



**Six Ridges Grotto
Constitution & By-Laws**

The Constitution and By-Laws of Six Ridges Grotto of the NSS

CONSTITUTION

Amended 29 December 2024

I. Name

The Name of this Organization shall be the SIX RIDGES GROTTTO of the National Speleological Society (NSS).

II. Purpose

The purposes of this organization shall be consistent with the stated purposes of the National Speleological Society, and the specific purposes of the organization shall include promoting the science of speleology; the conservation, exploration and study of caves; the promotion of safe caving practices, and the fellowship and education of cavers in east Tennessee and surrounding areas.

III. Executive Committee

1. The SIX RIDGES GROTTTO shall be governed by an Executive Committee that shall be composed of the following officers:

A. *Chairperson*

B. *Vice-Chairperson*

C. *Secretary*

D. *Treasurer*

E. *Immediate Past Chairperson*

Such Full Members as may be denominated in the By-laws shall also serve on the Executive Committee.

The members of the Executive Committee shall all be members of the National Speleological Society. They shall be elected as the by-laws may provide. There shall be such other officers as the members from time to time direct in the by-laws.

2. The Executive Committee shall have power to manage the business of the Grotto, to propose by-laws, to raise funds in any manner consistent with the policies of the NSS and consistent with the By-laws of the Grotto, and to perform all other necessary functions.

3. Decisions or actions of the Executive Committee may be overruled by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any regular meeting of the Grotto.

IV. Meetings

1. Executive Committee and general meetings shall be held at such times and places as are determined by the Committee.

2. It shall be mandatory for the Executive Committee to call a special meeting when presented with a petition signed by two-thirds of the membership requesting a special meeting and stating the purpose of such meeting. Such a meeting shall be held within three days of presentation of the petition to the Chair or in his/her absence to any member of the Executive Committee.

3. Regular meetings of the membership shall be held not less often than once each month but this provision shall not prevent the Executive Committee from canceling any meeting for inclement weather or other extraordinary cause. Any meeting that is canceled pursuant to this provision may be rescheduled in the discretion of the Executive Committee.

4. Meetings can be attended in-person or via video conferencing.

V. Membership

Full membership in the SIX RIDGES GROTTTO shall be limited to members of the National Speleological Society. Further requirements for full membership may be set out in the by-laws. There may be such other classes of membership as the members may from time to time direct in the by-laws.

VI. NSS Property

Any NSS property which may be in possession of the Grotto at the time of any dissolution of the Grotto shall remain the property of the NSS and possession of such property shall revert to the NSS. The NSS shall be responsible for promptly assuming possession of such property and shall bear all costs involved in assuming such possession.

VII. Amending the Constitution

Amendment to this Constitution shall be made by a two-thirds favorable vote of those members present at any meeting called by the Executive Committee expressly for the purpose of considering amendment to this Constitution, or; by written consent, of one-half of the total

membership in good standing or; following at least fourteen days notice of the proposed amendment, upon motion at any regular meeting of the Grotto.

VIII. Quorum

The number of members required to constitute a quorum shall be set out in the by-laws.

IX. Definitions

In this Constitution, the word “members” shall mean “members present and in good standing”. The word “membership” shall mean “all members of the Grotto who are in good standing”.

BY-LAWS

I. Adoption

These by-laws shall be effective upon adoption.

II. Governance

This Grotto shall be governed by the NSS Policy for Internal Organizations dated 10 April 1965 and as amended through 5 March 2005, and by the SIX RIDGES GROTTTO Constitution and by-laws not inconsistent therewith.

1. The Grotto may enact such by-laws, as it shall deem expedient.
2. Adoption of by-laws shall be by the following methods only:
 - A. By the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting; or
 - B. By the written consent of one-half of all members in good standing.

III. Terms of Office

1. Terms of office shall be as follows:
 - A. All offices shall be held for one year.
 - B. Persons elected or appointed to an office shall assume that office at the next meeting following such election or appointment.
 - C. It shall be permissible for persons elected or appointed to any Grotto office to hold consecutive terms in that office.

D. No member of the Executive Committee shall have more than one vote.

2. Nominations of officers shall be made at the first regular meeting in the month of November of each year. In addition to nominations for the officers provided for in these By-laws and in the Constitution, nominations may also be made for up to 2 additional Full Members to serve on the Executive Committee

3. Elections shall be held at the first regular meeting in the month of December of each year.

A. Candidates for the Executive Committee shall be made by nominations from members, subject to acceptance by the member so nominated. Ballots shall have provisions for write-in votes.

B. The Executive Committee shall identify a process or designate a neutral person(s) to take the role of counting the votes and releasing the results.

