

Colorado Cave Survey Meeting
7:00 pm, Thursday, February 10, 2017
Home of Derek Bristol
7744 Gunsight Pass
Littleton, CO

Attendees

Derek Bristol (CCS Chair - NCG proxy votes x2)
Kevin Manley (CCS Vice Chair, FRG)
Mary Klaus
Jon Schow (CG)
Carey Hunter (TG x2)
David Gnuse
Stuart Marlatt
Talmage Trujillo (RCG x2)
Layla Borgens (SCMG)
Barb Smith (CG)
Jeff Goben
Shiloh McCollum (WSG)
Ken Headrick (WSG)
Tracy White
Rob McFarland
Rick Rhinehart
Dan Sullivan
LP Lawrence
Michael Boyes
Paul Fowler (FRG)

** 13 of 14 votes were present, so a quorum was met and business can be conducted*

Meeting Agenda and Minutes

USFS Region 2 –

Hubbard Cave Gate

Update from Phil Nyland (WRNF Wildlife Biologist):

In terms of the NEPA process, I have reviewed and analyzed all the comments received during the scoping period. I also have nearly all the internal input from the other Forest Service resource specialists on my project team (recreation, cultural resources, visuals, geology, and wildlife (me)). We are in the process of cultural resource consultation based on cultural surveys done last fall, and records from our database.

Based on 17 comments received from 13 individuals, I have incorporated input into the scope of the decision, proposed gate design, and monitoring plan. Comments provided good suggestions for additional inventory and monitoring at Ice Cave, improving gate design features to dissuade gate vandalism and digging, and further disclosing the project's potential impacts to recreation.

Thus far, no extraordinary circumstances have been raised during scoping or internally to trigger additional analysis, pending completion of final analysis and cultural resource consultation. We expect a decision sometime in the spring. This project is being done in the context of a larger workload assigned to me and my team, so work on this project has been delayed from time to time by other priorities.

In the meantime, along with biologists from Parks and Wildlife, and CSU natural heritage program, I will continue pre-project monitoring this winter with a visit to Hubbard and Ice cave in the near future to inventory bat presence and survey for human use of the caves. Later in 2017, we will conduct surveys and site visits in fall and winter, following gate installation if approved.

Colorado Corrections Industries was asked to visit the site in June 2016 to provide us a cost estimate for gate construction. They estimate the total cost for 3 gates at Hubbard and 1 gate at Ice cave to be approximately \$78K. If the project is approved, the funding will come from FS mining mitigation funds, and Parks and Wildlife grant funds. The gates would be constructed in summer/fall 2017 over a 2 week period when bats are absent except for maybe a few individuals.

At this point, I am awaiting cultural resource consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, followed by a review of the project NEPA by my Line Officer with a decision weather to proceed with the project as proposed during scoping. The Line Officer may choose to proceed, or revise the proposal based on analysis and information collected.

I can provide additional updates once the project progresses.

Some very loosely related information from Rick Rhinehart:

One topic worth mentioning is that Utah Congressman Jason Chaffetz has introduced House Bill 622 in Congress, calling for the elimination of USFS and BLM law enforcement officers. If passed, beginning October 1, all federal law enforcement officers on these lands would have their employment terminated. I asked Kay Hopkins about this, and she said the WRNF has three law enforcement rangers. The ranger on the west side of the Forest patrols the caves as he can, she reports.

If the Act is passed, cave patrolling would be left to local Sheriff's department officials, which means they don't have the time, interest, or manpower. This is a big deal for protecting Groaning, Spring and Hubbard Caves with their gates.

Note: This bill was discussed briefly and it was determined that there wan't much for the CCS to do about it.

Spring Cave Gate

No new information is available. At least one exception to the fall swarming season closure was approved in 2016. Cavers who want to visit the stream passage beyond Jones Beach are encouraged to request similar exceptions due to lower water conditions in the fall.

Fixin' Cliff Climbing

From Noah Kaufman (climber):

Hi, I'm writing with regards to Deep Creek. Myself and many other climbers are enjoying this pristine area and having a blast bolting routes on the large limestone cliffs. We have peacefully coexisted with cavers, and we too like to explore the caves and the natural wonders of the area.

