

CONTACT:
Tanny M. McGinnis
Community Relations Deputy
Garfield County Sheriff's Office
107 8th Street
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601



PRESS RELEASE GARFIELD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

For Immediate Release

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Garfield County, Colorado – The Garfield County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Unit in conjunction with members from the Colorado Cave Rescue Network and the Colorado Grotto will be conducting a cleanup of a local cave and the surrounding area. The cave, located in northern Garfield County has become littered with a mountain of trash and debris over the years. The cleanup operation is expected to take place on August 29th and 30th, 2009. The operation offers a great opportunity for Search and Rescue members to practice rope work and rigging on high angle terrain.

Dependable Waste of Rifle, CO graciously donated the use of a roll off dumpster for the project, and the Garfield County Landfill is allowing the trash that is collected to be dumped for free.

Volunteer workers certified through the Colorado Division of Wildlife will be on hand to conduct surveys on the health of the Townsend's Big-Eared Bats known to roost in and around the area.

Citizens wishing to utilize the many caves located in our area are reminded to use the "Leave No Trace" and "Look but Don't Touch" methods of exploration in an effort to preserve these delicately balanced ecosystems. Many of the caves in our area have been damaged by curious citizens taking "souvenirs" such as rock formations and crystals from the caves. Simply touching formations can cause damage, as oils from people's skin

stop the slow growth of stalagmites and stalactites, and can easily destroy the fragile fauna and flora that exist in cave environments.

The Garfield County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue would also like to remind people to utilize safety measures when exploring caves. Always carry water and bring adequate lighting with extra batteries (a minimum of 3 separate light sources such as flashlights are recommended), wear a helmet, do not explore alone, and let friends or family know exactly where you are going and when you expect to return. Also be aware that cave exploration can be inherently dangerous, and take necessary precautions to ensure a safe trip.