
3.2. RESEARCH

A. Research on TCMA Preserves

It is the policy of the Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) that, when appropriate, the managers of TCMA cave preserves should request researchers to complete the TCMA Formal Research Form to protect the cave resource.

Research is defined as any project primarily to gather scientific data that will require physical or cave or preserve modification, the installation of instrumentation, repeated visits, special access to the cave not normally provided, or collections of mineral or biological material; except that limited collecting that might normally be considered part of a cave trip can be approved by the preserve manager. For example if cavers have word that a species in the cave might be a new species the manager can authorize limited collections as part of normal cave trips, or the manager can approve collections of an individual of a species not known to have been collected from the cave. Most activities that can be conducted as part of a normal cave trip by cavers would not be considered research, as photos to illustrate solution features, probing the depth of guano, collecting a water sample from a pool, etc. Activities such as taking a sample of guano, photographing cave life would be considered research if they are elaborate, time-consuming projects, but not if they take only a few minutes. If an academic researcher or a researcher from a consulting company requests access it is best to have the requester complete the research request, especially if any collecting is required. Completing the research form may be waved at the discretion of the preserve manager if the academic or cooperate researcher only wants to observe or photograph the cave. In case of uncertainty as to weather the requested activity is "research" the manager should their best judgment, or contact a TCMA officer for guidance.

B. Research Requests

1. Requests for Research at TCMA sites must be submitted in writing and must include the following:
 - a. The name, street address, and telephone number of the person(s), business, organization, or agency requesting to perform the research.
 - b. A description of the research project; to include the types and number of any animals to be collected and an explanation of why that number is needed; a description of any samples to be removed from the cave (or preserve) and a statement as to why these materials are needed, and a statement as to what will happen to the collections upon completion of the project.
 - c. A description of the intended use of the data collected.
 - d. The qualifications of the person(s), business, organization, or agency to conduct the research;
 - e. A statement of intent not to directly or indirectly harm, degrade or destroy caves, karst features, or their contents.

- f. If the results of the research are to be published, an agreement as to the accuracy of the cave locations to be included in the publication. Some cave locations are sensitive, and the published accuracy of the location needs to be limited to protect the cave. Even for sensitive caves this should not be a problem as a dot on a map of a county will usually be acceptable to the TCMA.
 - g. An agreement to provide the TCMA with a copy of all data, maps, or reports that are produced based on or result from the research, with an estimated time frame of when that information will be delivered.
 - h. For biological research projects in caves with endangered species, names and endangered species collection permit numbers of any persons planning to collect endangered species.
 - i. If the person(s), business, organization, or agency is making the request on behalf of other persons, businesses, organizations, or agencies, then letters are needed from each of the other parties providing the above information and stipulating to the above conditions.
 - j. A statement that the TCMA has all financial rights to any material removed from TCMA property and processes derived from this material developed for commercial use.
 - k. An acknowledgement that despite any agreements and arrangements conditions might exist to make it necessary for the preserve manager to restrict collections, limit or deny access and the researchers agree to comply with all instructions of the preserve manager and to hold the TCMA harmless for any actions taken by the preserve manager.
2. Procedure for doing Research at TCMA Preserves or TCMA controlled caves: If a Research Request is approved, and it requires visitation to a TCMA Preserve or TCMA controlled cave, the following process should be observed.
- a. Request from the preserve manager a specific date for visitation and coordinate the visitation with the manager.
 - b. Researchers must sign a liability release before any visitation of the property.
 - c. Any sampling of endangered species must be outlined in the research request and should be consistent with current best practice; the researcher should obtain any required permits.
 - d. Researchers must be familiar with and adhere to all provisions of the Preserve Management Plan.