

**2014 CONSTITUTION OF THE GADSDEN GROTTO
OF THE
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

I. GROTTO NAME

- A. The name of this organization shall be called the Gadsden Grotto (also referred to as Grotto in this document) of the National Speleological Society (also referred to as NSS in this document)

II. PURPOSE

- A. The purpose of this grotto shall be the same as those of the National Speleological Society and to better promote the objectives of the Southeastern Regional Association and the National Speleological Society with the additional purpose of organizing NSS members in the East Alabama geographical area.
- B. The Grotto will also promote conservation and the studies of geology, biology and hydrology and other cave related sciences associated with caves and karst regions.

III. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- A. The Executive Committee shall be made up of the officers of the Grotto.
- B. The Executive Committee shall govern and conduct the business of the Grotto.
1. Decisions or actions of the Executive Committee may be over-ruled by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Regular Members present at a regular Grotto meeting.
- C. The Officers, elected annually, shall be elected by a majority vote of the Regular members present and shall consist of:
1. Chairman
2. Vice-Chairman (Programs and Projects)
3. Vice-Chairman (Public Relations)
4. Secretary / Treasurer
- D. Provision is hereby made for the making of the office of Secretary / Treasurer into two separate offices and the addition of a Safety Officer and a Trip Coordinator by the Executive Committee if and when they deem it necessary and to describe their duties.
- E. Executive Committee officers may delegate job duties to other Grotto members as required.

IV. MEMBERSHIP

- A. Regular Membership is open to anyone that is an NSS member and shows an interest in speleology or cave exploration.

V. CONSTITUTION

- A. The Constitution and Bylaws of the National Speleological Society shall be binding on this Grotto. All action inconsistent therewith shall be null and void.
- B. This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the Regular Members present at a regular grotto meeting. All members shall be notified of the proposed amendment at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.
- C. This Constitution may be superseded by a new Constitution by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Regular Members present at a regular meeting. All Regular Members shall receive a copy of the proposed Constitution at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

VI. DISSOLUTION

- A. In the event of the dissolution of the Gadsden Grotto all assets remaining after meeting outstanding liabilities shall be assigned to the National Speleological Society.

VII. NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

- A. This Grotto is a nonprofit organization.
- B. No part of the net earnings of the Grotto shall incurr to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the Grotto shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distribution in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the constitution of the Grotto.
- C. The grotto shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on:
 - 1. by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding provision of any future U.S. Internal Revenue law.
 - D. by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future U.S. Internal Revenue law.

1. BYLAWS

As Pertains to the Operation of the GADSDEN GROTTO

I. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS.

- A. The Executive Committee consists of the officers listed below.
- B. Officers of the Executive Committee and duties shall include the following:
 - 1. Chairman: Preside at Regular Meetings, Called Meetings, and Executive Committee Meetings.
 - 2. Vice-Chairman (Programs and Projects): Perform the duties of the Chairman in his/her absence, plan programs for Regular Meetings, and fund-raising projects.
 - 3. Vice-Chairman (Public Relations): Keep in contact with Gadsden Grotto members and other grottos; notify them of special trips, caving events, and of called meetings. Maintain public, internet, and social media sites.
 - 4. Secretary / Treasurer: Keep an accurate record of the Executive Committee Meetings, Regular Grotto Meetings and financial status of the Grotto. Collect grotto membership dues. File appropriate legal forms as needed. Transact business through a bank account. Disburse funds and pay bills as delegated by the Grotto. Keep the grotto records up to date with the NSS and submit the Annual Report to the NSS. A roster of all Grotto Members shall be presented by the Secretary at the third meeting after the beginning of each fiscal year and may be added to and corrected as the Grotto Membership changes.
- C. Officers shall be elected to serve a term of one year. Regular election of the Officers will take place at the May Meeting of each year. The elected officers shall begin their term at the conclusion of the meeting at which the election takes place.
- D. Vacancies on the Executive Committee that occur shall be filled for the balance of the fiscal year by the chairman's appointment, subject to majority approval of the rest of the Executive Committee. Their term of office shall begin immediately.
- E. A vacancy of the Chairman's office shall be filled for the balance of the fiscal year in following manner:
 - 1. All Regular Members will be given at least two weeks notification of the vacancy and forthcoming election.
 - 2. At the next Regular Meeting, following the two-week notification, the vacancy shall be filled by a majority vote of the Regular Membership present.

