

## **Ohio Cave Survey Landowner Information Sheet**

### ***Who we are...***

The Ohio Cave Survey (OCS) was founded in 2020 as an independent, non-profit 501c3 organization to act as a steward, advocate, and educational resource for the cave and karst features of Ohio and their landowners, as well as to manage the cave data repository first established by the late Horton H. Hobbes III at Wittenberg University. OCS is comprised of cavers, landowners, academics, and geology/biology volunteers from across the state. Membership is open to anyone.

### ***What we do...***

OCS has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to maintain a central storage place for Ohio cave and karst feature data (location, biology, maps, ownership info). OCS serves as an intermediary between ODNR, landowners, scientists, students, and recreational cavers to collect and share cave and karst data when appropriate (see Privacy Policy below), but also to support these groups by facilitating conversations, answering questions, and sharing information on cave and karst state policy, legal protections and other considerations, conservation best practices and a number of other topics. We publish a periodic newsletter, and plan outreach activities to further educate the public regarding these fragile natural resources.

We also maintain a secure website (<https://ohiocavesurvey.org/index.shtml>) that allows landowners to view and report information about cave or karst features on their property. This information is added to a database that will eventually include mapping capabilities for use by qualified academic and scientific study (see below).

### ***Why we do it...***

We recognize caves and karst features as a valuable natural resource which, in many cases, have biological, geological, and archaeological significance. Because Ohio has a large number of smaller cave and karst features distributed widely across the state (roughly 15,000), general knowledge of state policy, legal considerations, conservation best practices, etc. is not broadly available as in some other states. ODNR is not currently staffed to manage data, relationships, and public outreach activities on its own. As such, OCS fills in this gap to help manage the central storage of Ohio's cave and karst data, share information, facilitate conversations among interested parties, and educate anyone with an interest in these resources. Landowners are a key constituent of our organization.

### ***So what do you want from me as a landowner...and what do I get from OCS?***

As a landowner of a property with cave or karst features, you are in control of a valuable natural resource with potential biological, geological, and archaeological significance. We would like, at the very least, to add your cave/karst feature to our database, along with some basic data (location, length, map, biological/other data, description, etc.). We would also like to have your contact information on file if possible (name, email, phone, address).

In return, OCS people and resources will be made available to you to help with questions you have on topics such as legal liability, cave management and conservation, state policy. OCS can also provide guidance and support from the caving community on other topics such as bat/wildlife conservation, cave gating, survey/mapping opportunities, cave property valuation, volunteer cave clean-up support, etc. We will always share our newsletter and other relevant materials with you regarding Ohio caves, cave ownership, and policy as they become available. Your cave data will be added to the permanent body of scientific information being collected on caves and karst within the state.

***Yes, but what is your Privacy Policy?***

OCS policy is to provide cave location data and information only to “qualified third parties”, as determined by the OCS board’s review of a data request. This might be a geology or biology student who is doing a study on caves/karst, or a geologist doing a groundwater study, for example. When there is a need to contact a landowner for a specific reason, you would be contacted first for permission to share your contact information. Subsequent steps are up to you based on the interest of the “qualified party”. Cave location and ownership data will NOT be shared with the general public.