Until last weekend, we had shared beers and stories around campfires with local cavers without any issues. Sadly, a few cavers, Shy (missing a finger or two) and Justin, took it upon themselves to remove bolts, take climber gear and destroy many improvements and hours of work that we have put in to the area without any discussion. They also refused to return climber ropes and gear to a climber who owned this gear when he confronted them.

This was fairly egregious and disturbing to the climbing community. We do not hold cavers responsible, but we do these two arrogant, irresponsible and perhaps immature lads who happen to be cavers. These two children are no longer welcome to the area and their safety is indeed at risk should they reappear.

It is our hope that we can continue to peacefully coexist as user groups without involving Forest Service as that will benefit no one. I'm happy to discuss the incident and how we can work together now that Deep Creek is becoming a popular climbing destination. It is important that we police ourselves and do not allow a situation to escalate after "the first stone has been thrown." I have several young, impassioned climbers who were contemplating "Mountain Justice" and am trying to defuse the situation.

Thanks for your time and kind regards,

*Noah Kaufman, MD
[\(330\)701-4614](tel:(330)701-4614)*

From Rick Rhinehart (caver emeritus):

I have been in communication with Dr. Noah Kaufman in Fort Collins, and he provides a listing of gear that was removed or stolen in the Fixin' area this last weekend. He reports:

"They stole a lot of hangers, rope, tools, & a few draws. I feel like they should have to pay to replace all the bolts they chopped off the verdon wall, panorama wall, & waterfall. They chopped 5 sets of anchors I have counted so far, & 3 bolts at the waterfall. That's 13 bolt hanger combo's. The bolts were pounded in so you have to completely start over."

We are trying to get a price on all the gear. It's really unfortunate that they chopped bolts.

It was really shortsighted of them and arrogant. I am worried that if they show up while there are climbers there, things could escalate.

Any thoughts on the value of these items?

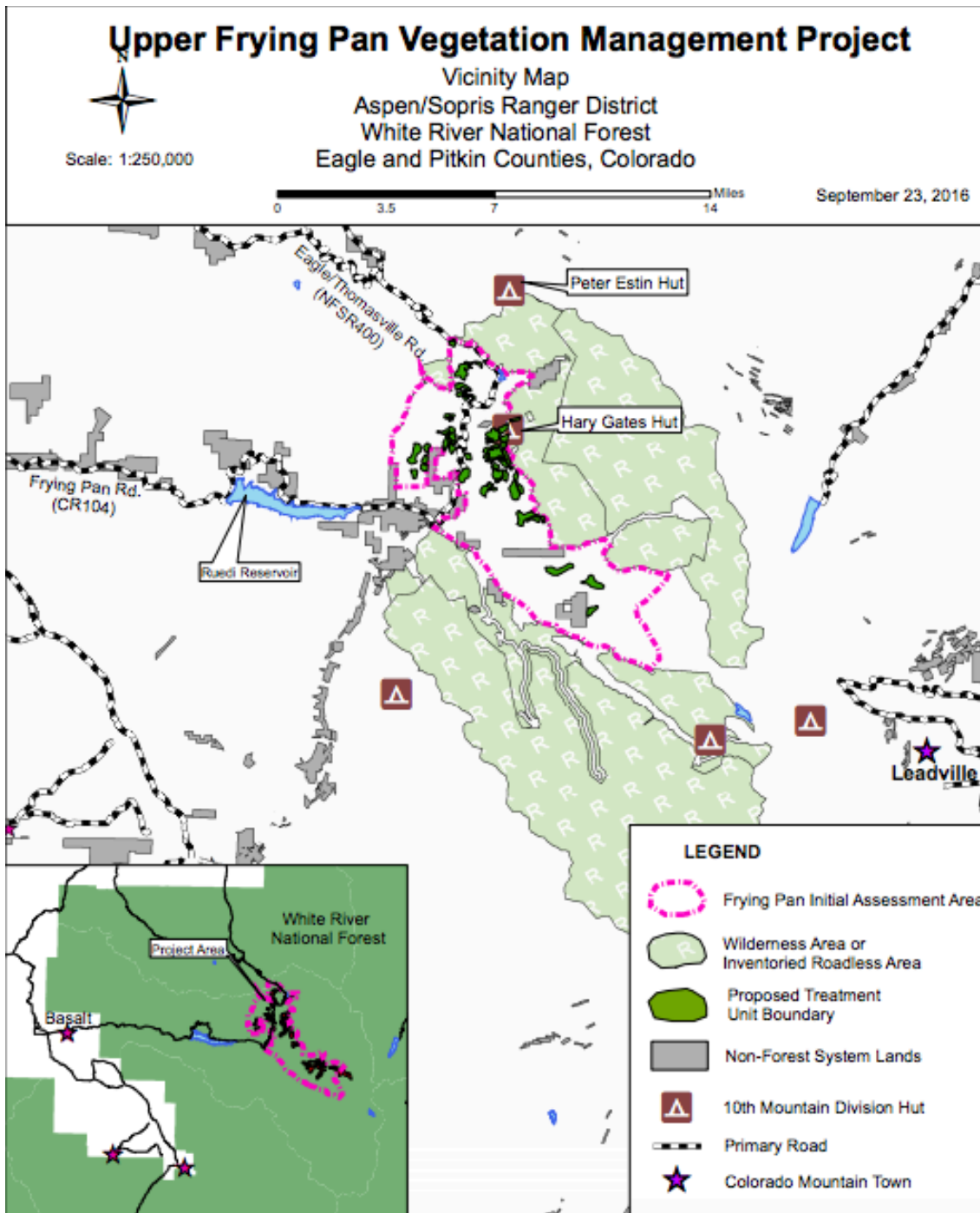
The cavers in question apparently live in the Nederland/Eldora area and have no interest in joining a caving group. Mark Rabin told me that he's seen them on the Plateau in the past, and that some of the cavers in Nederland know them. Mark is going to try and find contact information for them and will share with Noah.