II. REGULAR MEETING

- A. A Regular Meeting of the Gadsden Grotto shall be held at least four times a year not to exceed four months between meetings with the date, time and place of such meeting to be determined by the Executive Committee and publicized by the Vice-Chairman.
- B. To conduct official Grotto business at a Regular Meeting, a quorum must be present.
- C. A quorum shall consist of at least three (3) Executive Committee Members and any Regular Members in attendance at the meeting.
- D. No Called Meeting shall carry on business without a quorum as described above.
- E. The Grotto fiscal year shall begin in May of each year and end in April of each year.
- F. Roberts' Rules of Order shall govern all procedural questions arising at Executive and Regular Meetings.

III. GROTTO MEMBERSHIP PLANS:

A. Regular Membership:

1. They are NSS members and have paid Grotto membership dues.
2. The privilege to vote on Grotto matters and to be on the Executive Committee shall be vested in the Regular Members.
3. They receive any generally distributed publications.

B. Family Membership:

1. They are NSS members living in the same household as a Regular member and have paid Family Grotto membership dues. They have all the same rights as a Regular member except do not receive publications.

C. Associate Membership:

1. They are not NSS members.
2. They do receive any generally distributed publications.
3. They may become Regular Members by meeting all requirements set forth by the Bylaws for Regular Membership

D. Associate Family Membership:

1. They are not NSS members.
2. They live in the household of either a Regular or Associate Member.
3. They do not receive publications
4. They may not hold office, but have the privilege to vote on Grotto matters.

E. Honorary Membership awarded to individuals who have:

1. Contributed to the advancement of speleology
2. or have been very generous in facilitating a project
3. or has been of extraordinary help to cavers.
4. Honorary Membership is awarded by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Regular members present at a Regular Meeting.
5. They have all the same rights as a Regular member, however, may not hold an Executive Committee office unless an NSS member.
6. Honorary Members have the privileges of Regular Members without paying dues.

F. Life membership

1. Given to outstanding persons in speleology by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Regular members present at a Regular Meeting.
2. All persons signing the original Constitution are Charter Members and are Life Members.
3. Life Members have the privileges of Regular Members without paying dues.

G. Members under 18 years old must have a signed letter from a parent or guardian giving permission to be a member of the Grotto.

H. Grotto Membership dues:

1. The Executive Committee shall determine grotto dues by a majority vote.
2. Dues shall be payable at the beginning of the fiscal year. Any membership payment after this date shall be prorated according to the determination of the Executive Committee

IV. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- #### **A. Membership shall be terminated for nonpayment of Grotto dues. A member dropped for non-payment of dues may be reinstated automatically upon payment of current Grotto dues.**

- B. Members may be admonished, suspended from certain privileges, or expelled from the Grotto membership for any of the following reasons:
 - 1. Willful misuse of Grotto funds, property or facilities.
 - 2. Willful disregard for the safety of themselves and/or of others while participating in a Grotto activity.
 - 3. Conduct detrimental to the Grotto and/or the National Speleological Society.
 - 4. No member shall litter, deface, or damage the cave or cave owner's property.
- C. Disciplinary Action
 - 1. Under this provision, disciplinary action shall be taken only upon a two-thirds vote (2/3) majority vote of the Regular Members present at a Regular Meeting by a secret ballot.
 - 2. Disciplinary action shall be initiated only upon presentation to the Executive Committee of a written petition for disciplinary action, submitted by at least two members of the Grotto not in the same household.
 - 3. Due Process and Members Rights
 - a) Upon receiving such a petition, the Executive Committee shall take such actions as are deemed necessary to notify the accused member or members, in writing, of the petition, and the place, date, and time at which the petition will be considered by the Executive Committee.
 - b) The accused member or members shall have the right to attend the meeting and to speak on their own behalf.