C. Executive Committee members may concurrently hold more than one position.

(4) Absentee voting shall be conducted as follows:

A. At the first regular meeting in November, the Treasurer shall present a complete list of members in good standing. Upon the close of nominations such members as the Chairperson shall deem advisable shall be appointed by them to prepare ballots showing each person nominated for office together with the office for which nominated. Such members as are appointed by the Chairperson to prepare ballot shall, post nominees on the current means of communication:

1. was not in attendance at the first regular meeting in the month of November as above mentioned; or

2. has prior to or at the first regular meeting in the month of November requested the Chairperson or the Secretary to list him as an absentee voter through personal message to the vice president to hold secret until after members have voted.

3. At the first regular meeting in the month of December, the first order of business shall be the conduct of elections. Absentee ballots shall not be opened or counted until the votes of the members present have been tabulated for each office.

4. If any person elected or appointed to any Grotto office fails to perform his or her duties in a satisfactory manner, any member in good standing may move at any regular Grotto meeting that such officer be replaced on an interim basis by the Executive Committee. Additionally, the Executive

Committee may, of its own motion, replace such officers on an interim basis. Such request for interim replacement shall be accomplished by a majority vote of the members of the Grotto present at that meeting. In the case of action by the Executive Committee's own motion, interim replacement shall be by a majority of the members of the Committee present at the meeting at which replacement is considered. Such interim replacement may be made by the Executive Committee for such time as the committee finds appropriate, up to and including the remainder of the term of office for the non-performing officer.

IV. Caving Trips

1. All Grotto caving trips must have a trip leader and/or cave master.
2. In the event a trip leader cannot attend the trip for which he or she was selected, it is his or her responsibility to either appoint a competent substitute or to cancel the trip and so notify those who have previously indicated to him that they planned to attend the trip.
3. Trip leaders shall have the authority to determine whatever rules, regulations or prohibitions that they, in their discretion, deem necessary.
4. No one may participate in any Grotto caving trip or training session unless and until that person shall have signed a Grotto Liability Release. In addition, no minor may participate in any Grotto caving trip or training session unless and until that minor's legal guardians shall have also signed a Grotto Liability Release.

V. Membership Classes

1. Membership in this Grotto shall be applied for and granted, or refused in the following manner.

Applications for membership shall be in writing or electronic format and shall be accompanied by dues as specified herein and a statement by applicant indicating support for the goals of the Grotto and its conservation policies.

2. The Grotto shall have the following classes of membership:

A. *Full Member*: A person who is an NSS member and who has been duly accorded membership according to Article IX, and who is current in all financial obligations arising from his or her membership in the Grotto. A Full Member has voting rights in the Grotto and is eligible to serve on the Executive Committee. Full members shall have access to the member Grotto social media.

B. *Associate Member*: A person who is not a member of the NSS or is a member of any other NSS Grotto, but who has been duly accorded membership, and who

is current in all financial obligations arising from his or her membership in the Grotto. An Associate Member has voting rights in the Grotto, but is not eligible to serve on the Executive Committee. Associate members shall have access to the member Grotto social media.

C. *Family Member*: A person who is the Spouse or child of a Full or Associate Member. Full or Associate Membership shall not be extended to any person who has not reached their 18th birthday. Notwithstanding this provision, any minor whose parent or legal guardian is a member, may be granted membership on the same terms and conditions as an adult, with these exceptions: A family minor member has no voting rights in the Grotto and may not hold office.

D. *Student Member*: A person who is still a student in school (whether elementary, high school, or college). This membership is intentionally discounted to make it even more affordable for students. Student members will have full voting rights.

E. *Honorary Member*: A person may be granted this status at the discretion of 2/3rds of the voting members present at any regular or special grotto meeting. Such membership shall constitute a lifetime membership in the Grotto exempt from the payment of grotto dues. In the event the honorary member holds NSS membership, it shall entitle the holder to all rights and privileges of a Full Member. In the event the honorary member does not hold NSS membership, the right to hold elective office and represent the Grotto in the Congress of Grottos shall not apply.

VI. Membership Dues

Dues shall be payable prior to activation of membership and shall expire one year from purchase. Payment will be in such amount as the Grotto shall set.

VII. Donations

Donations may be accepted by the grotto according to the following provisions:

1. No special assessments may be made against members of the Grotto. Voluntary contributions may be solicited by the Executive Committee for specific purposes. A charge may be made for the Grotto's special publications and extra copies of regular publications, and fees may be collected for use of the Grotto's property when approved by the Executive Committee.
2. 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.
3. A charge may apply to non-members for copies of publications, maps, and other data.

