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Natural Bridge Caverns Named to National Register of Historic Places
First Prehistoric NRHP Site to be Listed from Comal County
Atlatl Demonstration & Artifacts Presented to Media
Wednesday, November 17

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Natural Bridge Caverns, TX...Natural Bridge Caverns (NBC) has been named to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), a designation given by the U.S. Department of Interior for sites that have an important role in preserving cultural history. The designation follows an archeology excavation that was conducted last fall for NRHP consideration. A varied sample of artifacts were uncovered, including a **prehistoric cooking hearth, stone tools, projectile points and charred plant remains**, which will be presented to media on the grounds of NBC on **Wednesday, November 17, at 10 a.m.**

"All of the artifacts uncovered establish the site's long usage and support NBC's distinction of being the **first prehistoric site in Comal County to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places**," said F. Lawrence Oaks, executive director of the Texas Historical Commission, the state agency that facilitates the nomination of Texas properties to the NRHP.

In 1964, development-related excavations took place at Natural Bridge Caverns to enlarge the entrance, provide a walkway and develop a trail system inside the cavern. During the original trenching of the entrance, several diagnostic projectile points dating back approximately 10,000 years ago were salvaged. In addition to projectile points, several other stone tools were recovered during this phase of development, including hide scrapers, gouges, knives and drill fragments.

Based on these initial finds, the Cavern's deposits were systematically tested last fall. The archaeological excavations produced an abundant and varied sample of cultural materials documenting aspects of hunting technology, subsistence strategies, paleoenvironmental conditions, food processing and tool manufacture techniques.

"The samples discovered at Natural Bridge Caverns provide strong evidence of the site's potential to inform archaeologists about several critical aspects of prehistoric occupation and use of the Texas Hill Country by its early inhabitants," said Steve Tomka, Ph.D., and Director of the Center for Archaeological Research at UTSA and Principal Investigator of the excavations.

Several of the significant finds will be presented at the caverns for NBC visitors to enjoy and will include a re-creation of the prehistoric cooking hearth found during the archeology dig, a stone tools display and projectile points exhibit.

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Original excavations, informal testing and systematic investigations have recovered remains representing nearly a full cultural and chronological sequence known in the region, including: Paleo-Indian, Early, Middle and Late Archaic, and the Austin and Toyah Phases of the Late Prehistoric period. It has been documented that the site of the natural bridge, the namesake of **Natural Bridge Caverns**, has been used and inhabited by prehistoric peoples spanning a timeframe of at least 8,800 years.

“Our family is honored that Natural Bridge Caverns has been named in the National Register of Historic Places and recognizes the importance of protecting the natural bridge and sinkhole area for future generations,” said Brad Wuest, president of NBC, and third-generation family member to own and operate the caverns.

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), a division of the U.S. Department of the Interior, is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate and protect our country’s historic and archeological resources. For more information, visit their website at www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com.

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NOTE TO MEDIA: Atlatl--a prehistoric device that was used to throw darts tipped with stone points (similar to the ones found at NBC) will be demonstrated on-site. The atlatl consists of a rod or board with a projection (commonly a hook) at the rear end to hold the dart in place until released and predates the bow & arrow by thousands of years. Dr. Steve Tomka will give a throwing exhibition during media visit.



A limited number of “hands-on” opportunities will be offered!
Please RSVP to Karen Adams by Nov. 15 by calling 210-844-8973 or emailing her at klsadams@earthlink.net.

On hand for interviews:

Joye Wuest, NBC Chief Financial Officer
Steve Tomka, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Archaeological Research at UTSA

For more information about Natural Bridge Caverns, please visit their website at: www.naturalbridgecaverns.com.