V. PUBLICATIONS, INTERNET, SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER FORMS OF MEDIA

- A. The Gadsden Grotto is committed to protecting the freedom of expression while safeguarding the privacy and security of its members and cave information.
- B. Any published material or internet content representing the Grotto must be approved by the Executive Committee
- C. The Executive Committee must approve any publication of information from the Grotto files.
- D. All internet sites or social media sites which represent the Gadsden Grotto shall be governed by the Members of the Gadsden Grotto.
- E. Rules and guidelines for each internet and social media site shall be presented to the members at the Regular Grotto Meeting and voted on by the Regular members.
- F. Administrators of internet and social media sites shall be appointed by the Regular members at the Regular Grotto Meeting.
- G. Personal Information and Security
 - 1. Providing personal information about individual members of the grotto such as telephone numbers, addresses, membership lists, link to personal home pages and identifying members in photographs is discouraged.
 - 2. Consent to publish personal information shall be obtained from individuals.
 - 3. It is recommended that pages containing personal information be made viewable to members only.
- H. Photos, Stories, or Other Works of Art
 - 1. In most cases, group photos at public or grotto or cave events do not require release permission.
 - 2. Individuals have the right to request a photograph of themselves be removed or not used within 30 days of the publication.

3. Artistic works such as photos, individual photos, graphics, stories, and other works of art require a release from photographers, writers, artists, and subjects.
4. Any releases obtained should be archived and stored by the Grotto officers.

VI. LIABILITY

- A. The Gadsden Grotto and its members assume no liable responsibility concerning the well-being of any of the Grotto members.
- B. All participation of any individual in any Grotto activity is with the understanding that the individual must assume full responsibility for his or her own well-being.
- C. Any minor must have a release form from his/her parents or guardian before he or she will be allowed to participate in any Grotto trip.

VII. ASSESSMENTS AND GIFTS

- A. No special assessments may be made against members of the Grotto. The Executive Committee may solicit voluntary contributions for specific purposes.
 1. A charge may be made for the Grotto's special publications and extra copies of regular publications.
 2. Fees may be collected for use of the Grotto's property when approved by the Executive Committee.
- B. Gifts and bequests may be made to the Grotto in any form or amount and for any use compatible with the purpose of the Grotto.
- C. None Members
 1. A charge may be made to non-members for:
 - a) Attendance at Grotto-sponsored activities
 - b) Use of the Grotto's equipment and library
 - c) Copies of publications, maps and other data.
 - d) Inclusion of non-members on the Grotto's mailing list.

VIII. GROTTO FUNDS

- A. The objective of the Grotto funds is to advance the purpose of the Grotto as written in the Constitution.
- B. The control and expenditure of the Grotto funds shall be decided by a majority vote of the Regular members present at the Regular Business Meeting.
- C. Grotto Funds may be generated by methods approved by a majority vote of the Regular members present at the Regular Business Meeting.
- D. Any fund-raising activities concerning the Grotto must be approved by a majority vote of the Regular members present at the Regular Business Meeting.
- E. The Executive Committee shall have the authority to disperse funds for regular business expenses and emergency funds. These expenditures shall be presented at the next Regular Grotto Business Meeting.

IX. AMENDMENTS

- A. These Bylaws may be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the Regular Members present at a regular grotto meeting. All members shall be notified of the proposed amendment at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

**PAGE
OF
CERTIFICATION**

The 2014 Constitution and Bylaws of the Gadsden Grotto were amended by three-fourths majority vote of the Regular Members present at a regular grotto meeting on January 14, 2014.

Revisions to the 2014 Constitution and Bylaws of the Gadsden Grotto were amended by three-fourths majority vote of the Regular Members present at a regular grotto meeting on July 2023.

The 2023-2024 Executive Committee hereby signs below as witness of the 2023 vote and adoption of this Constitution and Bylaws and that this document shall be binding on the Gadsden Grotto from this day forward.

Chairman
Richard meier, NSS No.: 66994

Date _____

Vice-Chairman (Programs and Projects)
becky noah, NSS No.:

Date _____

Vice-Chairman (Public Relations)
anthony cline, NSS No.:

Date _____

Secretary / Treasurer
kimberly meier, NSS No.: 66995

Date _____