



Mississippi Valley Conservancy

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Media Advisory

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**BAT HABITAT PROTECTION SUCCESSFUL**

**Mississippi Valley Conservancy Closes on Purchase of Kickapoo Indian Caverns**

Culminating a year-long fund-raising campaign, Mississippi Valley Conservancy has announced its successful acquisition of the property known as “Kickapoo Indian Caverns,” in Southwest Wisconsin’s Crawford County.

The 83-acre property is home to one of the most spectacular show caves in the Midwest and is one of Wisconsin’s longest natural cavern systems. This stunning limestone cavern system including an underground river, numerous 60-foot high cathedral-like chambers, and beautifully-colored ribbon stalactites, is already developed with walking paths and electricity, providing an ideal opportunity for outreach, education, and a secure location for long-term research and study.

“Throughout the campaign, many local residents shared their stories of touring the cavern as kids. Memorable experiences such as these have a lasting impact. They help fuel our efforts to protect land for the future,” says the Conservancy’s executive director, Carol Abrahamzon. According to Abrahamzon, many generous individuals stepped up to “save the cave” by contributing all they could. She said support was also received from the Prairie du Chien Rod and Gun Club, Wauzeka Lions Club, Whitetails Unlimited, Wisconsin DNR, the Paul E. Stry Foundation, John C. Bock Foundation and others. “These individuals and organizations are the real super-heroes who saved the bat cave,” said Abrahamzon.

Historically, the site was a tourist destination and mainstay for school groups who toured the cavern and learned about the local geological, ecological, Native American, and historical heritage.

The cavern provides a significant hibernaculum for two state-threatened bat species and one federally-listed threatened bat specie. The Conservancy intends to manage it specifically for the protection of the bats, including closing the cave to tours during bat hibernation season.

In addition to the unique cavern features, the property is home to a prairie full of colorful wildflowers reminiscent of the habitat found in Crawford County 200 years ago. Additionally, there are limestone cliffs, rock outcrops, and oak savanna with an understory of pink and purple shooting stars. The forest is filled with mature oak, hickory, and dogwood. The site is located within the boundary of the Lower Kickapoo River Important Bird Area and provides excellent bird-watching opportunities, with nesting pairs of the state threatened cerulean warbler, ovenbirds, wood thrush and other migratory birds.

Under Mississippi Valley Conservancy’s ownership, the property will be open to the public year round for hiking, cross-country skiing, bird-watching, hunting and outdoor recreational activities. Guided hikes, volunteer work days, and other events will be offered to welcome all ages to experience and enjoy the site.

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#### ABOUT MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVANCY

Founded in 1997, Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a nationally accredited regional land trust that has permanently protected more than 18,500 acres of scenic lands in southwestern Wisconsin by working with private landowners, businesses and local communities on voluntary conservation projects. The focus of the Conservancy is to conserve the forests, prairies, wetlands, streams and farms that enrich our communities, for the health and well-being of current and future generations.