

Colorado Cave Survey Meeting
6:00 pm, Saturday, July 15, 2017
Glenwood Caverns - Patio Area
Glenwood Springs, CO

Attendees (CCS Representation in parentheses)

Derek Bristol (CCS Chair)
Kevin Manley (CCS Vice Chair, FRG)
Jim Lawton (NCG)
Kristen Levy (NCG)
Paul Fowler (FRG)
Cole Newton (TG)
Ken Newton (TG)
Tracy White
Ken Headrick (CWSG)
Nate Iden
Bob Bassett
Jen Foote
Rob McFarland (CWSG)
Shiloh McCollum
Jon Schow (CG)
Layla Borgens (SCMG)
Barb Smith (CG)
Rick Rhinehart
Kathy Keeler
Phil Nyland

* 12 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

Updates from Phil Nyland (WRNF Wildlife Biologist and Hubbard Cave gate project leader):

January 27, 2017:

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.

May 17, 2017:

At this point, I am still awaiting cultural resource consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. Unfortunately, I don't have further updates at this time.

July 7, 2017:

The decision has been signed, 6/27/17 to authorize gates at Hubbard. Ice Cave is deferred at this time. We got notice the week prior that the construction crew was available starting July 3 to implement the project due to a cancellation, otherwise they were next available in September which is when swarming occurs. Due to their busy schedule and the potential known conflict with swarming in September, the District Ranger decided to seize the opportunity.

The shift in timing unfortunately did not accommodate a filed review prior to installation as we discussed at the grottos meetings, however, I invite discussion of the site specific design planned for the gates with some caver reps. The timing of the work schedule, the July 4th weekend, and other projects going on at the same time is unfortunate, but in no way are we trying to deceive the grottos or CCS.

From Rick Rhinehart on July 14, 2017:

Kay Hopkins met with Karen Schroyer earlier today and asked her about the lack of communication regarding the Hubbard Cave gating. She admitted that they want to keep the gating secret from the public until the cave is gated. The reason is that they don't want to publicize the cave or bring attention to their gating project.

Phil Nyland gave a long explanation of the decision making process that led to the gate construction being approved and moved forward to early July. He explained that the lack of communication to the CCS on this decision was intentional by the Forest Supervisor, and that there was a desire to minimize communication about the decision. Phil was also asked whether the realization that Hubbard Cave is not a bat maternity site would lead to future recreational access during that season, as it is now for Spring Cave. He said that restriction wasn't likely to change in the immediate future, but after the gate installation is complete they may be able to revisit it.

Spring Cave Gate

From Rick Rhinehart on July 14, 2017:

Morgan Hill and Mike ??? are serving as the GeoCorps cave rangers at Spring Cave this summer. Morgan wrote CWSG to introduce himself June 20 - I wrote back, but have not received a response to date.

Ken Headrick reports multiple sport climbing routes that have been established in the entrance of Spring Cave. Phil Nyland will investigate and determine whether this is permitted use and whether there is any action the WRNF needs to take.

Fixin' Cliff Climbing

Update on 7-14-2017 (Derek Bristol):

I attempted to contact the cavers in Nederland that were involved directly in the bolt chopping / rope removal incident last summer, but received no response. I spoke to a friend of theirs who indicated that they were upset at the perception that they were vilified by the caving community for what happened, and felt that some of the stories about theft of gear were untrue. They were upset that some cavers would believe that such a thing were true. There was a general sense that the actions taken and the resulting conflict would not be repeated.

I called and spoke to Dr. Noah Kaufman, one of the climbers, and someone who has been trying to settle the conflict. I made an offer to help replace some of the damaged gear (chopped bolts and fixed ropes). He appreciated the offer, but said it was unclear how much gear had been removed in reality, and that enough time had gone by that it probably was unnecessary. He echoed the sentiment that I have, which is that there should be no need to involve the USFS in the matter; that both the caving and climbing communities would be better served by resolving our own conflicts internally.

There have been no new developments. Several cavers have expressed concerns over possible unauthorized visitation to caves in the area, as well as visual impacts such as fixed ropes, and hand-painted signs at the base of routes. Cavers have been asked to send a list of these concerns to the CCS Chair. They will be organized and discussed with the climbing community in an effort to reach a compromise.

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) for the past couple of years. That exception will be applied for again in 2017.

Upper Fryingpan Timber Harvest (including Lime Park)

Phil Nyland is on the committee that is overseeing the timber harvest in the Fryingpan area. Based on cooperative work conducted in the past with the CCS they are incorporating timber extraction buffer zones and soil erosion prevention techniques to help protect karst and cave features. If the harvest is approved it would happen approximately June, 2018 with harvesting commencing soon afterward and lasting for 2-3 years.

Deep Creek Wild and Scenic Designation

It was agreed at the February, 2017 CCS meeting that it would be good to have caver representation on the steering committee led by American Rivers that would support Wild and Scenic designation. Rick Rhinehart discussed this with Ken Newton, who agreed on 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.

Ken Neubecker of American Rivers is leading this effort, but could not be at the CCS meeting.

