

Goodwin Pit Sinkhole and Cave Restoration Project

The Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy (MCKC) owns Goodwin Pit Sinkhole and Cave, located in Laclede County. Goodwin Pit is an important karst resource that consists of a major sinkhole and the entrance to Goodwin Pit Cave. Sadly, Goodwin Pit was utilized as an illegal dump site for over 60 years.

In 1980 and again in 2009 the Missouri Department of Natural Resources dye-traced the water leaving the sinkhole and cave and determined that it flows to Ha Ha Tonka Spring before entering the Niangua Arm of the Lake of the Ozarks, ten miles away.

In 2012, MCKC began the clean-up of the sinkhole and cave. There was trash, tires, woody debris and mud all the way up to the roof of the cave and you had to crawl to get around. Between 2012 and the end of 2016 MCKC removed over 32 tons of trash, 142 tons of trash laden material, seven tons of tires, three tons of metal (which was recycled) and over 4,000 tons of clean fill from the sinkhole and cave. There were a total of 962 volunteers helping during 91 workdays.

The MCKC has faced numerous challenges with this project. A major challenge is that no one had seen the sinkhole and cave before the dumping started. The weather has had a huge impact. Temperatures can vary from sub-freezing to over 100 degrees.



Soldiers from Fort Leonard Wood are among the many volunteers who have contributed hundreds of hours to the cleanup efforts. (Photo: Meramec Regional Planning Commission)



Goodwin Pit Sinkhole after a heavy rainfall. (Photo: Klaus Leidenfrost)

The sinkhole can partially or entirely fill with water after heavy rains. It can take months before things dry out enough to be able to work in the sinkhole and cave again. Having adequate funding for equipment rental is always a concern. Finding volunteers to help is also an ongoing challenge.

In 2014, heavy equipment was able to be used in the bottom of the sinkhole to help open up the cave. Two sediment traps were constructed to help catch material which was being washed into the sinkhole, before it could enter the cave.

Unfortunately, there have been setbacks due to the weather. The sinkhole totally filled with water after heavy rains in August 2013, July 2015 and December 2015. These rains washed more material into the sinkhole and cave and undid a lot of the previous work that had been done. In December 2014, one of the volunteers was able to get approximately 130 feet into the cave, until their forward progress was blocked by a tire. In December 2016, you could not get more than 80 feet into the cave. According to a neighbor when the sinkhole used to fill with water, it took days for the water to drain out. Now it takes less than one day.

In 2017, MCKC hopes to continue clean-up efforts if the weather cooperates, to raise additional funding for equipment rental and can find enough volunteers to help.

Release Courtesy of Klaus Leidenfrost