



Monongahela National Forest

News Release

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Bowden Cave Rock Fall Causes Cave Closure

The collapse of rocks from the ceiling inside the Bowden Cave just east of Elkins have caused Monongahela National Forest officials to issue a temporary closure of the Federal portion of the cave. The unusual rock fall has raised questions about the stability of the remaining ceiling, leading to concerns with visitor safety.

“We don’t know how long the Forest Supervisor’s closure order will be in effect.” said Cheat-Potomac District Ranger Liz Schuppert. “If we can determine the area has stabilized we’ll rescind the closure as soon as possible. In the meantime we felt it was most prudent to do everything we could to protect the public.”

The Bowden Cave, popular throughout the caving community has a number of entrances on National Forest land. Much of the cave lies underneath National Forest, and the closure order applies to nearly all of the Federal portion of the cave.

Natural geologic erosion processes bring about the formation of caves in limestone rock, and can also cause caves to collapse. In the coming weeks, cave resource specialists plan to examine the rock fall area to develop a prognosis for it stabilizing.

“The safety of visitors is a top priority, and I want to emphasize this cave closure is intended to protect the public from the extraordinary hazard that has developed in the Bowden Cave.” Ranger Schuppert reiterated.

Being in or entering into the closed portions of the Bowden Cave is a violation of the cave closure, and is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.

Additional information is available from the Forest Supervisors Office at (304) 636-1800.