

Colorado Cave Survey Meeting

7:00 pm, Thursday, July 19, 2018
Colorado School of Mines
Golden, CO

Attendees:

Kristen Levy (NCG, CCS chair)
Jim Lawton (NCG)
Ken Newton (TG)
Carey Hunter (TG)
Paul Fowler (FRG, CCS vice chair)
Derek Bristol (FRG, proxy for Kevin Manley)
Jon Schow (CG)
Chris Carter (CG, proxy for Barb Smith)
Donald Davis
Blue O'Brennan
Mark Rabin
Shannon Rabin
Talmage Trujillo
Shannon Glazer
Amanda Factor
Rick Truex (USFS Region 2)

Remote attendees via Google Hangout:

Rob McFarland
(CWSG)
Kenny Headrick (CWSG)
Christina Kirkland (SCMG + proxy for Layla Borgens)
David Gnuse
Rick Rhinehart
Spiros Thanasoulas
Hunter Klein
Jennifer Zedalis

Meeting convened at 7:15 p.m. and adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Meeting Agenda and minutes

1) Forest Service cave management issues

Rick Truex, Wildlife Biologist, Rocky Mountain Region, US Forest Service

Rick will join us for an update and discussion of current and future WNS response and management in USFS Region 2.

From Rick Truex:

*When *P. destructans* was apparently reported from Oklahoma in 2010, Region 2 of USFS instituted a blanket closure of caves. This was lifted in 2013 when the current WNS response plan was implemented. Since that time we have been in what was termed Tier 1 management stage, which included mandatory decon procedures and some targeted, mostly seasonal, cave closures. The goals were to protect roosting and swarming bats, as well as to limit any possible human spreading of *P. destructans*.*

*The National Park Service in 2018 instituted a program of surveillance monitoring of bats on their units. This resulted in positive identification of *P. destructans* first in Badlands, then in Ft. Laramie, and then *P. destructans* and WNS in a long legged bat on FS land near Jewel Cave. This is close enough to most of the national forests in Colorado to trigger a move to Tier 2 management in the Region 2 WNS response plan. This is a recognition that WNS is essentially here now, and the goal is to protect the bats in best possible condition and minimize detrimental impact from humans as WNS spreads here.*

Much of the science done so far on WNS has been in the eastern US, where bats have large nesting groups in caves. It is recognized that bats in Colorado largely have different social behavior. Most bats here probably nest in small groups in cracks and crevices rather than in big congregations like back east, with WNS will probably spread here mostly between bats. There is much that we still do not know.

Tier 1 management continues for now, as the FS works out what implementation of Tier 2 will mean in practice. It calls for closure of caves with “targeted opening”, but FS still has to work out just what those words will actually mean. Implementation will probably come next spring. It is likely that there will be different interpretations at the level of individual forests. They learned from 2010 experience that uniform blanket closure was not a good idea.

Question: Why is the triggering distance 250 miles?

Answer: That was developed by US Fish and Wildlife as an estimate of bat to bat transfer radius in one season, and FT. Laramie is within 250 miles of most of the Colorado forests. That estimate was made for a particular species (long eared) and may in reality differ for other species, but it is our best estimate tight now.

Question: Targeted closures make sense even without WNS to protect swarming or roosting bats. Why institute more restrictive closures now if transmission is mostly bat to bat? Is there really evidence that restricting humans will help?

Answer: We want to protect bats from any disturbances that could cause critical energy loss.

Follow up question: In hibernacula, yes, but do humans really impact day use bats?

Answer: We do agree that it makes little sense to try to close every small cave.

Question: What is the worst “doomsday” case we cavers might be facing?

Answer: Maybe everything except possibly Fulford closed. But we have learned more since 2010, and we value the caving community. We could have Tier 2 in practice look a lot like the current Tier 1.

Question: Can we do any meaningful test or experiments to see what actually works to help the bats?

Answer: That is the big question – what can we do to help? But our bats are so dispersed in places like talus slopes that it is hard to do any real tests. Experimental treatments like chemicals really fall under state authority, too.

Question: “Targeted openings” the stated preferred option, but USFS has not really defined what that term means yet, have you?

