disturbance of any wildlife within Onyx, be it vertebrate/invertebrate/plant, is prohibited, is illegal under Arizona state law, and could result in fines and/or imprisonment. Visitors encountering bats should immediately become quiet, avoid shining lights on or near the bats, not approach any closer, and quickly leave the area. Photographing bats is prohibited unless prior EGI approval is obtained. If bats are encountered, the Trip Leader is requested to provide written details (date, location, description of observations, etc.) to EGI within one (1) week of the trip.
- 7.10. Emergencies.** Should any injury or emergency require outside assistance, **call 911** as soon as possible.