The CCS Chair has agreed to try to contact the unaffiliated cavers in Nederland and try to get an agreement to avoid a repeat of this type of incident. The Chair will then contact Dr. Kaufman to discuss the possibility of replacing damaged or stolen hardware, or reimbursing the climbers within reason, as a good-will gesture.

Survey Exceptions

Exceptions to the seasonal cave closures were approved for survey work in Groaning Cave during swarming season with stipulations (under exception #5 for NSS members)

Upper Fryingpan Timber Harvest (including Lime Park)



This was discussed, but no action is needed at this time from the CCS. The proposed timber harvest is fairly heavily opposed by local residents and businesses, but the USFS feels it is needed to improve the health of the forest and reduce the potential for wildfires. In any case, work done in the past to reduce the potential impact to caves is still in the Forest Service's plan.

Deep Creek Wild and Scenic Designation

From Rick Rhinehart:

Ken Neubecker, the Associate Director of the Colorado River Basin Program (kneubecker@americanrivers.org) attended Tuesday night's Colorado Western Slope Grotto meeting in Glenwood.

Apparently, there are new limestone mining claims that have been filed along Deep Creek, somewhere west of Groaning and Fixin on USFS land. This is concerning the USFS, and so they are interested in seeing the Wild and Scenic River designation proceed, which will withdraw the rim-to-rim land from mineral extraction.

Ken said the steering committee are planning an event at the Overlook this summer, in which they plan on inviting Congressman Scott Tipton and Senator Corey Gardner to attend. Both will be critical to having the proposal brought to Congress for consideration. (He's talking about having a helicopter on hand to provide flights over the canyon.)

There is interest among the committee in having a group of cavers attend the program to provide information about the caves of the canyon, and to perhaps lead a walk to the entrance of Groaning Cave (there wouldn't be any caving). I told Ken that cavers would probably be interested and willing to help with the special event, but that there would not be interest in leading trips to the Groaning entrance if the general public will attend.

Their official steering committee is interested in having a caver join as a member – they have most other stakeholders already involved. Ken Newton or Micah Hall in Glenwood might be good choices (they both attended the grotto meeting). I said I also would be willing to be considered for this position, but that the decision should be with the Cave Survey.

It was agreed that it would be good to have caver representation on this steering committee led by American Rivers that would support Wild and Scenic designation. It was agreed that Rick Rhinehart would discuss this with Ken Newton, who has previously indicated an interest in being the point person for the caving community. Ken Headrick has also agreed to remain involved in the effort. There was a consensus that since Ken Neubecker is in Glenwood Springs, that it would be best for the CWSG to take the lead on communicating with the steering committee.