Answer: Right.

Question: What does USFS need from us in the caving community?

Answer: Patience and engagement.

Follow up question: Many in the caving community do oppose giving FS any full list of caves.

Answer: Yes, we understand. And whatever we do, we have to get it approved by our lawyers, too.

Follow up question: At Fulford, there is a list of all the other closed FS caves. Is that really a good idea?

Answer: The law says that we have to disclose that to the public. Note that we list names, but locations only by ranger district.

Rick invites further question or discussion at rtruex@fs.fed.us

Upper Fryingpan Timber Harvest (Including Lime Park)

June 19 – Meeting with Dave Lambert and WRNF personnel.

Summary of report by Dave Lambert. It looks like Unit 103 will be removed from the timber sale, which should significantly help protect the caves and karst waters.

Jim Baichtal from Tongass National Forest visited with WRNF to advise on the timber sale and other related karst management issues. He recommended to WRNF that Unit 103 and at least parts of Units 105 and 106 be removed from the timber sale to protect the Lime Creek area caves and the karst groundwater hydrology.

Summary of Cave Management Meetings with WRNF

June 18- Meeting and discussion at the Groaning Overlook followed by trip into Groaning. Report from Kristen and Paul and Ken.

June 20-Meeting and discussion at Fulford Campground followed by trip into Fulford Cave. Reports from Kristen, Paul, and Ken.

Phil Nyland made a request for information on caves and assistance with outreach programs at Fulford in conjunction with Geo-Corps volunteers.

June 18: Meeting at Groaning Overlook with CCS and WRNF / USFS representatives. Review of Groaning management history and other cooperation between CCS and WRNF. Discussion of progress toward Wild and Scenic River designation for Deep Creek and possible implications for cave management in the area, as well as other human impacts. CCS took 6 USFS people (including the Eagle District Ranger) on a short trip through the CSU loop in Groaning Cave.

June 20: Long meeting at Fulford Campground with CCS and WRNF / USFS representatives, again including Jim Baichtal from Tongass Forest. A major point of discussion was possible WRNF responses to the recent approach of WNS to Colorado. They are waiting in part for new guidelines from Region 2. They do want CCS help in drawing up a new management plan for Groaning Cave, but this is not envisioned by them as just updating the existing access management agreement, but rather a much larger comprehensive management plan. Phil Nyland requested CCS help again in educational outreach about caves and particularly about WNS. CCS then took USFS representatives on a short trip through Fulford Cave.

Fixin' Cliff Climbing

Kristen Levy attended a second meeting with the Eagle District of WRNF and the Access Fund to discuss concerns over rock climbing development on the Fixin' buttness. She will review this meeting and discuss next steps for the CCS. Construction materials have been brought in and climbers are constructing belay pads.

There have been reports and photographs showing continued increase in the development by sport climbers of the cliffs around Fixin' to Die cave, including concrete and rebar used to construct belay stations. Multiple climbers and 10 vehicles were counted in one day at the camp and along the cliffs. The road is now officially marked as closed where it turns off from the main Coffeepot road. Another meeting with WRNF has been planned, but the date has gotten postponed. Update: Meeting will be held 8/9/2018.

Deep Creek Wild and Scenic Designation

Ken Newton will give an update.

From Ken: No major new updates. Stakeholder committees have been meeting. Next full meeting is August 21st at the Gypsum community center. The meetings are by invite only, not open to general public. Kenny Headrick agreed to be a backup whenever Ken N. cannot attend.

Exception Permits on WRNF

Exception permit requests have been submitted by CCS for visits to Groaning and Spring caves for the period of August 15-October 14. These permits are intended to meet the WRNF request to consolidate exception permits so they do not have to handle as much paperwork. Anyone wishing to plan a trip under these permits can contact Kristen or Paul; use of the permits is not intended to be exclusive. WRNF requests a short trip report to be submitted after the trips. Exceptions are not meant for strictly recreational trips.

Applications have been submitted for CCS exception permits for Groaning and Spring; permits are not yet granted at this time but are expected soon. This is only for these two caves, not any others.

