

# Philosophy and Operation of the Colorado Cave Survey

## I. Introduction

The Colorado Cave Survey is a coalition of grottos whose main objective is to represent the interests of organized cavers throughout the State. Through the Cave Survey, each Grotto is represented and supported in state-wide management, conservation, and political issues.

## II. Philosophy

The underlying philosophy of the Colorado Cave Survey is the conservation of nature. We support the philosophy of cave preservation and conservation; and, in general, the concept of the preservation of wildlife and nature. We support the conservation and caving practices of the N.S.S. and a consensus of the caving community. Consequently, the main objective of the Colorado Cave Survey is to support and coordinate conservation efforts in Colorado.

Colorado is undergoing massive changes. In the past 20 years, there has been a large increase in population, economic activity, and mineral development. This has put increasing pressure on caves and caving areas within the State. It has become more and more difficult for the individual caver, or even the individual grotto to effectively deal with these pressures. It is, therefore, the objective of the Cave Survey to provide a vehicle for dealing with these problems.

The main goals of the Cave Survey are:

### A) Support and Credibility

Caves and caving areas are often impacted by economic interests such as skiing and mining. These interests have powerful lobbies, money, and political power. One of the goals of the Cave Survey is to give the caving community increased political clout. The Cave Survey is a state-wide organization representing the cavers in several different cities. This gives the caving community a broader base and increased credibility when dealing with government agencies and other institutions.

### B) Cooperation, coordination, and communication

In many states, competition between grottos has created jealousy and friction that handicaps the caving community's ability to deal with common issues. Another goal of the Cave Survey is provide open channels of communication between grottos.

### C. Fair and objective management policies

Colorado has a relatively small number of caves and there is constant pressure for access. As a result, access policies are frequently the source of friction within the caving community.

The goal of the Cave Survey is to circumvent parochial issues and provide state-wide management of caves of state wide interest. The management policies will be carefully chosen to protect the cave, protect the caver, and provide fair and equitable access procedures.

### 1. Cave Protection

One of the main objectives of cave management policies is to protect the natural cave environment from degradation by human traffic. This is best accomplished through controlled access, marked trails and, most importantly, education. Since it is nearly impossible to protect all caves from any kind of damage, care must be taken to avoid creating petty and arbitrary rules.

### 2. Caver Protection

In some caves, it may be necessary to create management systems which protect the caver from hazards. In general, these will be warning flags, fixed ropes, anchors, ladders, and again, education.

### 3. Fair and Objective access procedures.

To avoid arbitrary and inconsistent cave management policies, access to Survey managed caves must be based entirely on the competence and experience of the individual caver. Access rules, competency requirements and qualification procedures should be clearly spelled out, preferably in writing. Policies which rely on personal contacts should be avoided.

### D) Management of Cave Survey Files

A secondary goal of the Cave Survey is to maintain files on cave discoveries, survey notes, cave hunting trips within Colorado, scientific studies, etc. The information in these files will be submitted voluntarily and access granted as described in the Constitution and Bylaws. Information in the files will not be published if the contributor has designated the material non-publishable.

### E) Confidentiality

The Cave Survey is entrusted with information of a sensitive nature by individual cavers, land managing agencies, and others. In order to maintain the trust of those parties, the Cave Survey must be able to assure them that information, particularly cave locations, will not be published or disseminated inappropriately. To that end, the Cave Survey must maintain control over certain data and may require certain parties to sign a confidentiality agreement detailed in Appendix A.

### III. Areas of Management

The strength of the Cave Survey comes from the support of the individual grottos and individuals within those grottos. The Survey is an organization that serves the will of the caving community. In order to prevent the Survey from becoming a power unto itself, the Survey is limited to certain areas of interest and responsibility. In general, Cave Survey activities should be limited to cave management and dealing with political and economic interests that impact the caving areas.

Scientific studies, mapping projects and cave rescue are best handled in special interest subgroups of the individual grottos and are outside the scope of the Cave Survey. Local grotto politics are strictly off limits.

