

# Mammoth Cave International Center for Science and Learning

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## Abstract

The Mammoth Cave International Center for Science and Learning (MCICSL) is a cooperative venture of Mammoth Cave National Park and Western Kentucky University. Funding, logistical support, and governance of MCICSL are shared equally by both entities. It is a part of a network of 17 research learning centers within the National Park Service. The goals of MCICSL and the other centers are to

- I. Facilitate the use of parks for scientific inquiry
- II. Support science-informed decision making
- III. Communicate the relevance and provide access to knowledge gained through scientific research
- IV. Promote science literacy, and resource stewardship.

MCICSL has been operational since the middle of 2005, so we are still building programs. Current staffing of the MCICSL consists of a Research Director (Toomey) and a part-time Education Program Specialist (Trimboli). In spite of the limited staff, the center is leading both research and education based programs.

MCICSL coordinates scientific research and research permitting at Mammoth Cave National Park and consults with the park on scientific issues. MCICSL staff also assists researchers in arranging the logistics of research in the park. Toomey is co-lead on several research projects involving NPS caves including a multi-park lighting research project, research to address on-going E. coli issues in cave waters, and a study to improve monitoring of visitation to backcountry caves. Toomey has also participated in several projects to implement changes in cave infrastructure and management by providing technical expertise and links to outside researchers. These include projects to modify cave lighting and paleontological compliance for a cave trails project. The center also helps recruit researchers and volunteers.

MCICSL staff lead or participate in numerous educational activities that highlight research at the park. Our educational efforts serve a variety of internal and external audiences. The methods employed to reach such diverse audiences are also widely varied. They include such things as workshops, internships, research-focused field opportunities, internal educational presentations, and internal and external research summaries. Some examples of education projects include teacher training workshops, WKU's Karst Field Studies Program, the Geoscience-Teachers-in-the-Parks pilot project and a demonstration project with Caverna High School.