VIII. Committees

Committees shall be established by the Executive Committee to execute the work of the Grotto. Committee Chairpersons shall be appointed by the Grotto Chairperson, subject to approval of the Executive Committee. Each Committee Chairperson shall select the personnel and promote the activities of its committee. All committees will operate under the direction and approval of the Executive Committee.

IX. Termination of Membership

Membership may be terminated at any time in accordance with the following terms:

1. Non-Payment of Dues: Membership shall be terminated for non-payment of Grotto dues. A member dropped solely for non-payment of dues may be reinstated automatically upon payment of current Grotto dues.
2. Infractions: Members may be admonished, suspended from certain privileges, or expelled from Grotto membership for any of the following reasons:
 - A. Willful misuse of Grotto property or facilities
 - B. Willful disregard of the safety of themselves and/or of others while participating in a Grotto activity
 - C. Conduct detrimental to the Grotto and/or the NSS.
3. 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. Upon receiving such a petition, the Executive Committee shall take such actions that are deemed necessary to notify the accused member or members, in writing, of the petition, and of the place, date, and time at which the petition will be considered by the Executive Committee. The accused member or member shall have the right to speak on their own behalf. Such considerations shall take place no sooner than twenty-one days and no later than seventy days after the petition is received by the Executive Committee.

The members may vote expulsion of any member for chronically unsafe practices above ground or underground, for violation of the conservation policy of the NSS, or for conduct creating ferment or discord within the membership. Expulsion shall require a three-fourths vote of the members.

X. Meeting Structure

Whenever the presiding officer so directs, procedures at all Grotto meetings shall be governed by Roberts Rules of Order.

XI. Quorum

A quorum for conducting business at any meeting shall be five members or more in good standing.

XII. Duties of Officers

The duties of officers are defined as follows.

1. The duties of the offices established by the Constitution shall be:

A. Chairperson:

1. Shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Grotto.
2. Shall be a Full Member of this Grotto.
3. Shall preside at all Grotto meetings.
4. Shall preside at all Executive Committee meetings.
5. Shall appoint such committees as he or she may deem necessary for the effective conduct of the business of the Grotto.
6. Shall have such other powers as are reasonably necessary to discharge the duties of his or her office.
7. Shall exercise overall financial responsibility for the grotto; co-signs bank accounts with club/group treasurer if needed.

B. Vice-Chairperson:

1. Shall preside in the absence of the Chairperson.
2. Shall be a Full Member of this Grotto.
3. Shall oversee the conduct of such a committee as the Chairperson may appoint.
4. Shall succeed to the remaining portion of the Chairperson's term in the event of a vacancy in the Chairpersonship.

C. Secretary:

1. Shall be a Full Member of this Grotto.
2. Shall keep all Grotto equipment and materials (except such equipment assigned to the Quarter-master).
3. Shall oversee all Grotto correspondence.
4. Shall keep a current member list.

5. Shall ensure the NSS is updated with any changes to the Constitution & By-laws, current member list of the Executive Committee, and any other Grotto-related data required by the NSS.
6. Shall keep meeting minutes and present a report of the minutes of the prior meeting in the subsequent meeting.
7. Shall be responsible for seeing that there is an adequate supply of copies of the current By-laws and Constitution, and Grotto Liability Releases, for distribution to members and applicants and shall post a copy of the current Constitution and By-laws on the Grotto website.

D. Treasurer:

1. Shall act as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the Grotto.
2. Shall be a Full Member of this Grotto.
3. Shall be responsible for keeping all Grotto funds and financial records.
4. Shall maintain the Grotto bank account.
5. Shall make purchases and acquisitions as the Executive Committee or the Grotto may from time to time direct and also pay all Grotto bills.
6. Shall notify members of delinquency of financial obligations within 30 days of the occurrence of such delinquency.
7. Shall be responsible to submit all required paperwork to the IRS.
8. Shall file the annual financial report to the grotto at the December meeting.

E. Immediate Past Chairperson:

1. The outgoing Grotto Chairperson shall serve on the Executive Committee.
2. He or she shall also serve as liaison officer between the Executive Committee and the Grotto membership.
2. The Executive Committee shall meet at the call of the Chairperson. The Chairperson may at his or her discretion at any meeting invoke Robert's Rules of Order. A quorum shall consist of two-thirds members of the committee.
3. Proxy. Any member of the Executive Committee may appoint a member of the Grotto as a proxy to act for them at a meeting of the Executive Committee. A Proxy may act at one meeting for only one Executive Committee member. The presiding officer must be

notified of such proxy appointment directly or in writing by the absent Executive Committee member before the proxy may be allowed to serve. Authorization should state if discretionary powers have been given to the proxy.