### IV. Organization

The basic organizational philosophy of the Cave Survey is based upon maximum participation and minimum bureaucracy. All survey meetings are open to the general caving community and input from individuals and grottos is encouraged.

It is the basic responsibility of each Cave Survey member to represent the individual members of the grotto in the Cave Survey. Survey members are responsible for communicating the activities and concerns of the Survey to the grottos; soliciting the grotto's opinions, views and ideas; and representing the consensus to the Cave Survey.

Survey representatives are also responsible for handling individual cave access. Access to any Survey managed cave is arranged through one of the Survey representatives for each grotto.

One of the primary responsibilities of the Cave Survey is to maintain an ongoing and consistent relationship with the Forest Service and other cave owners. One of the best ways to sustain continuity with cave owners is to put them on the mailing list for grotto publications. Also, the survey is encouraged to keep communication channels open by making frequent personal contacts with cave owners.

**Appendix A**  
**Colorado Cave Survey Confidentiality Agreement**

**Parties to the Agreement**

The Discloser of information relevant to this Agreement is the Colorado Cave Survey, although the relevant information may have been provided to the Colorado Cave Survey by a third party with the understanding that it is to be kept confidential. The Recipient is the individual who may receive confidential information through his or her relationship with the Colorado Cave Survey and has voluntarily signed this agreement.

**Scope of the Agreement**

This Agreement covers written, oral, electronic, and visual information the Recipient may receive in the course of being a member of the Colorado Cave Survey, being granted access to part or all of the Cave Survey files, or as part of attending meetings or conducting business with the Colorado Cave Survey. This Agreement covers specific cave location information, such as coordinates or descriptions, and other information that could be used to locate a cave, such as descriptions of a general geographic area or nearby landmarks. Cave descriptions, inasmuch as they could be used to locate a cave, are also covered by this agreement. Documents with information similar to that described above, including cave maps, photographs, and digital images, are also covered by this Agreement. Locations of newly discovered sections of known caves are similarly covered by this Agreement. Specific information may be excluded from coverage as described in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Colorado Cave Survey.

Information that would be covered by this Agreement is excluded from coverage if the Recipient obtains it from independent investigation or a source outside the Colorado Cave Survey and not in the context of Colorado Cave Survey business. The Recipient shall have no obligation under this Agreement with respect to covered information which is or becomes publicly available without breach of this Agreement by Recipient

**Recipient's Obligations**

The Recipient is prohibited from disclosing the covered information to others. The Recipient is prohibited from publishing the covered information in print, electronic, or other media, and also by granting interviews, conversation, or other means. The Recipient must use reasonable efforts to maintain the information covered by this agreement as confidential. Permission to disclose specific information covered by this Agreement may be granted by the Colorado Cave Survey as described in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Colorado Cave Survey. The Recipient is encouraged to seek guidance from officers and members of the Colorado Cave Survey if in doubt as to whether a particular action will violate this Agreement. The Recipient has no legal rights regarding the information covered by this Agreement. All tangible embodiments of the covered information must be returned by the Recipient upon request of the Colorado Cave Survey.

**Remedies**

If the Colorado Cave Survey deems that the Recipient has disclosed information covered by this agreement, it may take any or all of the following actions:

- A. No action
- B. Revocation of access to the Colorado Cave Survey files.
- C. Inform landowners, land managing agencies, and other partners of the Colorado Cave Survey of the disclosure.
- D. Expel the individual from the Colorado Cave Survey.
- E. Write letters, seeking discipline or expulsion, to National Speleological Society grottos of which the recipient is a member.
- F. Write letters, seeking discipline or expulsion, to National Speleological Society.
- G. Obtain an injunction against use of information covered by the agreement.
- H. Inform law enforcement agencies if it appears that laws may have been broken.
- I. Take other legal action deemed appropriate by the membership of the Colorado Cave Survey.

**Term**

This agreement is in effect upon signature by the Recipient and the current Chair of the Colorado Cave Survey. This agreement has no expiration date. It may be voided only as described in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Colorado Cave Survey.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Recipient

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Colorado Cave Survey

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date