



Kentucky Land Trust Protects a Cave for Beetles



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Entrance to Adams Cave. Brent Harrel, USFWS photo

The long-term prospects for two cave beetle species in Kentucky are a lot brighter as a result of a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances between the Southern Conservation Corporation, a land trust, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Thanks to conservation actions, the beetles are no longer candidates* for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

The Adams Cave, located in the Adams Place housing subdivision in Madison County, is the only known home of greater and lesser Adams Cave beetles. About the size of pencil erasers, the beetles are reddish-brown, cave-dependent, and eyeless predators of spiders, mites, and millipedes. Recognizing the importance of the site, landowner Robert Taylor donated the cave and the surrounding acre to the Southern Conservation Corporation for education and conservation purposes. The land trust entered into an

agreement with the Service to manage the site to protect the beetles and their habitat.

“We see this agreement as a simple way to help conserve these species,” said Charles H. Fox, Executive Director of the Southern Conservation Corporation. “The Fish and Wildlife Service helped us develop a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances and showed us how it would protect us from liability under the Endangered Species Act. All we had to do was implement several conservation measures on the property, which we were going to do anyway.”

Signed in December 2005, the agreement assures the Corporation that no additional conservation measures or commitments of land, water, or resources beyond those specified will be required if either species is listed as

threatened or endangered in the future. An “enhancement of survival permit” provides the regulatory assurances.

Under the agreement, the Corporation has protected the cave entrance from human disturbance, a major threat to the beetles, and has created a green buffer of habitat. Replacing a cinder block wall with a steel gate allows air to flow and natural debris to enter the cave.

Featuring a small wet-weather stream, Adams Cave is 1500 feet long, from 5 to 40 feet in height, and has several crawl ways. It is also home to three species of salamanders, two species of bats, and a cave crayfish, among other species.

The Service’s Candidate Conservation program and its Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program supported this effort. This included technical assistance



Crayfish. Brent Harrel, USFWS photo

and funding to construct the new gate and prepare and implement the agreement. Brent Harrel, Kentucky State coordinator for the Partners Program, thanked the partners, “To mention just a few, Robert Taylor, the landowner who donated the cave, was very generous to work with us on it. Ellis Laudermilk, a biologist with the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, kept everyone geared up about the importance of it and really helped me find the beetles and gate the cave.”

The Madison County Solid Waste Commission hauled away all the trash without charge. A local farmer volunteered his tractor to pull a grass drill to plant native seed for revegetation of the surrounding area. Other volunteers included Eastern Kentucky University, The Wildlife Society’s EKU Student Chapter, the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, and the National Speleological Society’s Blue Grass Grotto. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources helped restore woodland savannah habitat around the cave.

The Service removed both Adams cave beetle species from candidate status because of the short and long term conservation actions implemented under the Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances.

For more information about Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/listing/cca.pdf>



The cinder block wall failed to keep out trespassers; it was replaced with a “bat-friendly” steel gate below. Brent Harrel, USFWS photo



Gate designers Roy Powers and Kristen Bobo in front of the completed gate. Brent Harrel, USFWS photo

For the nearest Fish and Wildlife Service office, go to <http://www.fws.gov/offices/>

*A candidate species is one for which the Service has sufficient information to propose listing it as endangered or threatened, but higher priorities preclude such action.

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