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Comments: Forest Supervisor Holly Jewkes

Deschutes National Forest

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National Speleological Society

23 July 2020

Forest Supervisor Jewkes:

With thousands of members and 250 Grottos (chapters), the National Speleological Society is the largest organization in the world working every day to further the exploration, study, protection and conservation of caves and their environments. We work nationally with the USDA Forest Service under a cooperative MOU. We work with Bat Conservation International as well as bat researchers worldwide to monitor, understand, and protect bat populations and habitat. On behalf of the NSS, we extend our full support to the second round of comments by the Oregon High Desert Grotto. The NSS supports balanced approaches to cave access, cave resource protection, and bat habitat, as well as closures that are backed by scientific data and conservation measures that are implemented to truly enhance protection of cave resources and wildlife

Summary of Vital Changes

ProposedChange to:

1Eternity/Infinity ClosedApprove the proposed OHDG Challenge Cost Share Agreement and Management Plan or a similar agreement

2Cody Borehole Closed Year RoundCody Borehole open year round

3Lower Quartz Mountain & Lee's Cave closed Oct 1st-April 30thLower Quartz Mountain & Lee's Cave Closed Oct 1st-May 31st

4Cave digs prohibitedProvide clarification to the Grotto on how passage restoration will be managed to allow important exploration and study.

5Wind, Bat, and Skeleton Cave Closed Year RoundWind, Bat, and Skeleton closed seasonally. Public access restored.

6Temporary anchors prohibitedBolts and pitons prohibited

7Charcoal #1 & Deg Closed Year RoundCharcoal #1 & Deg Closed seasonally

850 foot bufferSite by site mitigation plans -You're creating a monster of a legal disaster for yourselves.

9"Certified Service Animals" allowedService Animals as defined by ADA.gov -The verbiage is illegal.

Thank You We sincerely thank the USFS for reviewing the outdated closure orders and working on a comprehensive plan to manage the caves. We hope that our NSS input helps make the final plan a better and stronger version. Thank you for reviewing our statements and considering specific details provided by the Oregon High Desert Grotto. In conclusion, we very much appreciate your long history of working closely with NSS members who help steward the caves of the Deschutes National Forest. The organized caving community of NSS-affiliated cavers historically provides resource monitoring, stewardship, and management assistance for cave resources across USFS lands, providing immeasurable Volunteer Value for protection of many of our nation's species, as well as cultural and natural heritage. We sincerely thank you in advance for including NSS expertise, field knowledge, and stewardship resources in your final plan updates.

Respectfully submitted,

Val Hildreth-Werker & Jim C. Werker

Katherine L. Crispin, PhD

NSS Conservation Division Joint Chiefs

NSS Administrative Vice President

Val Hildreth-Werker & Jim C. Werker

NSS Conservation Division Joint Chiefs