

HISTORY OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION, HOWES CAVE, NEW YORK

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Abstract

Howes Cave, the Howes Cave Quarry, Howe Caverns, Secret Caverns, and the McFails Cave Preserve of the National Speleological Society are at the center of a dramatic saga that illustrates the technical, economic, and social conflict between different perspectives of natural resource utilization. The local caves and their host, the limestone resources, are valuable as commercial tourist caves, non-commercial recreational caves, raw materials for the manufacture of natural and Portland cement, stone for construction aggregate, groundwater, and education. The most recent significant event in the saga occurred in 2002 when Cobleskill Stone Products started a redevelopment plan based upon a 1993 Masters Thesis at RPI by Clemens McGiver. The \$7.4 million project is unique because it is the first in the USA that attempts to harmonize the interests of the aggregates industry, the commercial cave businesses, academia, and the community, including cavers. A new surface quarry is being opened and existing industrial structures are being renovated for new uses. The long derelict but historic Cave House Hotel at the entrance to the Howes Cave Quarry is being restored to create a national museum of mining and geology, while the historic and supposed collapsed Howes Cave is being reopened for tours. The project and associated projects are underway to define the limestone resources that could be mined, while protecting groundwater, wild cave, and commercial cave resources from both the potential effects of new mining and the current effects of conflicting agricultural, commercial, and residential land use.