

EMERALD SINK CAVE DIVER QUALIFICATION PROCEDURE

This Procedure is approved jointly by all five of the United States cave diving/training agencies and is the result of unanimous initiative action involving the efforts of representatives from Global Underwater Explorers (GUE), International Association of Nitrox and Technical Divers, Inc. (IANTD), National Association for Cave Diving (NACD), National Speleological Society-Cave Diving Section (NSS-CDS) and Technical Diving International (TDI).

Since Emerald Sink is predominantly a deep cave system, the standards applied for review of a diver's credentials prior to receiving dive authorization are similar to those generally applied to other deep cave sites- i.e.- Mill Creek Pond. Access to portions of the shallow portions of the system may be addressed by the review panel at a later time.

This Procedure addresses two primary areas- 1) the formation of a nonpartisan review panel to insure those seeking to dive Emerald Sink are qualified to do so and 2) the establishment of **objective** criteria required to be met by cave divers seeking to dive this site. It is not the intent of this Procedure to suggest an exclusionary policy, but simply to insure that safety and conservation issues are adequately addressed. Further, this Procedure in no manner deals with the possibility of open water diving activities in the affected sites since such activities are beyond the scope of the involved agencies' primary purposes.

REVIEW PANEL

A seven member Emerald Sink Diver Qualification Review Panel will review applications of cave divers wishing to dive Emerald Sink. Five members of the panel will be agency-designated with each agency responsible for designating its representative. The other two members will be drawn from panel-nominated cave divers or from those who make application to the panel for membership. The two non-agency seats will be determined by majority vote of the panel. Each panel member will serve for an indefinite period with the right of the agencies to re-designate their representative at any time and the other two members to serve until they withdraw or are removed by majority vote of the entire panel.

This system will insure those who choose to serve are active in their duties and provide a positive effort in accomplishing the goals of the panel, the interests of the cave community as a whole and the interests of Wakulla Springs State Park.

Members will serve on an unpaid, volunteer basis. Each member of the panel must meet the objective criteria imposed on applicant cave divers.

Forms for application, releases and dive authorizations will be prepared by the panel and submitted for approval to Wakulla Springs State Park.

This Proposal is not intended to be all-inclusive; over time the panel may find it necessary to adopt additional policies. All future procedures, however, must be objective in nature, stipulated in writing and published in a convenient public forum such as the websites of the involved agencies.

CAVE DIVER CRITERIA

The criteria for determining a cave diver's eligibility for the issuance of authorization to dive Emerald Sink shall be as follows:

1. Applicant holds a full cave diving certification equivalent from one of the following certifying agencies: NACD; NSS-CDS; IANTD; TDI; NAUI, or GUE. (If one holds a full cave certification equivalent from another agency not listed, further review will be required by the Panel);
2. Certification as a Trimix Diver;
3. A minimum of 100 logged cave dives after certification to NACD, NSS-CDS or TDI Full Cave Diver/GUE Cave II Diver/IANTD Cave Diver or IANTD Technical Cave Diver level; NAUI Cave Diver III
4. Deep dive experience within the past 12 months consisting of a minimum of three dives in excess of 150 feet involving staged decompression of at least 45 minutes and;
5. DAN Master Diver insurance or the equivalent.

Authorization to dive Emerald Sink will not have an expiration date but can be revoked by action of the review panel or the Park Manager. Examples of activities that could lead to revocation include but are not limited to unsafe behavior, failure to observe industry accepted conservation practices or violation of the criteria established for permitted diving (i.e. use of DPV), permitting persons without authorization to accompany the diver on a dive and other activities as may be further established.

Other incidents will be evaluated on a case by case which may result in authorization being denied to a specific diver despite meeting the objective criteria stated above. Such denial may occur only upon unanimous panel vote.

Except denial of authorization to an otherwise qualified diver, all other decisions of the review panel shall be determined by majority vote of those panel members voting in person or by written proxy.

If the applicant diver submits credentials that clearly identifies the qualifying criteria, the Emerald Sink Panel/Park liaison will add the diver's name on the authorized list of divers for Emerald Sink.

If the applicant diver submits credentials that unclearly identify the qualifying criteria, his or her application and credentials will be reviewed by a majority of the review panel members present and voting in person or by proxy, the diver's name shall be added to the authorized list of divers for Emerald Sink. The authorized list will be updated quarterly. Upon approval by the Review Panel and the diver being placed on the authorized list, reservations to dive Emerald Sink may be made by contacting the Wakulla Springs State Park.

REVIEW PANEL APPROVAL

It is recognized that this Procedure establishes a high standard for cave divers wishing to cave dive Emerald Sink. The stated criteria are subject to periodic review by the review panel and Wakulla Springs State Park management for modifications.

The inter-agency effort has been successful and its participants look forward to cooperating and working with the management and staff of Wakulla Springs Park.

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