

## Horseshoe Bay Cave plan passes unanimously

By Peter J. Devlin, Advocate Correspondent 6:45 p.m. CDT June 29, 2014



(Photo: Tina M. Gohr/Door County Advocate )

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With Green Bay television cameras recording the proceedings, the Door County Board Tuesday passed a management plan for the county-owned Horseshoe Bay Cave, which is located on the Niagara Escarpment in the town of Egg Harbor.

The cave runs under the Horseshoe Bay Golf Course, owner of most of its estimated 3,000 feet length. Door County owns the entrance and first 75 feet.

The management plan calls for controlled access and little modification.

Several cave enthusiasts – members of the Wisconsin Speleological Society – urged supervisors to make changes in the plan developed by the county's Parks and Soil and Water Conservation departments and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, with input from a cross-section of scientific and educational interests.

While the DNR wants to protect the more than 1,200 bats that hibernate in the cave, the enthusiasts called for excavating the cave floor to allow visitors to walk upright inside the cavern.

DNR officials are concerned a fungal infection that has killed more than 6 million bats in the United States in the last several years. While the white nose syndrome hasn't yet appeared at the Horseshoe Bay cave, it was found in a cave in Southwestern Wisconsin this spring.

An estimated two to three feet of silt dating from glacial times has accumulated over the millennia. The cavers argue removing the silt would improve the environment for the bats while allowing freer access by visitors. Lowering the floor would result in "improvements aesthetically and affect the humidity," allowing for better control of the cave climate, Wisconsin Speleology Society Chairman Casey Fiske said.

Mike Toney, a Nasewaupsee resident, appeared at Tuesday's meeting "to speak for the bats." Toney said the board should approve the plan "as it is written. I urge you to go slow."

With one member, Ben Meyer, absent, the County Board approved the plan as presented.

In other business, supervisors approved taking money from a contingency fund to pay for equipment for county ambulances.

The county's Emergency Services (EMS) Department asked for \$60,000 to buy four new ambulance cots – the gurney-like devices used to transfer patients in the backs of ambulances.

EMS Director Danny Williams told his department's oversight committee federal regulations require replacing the \$15,000 devices approximately every eight years. All of the cots in use in Door County ambulances are older, he said.

Williams asked for funding for four of the devices this year and said he would budget for the purchase of three more in 2015.