The next stakeholders meeting is August 21, 2017. Stakeholders include grazing rights folks. Deep Creek has been proposed as a Wild and Scenic River for many years now. The recent changes include a proposed expansion of the boundaries of that designated area. It is unclear whether the boundary would extend to the base of the rim, or the top of the rim, and whether this would encompass the climbing areas or caving areas. The primary purpose of the designation is to improve conservation by limiting development, but it is unclear whether this would have any direct influence on the activities of climbers or cavers.

Groaning Cave Survey

A resurvey if the "backbone" of Groaning Cave is being discussed between Paul Fowler, Derek Bristol and Stuart Marlatt. It is felt this is needed to improve the accuracy of existing and future surveys. During the February, 2017 CCS meeting 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. None of these trips has happened to date, but a test survey marker was placed at station D1.

There was additional discussion of this proposal. The current proposed survey markers are approximately 1 inch x 2 inches, and made of a durable plastic. Much smaller tags are being considered, as well as possibly only marking every few stations (e.g. every 5th station), or only marking stations at junctions. It was discussed whether these markers could be used as the foundation for a marked trail through the main travel route. It was proposed that any sort of marked trail might only extend as far as Hard to Get Hall (as an example). No specific decisions or actions came from the discussion.

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.

From Kim Leitzinger on 7-14-2017:

I am checking in with our archaeologist, Erin Leifeld, on an update. She is out on maternity leave, so I am not sure I will have something for you in time for the meeting this weekend! But once I get an update from her, I will share it with you!

I can tell you that we have secured funding for cultural surveys to be completed in Deep Creek canyon in 2018. We are working on the agreement right now to have one of our partners complete the work. The tribes have asked that we complete cultural surveys to gain a better understanding of the historic use of that area on a landscape level before we move forward with proposals. We are steadily moving in a forward direction on your request.

No new information was presented. There is a little frustration that the process is moving at such a glacial pace, and that the proposed changes to the management plan should have no relevance to archeological issues.

CCS Managed Caves

Groaning Cave

Discuss management plan renewal, reinstating annual reports, waiver management, etc.

Paul Fowler will give an update on the gate and the condition of the lock. There were some issues getting into the cave at the beginning of the season.

Paul reports that the lock didn't open on the initial trip of 2017, and it was eventually opened using lubrication and applied force. Additionally, the USFS key lock would not open with a provided key, so it was cut off and a new USFS key lock installed, which was provided by the Rifle field office. Kim Potter at the Rifle field office instructed Rob McFarland to keep a copy of the key. The CCS has never had a copy of the USFS lock key in the past, and there is some concern whether we want that responsibility. The CCS Chair will contact Kay Hopkins and copy the Region 2 and Rifle offices to clarify what should be done with respect to this lock.

LaSunder Cave

Discuss status of trips, waivers, conservation, etc.

Not much news. Very few trips.

No new information was discussed.

Fly and Marble Caves

Discuss status.

From Christine Kirkland on 6-26-2017:

I don't have any updates for Fly and Marble Caves, except that the lock to Fly cave had to be replaced. Several groups reported not being able to lock the cave. Garrett Blair had offered to replace the lock on the his trip down there last week and I took him up on the offer. I sent him a check for \$15 to cover the cost

of the lock. Is there anyway to get reimbursed for the lock? If not, its not a big deal. Thanks!

The CCS Chair will send Christine a check for \$15.

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

Kevin Manley to provide an update.

There was a datalogger trip to CJs recently. There had been some vandalism to the hinges of the gate, but Clear Creek Open Space group repaired the damage. There didn't appear to be any vandalism in the cave.

Topics from the floor

New topics brought up for discussion.

1. Recent caving videos on the internet. *Is there a need for guidelines from CCS regarding sharing general locations, specific locations, images of trails or entrances - through video, photo, or written text.*

There was a long discussion about two YouTube videos that were posted recently - one about a survey trip to Groaning Cave, the other a survey trip to RonTom Cave. Both videos have had their status changed from "public" to "private" once these concerns were raised. The author of these videos agreed with the consensus that the Groaning Cave video in particular, and to a lesser extent the RonTom video, disclose too much information on the location of these caves. Rick Rhinehart produced a statement from the NSS that recommends not disclosing "specific locations" of caves, and while the videos don't contain specific locations in terms of coordinates, it could be possible to locate them by using images in the videos. The author of the videos has agreed to re-edit the videos to remove these clues before republishing. The author has also verified that no location information is contained in the metadata of these videos.

2. Colorado Cave Rescue Network. *A caver from the western slope recently contacted Garfield County S&R to discredit the CCRN. He suggested that they not use CCRN as a resource in the event of a cave rescue and that Garfield S&R should contact him instead because he had a secret elite team of cave rescuers that should be consulted instead. Discuss these events.*

This incident was discussed briefly. It was explained that Garfield County S&R was contacted regarding training opportunities, and somehow this led to a serious misunderstanding regarding the role of CCRN. The person who made the call expressed confidence in CCRN and stated that there was never an effort to undermine their role in cave rescue activities in Colorado. That person agreed to call Marty Reames and further discuss the issue.

No other business or topics from the floor were raised. Although there were many topics covered, no motions were made or votes taken.

Next meeting

This will likely be in October, 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: Jim Lawton	quinoa@frii.com
	Survey Rep: Kristen Levy	kblevy@comcast.net
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	robmcfarland@me.com
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.