Groaning Cave Survey

From Paul Fowler:

Groaning Cave Baseline Survey proposal - Stuart Marlatt, Derek Bristol, Paul Fowler; February 2017.

Goal: Establish more accurate and more permanent reference survey lines in Groaning Cave.

Motivation: Most surveys in Groaning are tied into a few old main surveys (ca. 1968-1972). Problems with these early surveys are a major limitation on the accuracy of current survey and mapping efforts. They also make it more difficult to specify accurately known locations in the cave for e.g., scientific data collection instruments.

- 1) There are some large known loop closure errors (> 50 foot).*
- 2) Some of the old surveys have few or no station markers left in the cave.*
- 3) Many of the old survey flags that are there are just lying on the floor, and there is no real way to know where the actual station was intended to be any more.*
- 4) Some of the old surveys have station markers in the cave that are known not to be where the actual shots were, but just placed on walls somewhere in the general vicinity.*
- 5) Some of the old surveys have no notes in the data base.*
- 6) Some of the old surveys appear to have been reconstructed years later by estimation from Norm Pace's 1974 map.*
- 7) Some of the old surveys have few or no inclinations recorded in the data base. This means among other things that we have little reliable vertical control in the back part of the cave.*
- 8) Because of the various problems above, it is often very difficult to tie new surveys into old ones accurately.*
- 9) Modern surveying with DistoXs and backsights is much more accurate than the standards used in the 1970s.*

Proposal: We want to run a new survey from the entrance of the cave to the back, mostly following the main travel path in common usage today, collecting new higher quality data as well as sketching to a more modern standard. We want to make this new baseline survey using stations that will can be found and revisited for many years into the future. Our intention is to use small station tags printed on plastic, attached to the cave walls using either small brass (nonmagnetic) screws, or small dry wall screws with drilled plastic anchors, or similar. These should be visually fairly unobtrusive (much less than current colored flagging tape), but also difficult to be inadvertently displaced or removed.

Colorado Cave Survey involvement: A similar proposal was approved at the October 2005 CCS meeting. As reported in the Summer 2006 issue of RMC, "Owing to an increasing number of cavers who become momentarily lost or use cairns and other marking devices in Groaning Cave, the Survey decided that a new backbone survey of the main trade route between the entrance and Shattered Hall in the back of the cave is in order. The backbone survey could be used by Alan Williams, the cave's survey director, for survey integrity, but its primary purpose is to set permanent stations along the route that can be used as landmarks for cavers." The current proposal is similar, but we now view the permanent stations as primarily for improving the survey quality and accuracy, rather than any trail marking. We intend for the station markers to be as unobtrusive visually as possible, although like any survey marking, they might be used to help seriously lost cavers, or to help rescue efforts. We note that the main travel route in many parts of the cave is now pretty easy to follow just from the "elephant trail" on the floor created through the years. We know that some previous efforts to mark trails have met with substantial resistance from some cavers. We would like this time to explain the project before we start via the CCS, and to try to hear any objections in advance to forestall possible future misunderstandings or conflicts.

Concerns were raised about not wanting the new survey tags to be too prolific or overly large or visible to avoid creating too obvious a trail to more remote parts of the cave. There was also a concern about not overly impacting the cave with drill holes. It was agreed that a couple of resurvey trips would be conducted early in the season and the new survey tags could then be evaluated and modifications made if necessary. Ken Headrick has agreed to possibly participate in some of these early resurvey trips.

LaSunder Cave Management Plan

Discuss renewed LaSunder Cave Management Plan and status of proposed changes. The LaSunder Cave Management Plan was renewed in the fall of 2016. Changes proposed in 2013 have not been adopted yet. The BLM is still consulting with local tribes to determine if there are any objections to the proposed changes in the management plan.

