**White Nose Syndrome Protocol for the 2017 Convention of the National Speleological Society**

All participants of the 2017 Convention of the National Speleological Society who choose to join a Convention caving trip must adhere to this protocol for White Nose Syndrome (WNS).

**If you have been caving in an area that has been identified as having a positive detection of WNS:**

Do not bring your caving gear to the 2017 NSS Convention. Any gear that was used in a WNS positive area will not be permitted in caves selected for trips for the Convention. Most of the 2017 Convention Caves are located on land managed by the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service. These agencies have policies prohibiting the use of gear from a WNS-positive area; the 2017 Convention is adhering to those policies.

The 2017 Convention has a supply of loaner gear for your use, including helmets, lights, and vertical gear. The loaner equipment is almost new, lightly used, high quality equipment. Vertical gear is primarily frog systems, as most vertical caves selected for cave trips have short drops but may involve passing rebelay systems.

We recommend you bring your own boots and gloves to ensure a good fit. Many caves in the eastern USA contain quite a bit of mud, and many eastern cavers wear rubber or wellie-style boots. Most caves selected for Convention trips have very little mud and many western cavers wear hiking boots when caving. We recommend you bring your hiking boots to the Convention. Another option is to purchase inexpensive hiking or work boots for the 2017 Convention.

**If you cave exclusively in areas that have not been identified as having a positive detection of WNS:**

You will still be required to use the decontamination station at the 2017 Convention for all of your gear, no exceptions, consistent with the policies of the Federal land management agencies.

**The decontamination process at the 2017 NSS Convention:**

Before you go caving the first time, and between every caving trip (except for the pre- and post-Convention trips, where several caves are located close together), you must decontaminate your gear. If you attended the 2016 NSS Convention and used the decontamination station, the process is the same.

At the decontamination station, you will find written directions and volunteers prepared to assist you. The procedure is as follows:

1. Wash mud and dust from your equipment. Hoses, power washers, tubs filled with water, and brushes are available for your use.
2. Place all gear (including boots and helmets, if your light can be detached from your helmet) that can withstand immersion into hot water (greater than 55 degrees Celsius or 131 degrees
Fahrenheit) into mesh laundry bags (available at the decontamination station) and set the bag into the area designated for gear to be decontaminated.

3. Gear that cannot withstand immersion in hot water (primarily lights, or helmets and lights if the light is permanently attached to the helmet) should be sprayed with dilute bleach (supplied at the decontamination station), allowed to stand for 5 minutes, and rinsed with fresh water (supplied at the decontamination station).

4. Designated volunteers at the decontamination station will place the mesh bags with caving gear into a large tank filled with hot water (temperature between 55 and 65 degrees Celsius (131 to 149 degrees Fahrenheit) for 20 minutes. The current WNS protocol specifies a minimum temperature of 55 degrees Celsius (131 degrees Fahrenheit), but to maintain the temperature above the minimum, the decontamination station maintains the temperature slightly above the minimum.

5. After 20 minutes, mesh bags of gear are removed from the hot water by designated volunteers and placed in a designated pickup area. Cavers can retrieve the mesh bags of their gear and place their gear in plastic bags (provided by the decontamination station) or hang their gear on drying racks at the decontamination station. Mesh bags are returned to the decontamination station.

6. Cavers processing their gear through the decontamination station are issued decontamination cards, indicated that their gear was decontaminated.

All trip leaders, on all caving trips for the 2017 Convention, will ask to see the decontamination card prior to allowing cavers to join the trip.