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Cave Resources Protection Act Needs Your Help

The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act passed its first hurdle and was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives in late March. The Senate will vote on its companion bill (S. 927) later this summer.

The proposed legislation applies to the protection of all caves under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior, including Indian lands. Criminal penalties would be levied against those who knowingly kill, injure or interfere with cave life or obstruct the free movement of any natural resource in these caves. Several states already have passed legislation protecting privately owned caves within their state, including both Alabama and Kentucky this year.

Growing use of caves as hazardous waste dumps seriously threatens ground water supplies. Other unnecessary human disturbance, including vandalism, has led to the loss of unique and complex cave ecosystems and geological formations. Cave environments are fragile, and many species can live nowhere else; the low tolerance of these ecosystems for disturbance often means that they cannot recover. Some cave-dwelling species of wildlife have already been listed as endangered or threatened and many more are under consideration. Four of the endangered species are bats with two more proposed (see this issue, page 3).

Please write your Senator in support of this important legislation (S.927) and send a copy to Senator J. Bennett Johnston; Chairman, Energy Committee; 136 Hart Senate Office Bldg.; Washington, DC 20501.

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