CCS Managed Caves

Groaning Cave

Discuss management plan renewal, reinstating annual reports, waiver management, etc. Mary Klaus continues to manage the combo changes effectively. The CWSG raised a concern that they didn't have an access coordinator in their grotto. It was clarified that the access coordinators are not necessarily affiliated with each grotto, and communication around access, waivers, trip leaders, etc is generally done by email or phone. In any case, a motion was made to add Rob McFarland as an access coordinator for the western slope. This motion passed. Rob will work with Mary on understanding the requirements of the role. Vetting of newer trip participants, adherence to completion of waivers and submittal of those waivers to Mary prior to any trips, and ensuring all trips have the USFS authorization prior to getting the combo are all critical steps to ensuring lasting access for all cavers.

LaSunder Cave

Discuss status of trips, waivers, conservation, etc. There were relatively few trips this year, but trips taking during the Rocky Mountain Regional this summer have not yet turned in all their paperwork. This paperwork is a strict requirement of the BLM and they are verifying that it is being done properly. Those trip leaders will be contacted again and encouraged to get this done.

Fly and Marble Caves

Discuss status.

Christine Kirkland reports that the gate combos were changed in December. There have been few trip requests this winter. There were a lot of trips during the warmer months. No bats observed during the last few trips.

There's a narrow crawl below the entrance slope in Fly Cave that is getting more constricted as dirt gets pushed down a slope into the tightest part of the crawl. Talmage is proposing digging out this loose dirt to return the passage to its original robust size. It was determined that he could go ahead with this using his judgement on what to do with the loose dirt.

The access management team is:

Christine Kirkland (liability waiver coordinator) agnew200@yahoo.com

Talmage Trujillo talmagetrujillo@yahoo.com

Active Committee Reports

Clear Creek Canyon Project

Goal: Develop a relationship with Jefferson County Open Space regarding cave management, and promote exploration and conservation in Clear Creek Canyon.

Project members:

Kevin Manley (chair) kevin.manley@colorado.edu

Dan Castellari cavesr4all@yahoo.com

Dave Lambert cavelambert@gmail.com

No new activity. An evaporimeter monitoring trip to CJs is planned for sometime in the summer.

Topics from the floor

New topics brought up for discussion.

1. *Kristen Levy reports that the father of her neighbor, who recently passed away, has a letter describing cave trips taken to the Grand Canyon and elsewhere in the 1950's. The neighbor might be willing to donate the letter to the CCS files for archiving.*

Officer Elections

Chair and Vice-Chair offices are open for the next 12 months.

Derek Bristol (Chair) and Kevin Manley (Vice Chair) were nominated to serve another year. The motion was passed with two votes against.

Next meeting

This will likely be in June/July, 2017.

Officers of the Colorado Cave Survey

Chair Derek Bristol derekbristol@gmail.com
Vice-Chair Kevin Manley kevin.manley@colorado.edu

Voting Membership of the Colorado Cave Survey

(Please inform the Survey of any changes at your respective grottos.)

Colorado Grotto	Chair: Jon Schow	acojon@gmail.com
	Survey Rep: Barb Smith	smithbr@comcast.net
Front Range Grotto	President: Kevin Manley	kevin.manley@colorado.edu
	Survey Rep: Paul Fowler	pjfowler1@gmail.com
Northern Colorado Grotto	Chair: Kristen Levy	kblevy@comcast.net
	Survey Rep: Jim Lawton	quinoa@frii.com
Southern Colorado Mountain Grotto	Chair: Layla Borgens	nurse.layla@yahoo.com
	Survey Rep: Jeff Polk	jmpdelos@gmail.com
Timberline Grotto	Chair: Cole Newton	cavekids@comcast.net
	Survey Rep: Carey Hunter	mushmc20@netzero.com
Colorado Western Slope Grotto	Chair: Ken Headrick	cavecritters@gmail.com
	Survey Rep: Rob or Shiloh	mudface@comcast.net
Red Canyon Grotto	Chair: Tony Clementi	ynotgocave@gmail.com
	Survey Rep: Ken Dageforde	kadag10@juno.com

Cave Survey Communication

The Colorado Cave Survey maintains an extensive website at:

www.coloradocavesurvey.org

A Google group is maintained for making announcements and discussing CCS business. An email sent to the group automatically goes out to everyone subscribed. For those interested, this is the best way to keep apprised of what is going on with the CCS. A person can unsubscribe without assistance whenever he or she wishes. To subscribe, please email Derek Bristol.