4. **Other Attendees.** Committee chairpersons may attend meetings of the Executive Committee and have the privilege of speaking on matters relevant to the committee's function, but shall have no power to vote by virtue of their committee role. Any other member of the Grotto may attend Executive Committee meetings and may be granted the privilege of the floor at the discretion of the presiding officer but shall have no power to vote.

5. **Recall:** The Executive Committee shall have the power to remove any Executive Committee member who, without just cause, fails to attend two regular Executive Committee meetings in one fiscal year without sending a proxy or who, without just cause, attends no Executive Committee meetings in person for three consecutive meetings.

6. **Filling Vacancies:** Vacancies on the Executive Committee that occur shall be filled for the balance of the fiscal year by appointment of the presiding officer, subject to majority approval of the rest of the Executive Committee.

7. The Grotto may have the following additional officers as needed:

A. *Safety Officer:* The Safety Officer or his/her designee shall conduct training sessions and training trips as he/she deems necessary or as directed by the Executive Committee or by majority vote of the Grotto membership.

B. *Quarter-Master:* The Quarter-Master, or his/her designee, shall keep, maintain and make available for use by the members, such common Grotto property as shall be entrusted to him by the Executive Committee.

C. *Editor:* The Editor(s) shall approve and/or publish content to the website and social media.

D. *Librarian:* The Librarian shall keep, maintain and make available for use by the members, the Grotto Library. They shall receive and direct mailing of exchange publications.

E. *Webmaster:* Responsible for updating the website.

F. *Cave Projects Chairperson:* This person shall be responsible for overseeing new cave discoveries, surveys, and giving reports on Grotto cave projects.

G. *Cave Conservation Chairperson:* Oversee cave and karst clean-ups.

H. *Landowner Relations Chairperson*: Develop and maintain relationships with cave landowners.

I. *Membership Chairperson*: Plan Grotto trips, plan community events, welcome new members, and work with clubs and organizations to set up presentations or other activities.

J. The Chairperson or Executive Committee may appoint such other ad-hoc officers as they may, from time to time, deem expedient.

8. Officers mentioned paragraph XII, section (7) shall be appointed by the Executive Committee.

XIII. Records

The Secretary shall maintain, separate from the minutes, a current copy of all By-laws and shall enter upon said copy all amendments, additions or deletions adopted by the Grotto, and shall from time to time present said list to the Grotto for review.

XIV. Documents

The Secretary, or one delegated by him or her, shall be responsible for seeing that there is an adequate supply of copies of the current by-laws and Constitution, and Grotto Liability Releases, for distribution to members and applicants and shall post a copy of the current Constitution and By-laws on the Grotto website.

XV. Definitions for terms used in these by-laws

It is necessary to define the following terms:

1. "Members" shall mean "members present and in good standing".
2. "Membership" shall mean "all members of this Grotto who are in good standing".

XVI. Meeting Minutes

At each Grotto meeting, the Secretary, or an appointed substitute, shall take the minutes of that meeting. At the close of the Meeting such minutes shall be turned over, by such appointee, to the Secretary for inclusion in the Grotto files. The Secretary will ensure that the minutes are provided to the Editor and/or Webmaster for inclusion on the website.

XVII. Retroactivity of Amendments

No amendment to these by-laws shall be retroactive unless retroactivity is specifically stated.

XVIII. Duties of the Executive Committee

1. The power of the executive committee to manage the business of the Grotto as set forth in the Six Ridges Grotto constitution shall not be exercised so as to exclude the

involvement of the membership in the discussion and decision of the business of the Grotto. Matters of business pertaining to the Grotto shall be discussed and decided at regular meetings of the membership whenever practical.

2. When a separate Executive Committee Meeting must be held, Executive Committee Meetings shall be open to participation by any member in good standing, and the membership must be notified and presented with a proposed agenda at least three days prior to such meeting.

3. Nothing in this provision shall be construed to limit the power of the Executive Committee to manage such "emergency business" that may arise; such "emergency business" being defined as business that arises that must be addressed and resolved before the next regular meeting of the membership.

XIX. Finances

The Grotto may acquire real and intangible property, including equipment, literature, loaner gear, and other materials for use by and on behalf of the membership. Generally accepted accounting practices shall be used to account for all assets.

XX. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year shall be the calendar year.

XXI. Store

The Grotto may maintain a Grotto Store for the convenience of members, friends, and associates, which will be limited to caving-related goods appropriate to the policies of the Grotto.