Groaning Cave management

The need for an updated management plan has been discussed with the WRNF. However, they do not want just an update to the short access management agreement we have now, but rather an extensive overall management document. It will probably end up more like 100 pages long and look like the LaSunder Management Plan. We can help them with this, but obviously can't do it all ourselves. Kay Hopkins will send more some templates to the Survey for our input.

WRNF has asked that annual reports be submitted with basic information. Perhaps we can use a template like the LaSunder report? At a minimum they would like a summary from the register of how many visits there were.

Can cave access coordinators determine the best way to follow up with this?

Jen Prusse, WRNF biologist, has asked that bat sightings be noted in the register as people exit the cave.

The WRNF has not requested that permits be submitted after trips at this point.

As discussed above under meetings with WRNF, they do want CCS help in drawing up a new management plan for Groaning Cave, but this is not envisioned by them as just updating the existing access management agreement, but rather a much larger comprehensive management plan.

Paul Fowler volunteered to pull the Groaning register at the end of the season and to get the previous several years registers from Mary Klaus to try to put together a short updated summary of visitation at Groaning.

Derek Bristol offered to make small in-cave maps of Groaning available to the access coordinators for distribution as needed to approved trip leaders.

Hanging Lake Adaptive Management Plan Update

A new management plan for the Hanging Lake parking area and trailhead have been proposed that would limit daily access, require a permit, impose a permit fee, and require use of a shuttle service to access the trail. There are a few small caves in the area, and the proposed changes should have little effect on the caves or cavers, but relatively little is known about the area.

The permit system will not go into effect until next year. There will be no exceptions allowed for any user group, including cavers. If one is interested in visiting one of the caves, it is asked that 1) do it in the off season and 2) let the WRNF know you will be hiking off trail to visit a cave. Letting rangers know in advance will preclude misunderstandings.

During peak season (May 1-October 31) it will be required to make a reservation and pay a small fee to ride the shuttle bus. One can walk/hike/bike in but will still need a reservation

to keep numbers of daily users in check. There has been no request from the WRNF to visit and inventory caves though assistance was offered.

Specific details on implementation plans are not available yet, and implementation has been delayed until 2019.

Significant Cave Designation

Caves can be nominated by private citizens and if they meet certain characteristics they can qualify as 'significant' under the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988. This includes caves that could be used as habitat for bats. This could be a strategy that can be used to protect the caves of the Fixin' Block. A cave can qualify under the following criteria: biota, cultural, geologic, paleontological, hydrologic, recreational, educational, or scientific. Discussion?

NSS policy is that all caves should be considered significant. Land management agencies have said they do not want to worry about every little cave, however. The Tongass forest is an exception; they consider all caves significant by default.

2) BLM cave management issues

Glenwood Quarry Expansion

Update by Rick Rhinehart.

First proposal rejected as incomplete.

Letter writing campaign coordinated by Steve Beckley.

From Rick: The permit application from Rocky Mountain Resources to expand the Mid-Continent quarry is still not finalized. For now the best thing we can do is send letters. It might be useful to walk the area also to know better just what karst features are there. Updated information gets posted at the website loveglenwood.org, created by the group Glenwood Springs Citizens' Alliance.

Several grottos and many cavers have already written letters in opposition to the quarry expansion. CCS will write one too.

Twenty Pound Tick Management Meeting with BLM

The BLM requested a visit to Twenty Pound Tick with Kristen and Paul to assess what may be needed for a management plan now that the sump entrance has been by-passed. Dan Neubaum of CPW attended looking for potential bat habitat. Hilary Boyd, Wildlife Biologist, and Justin Jones, Recreational Ranger represented the BLM.

Kristen and Paul hiked up to the cave with the BLM and CPW people on June 20th. Everyone went in as far as the new bypass. Dan Neubaum took a series of measurements of temperature and airflow. He expressed the opinion that it might get infrequent visits by single bats, but was not a likely significant bat habitat. BLM will probably write a new management plan for the cave. We do not know what it will suggest, nor what their timeline now is, but CCS should continue to track and to provide input and suggestions to them.

LaSunder Cave

Discuss status of trips, waivers, and conservation. Do we need to update contacts for waivers and keys?

Due to the late submission of waivers from a trip in 2016, waivers will now be required in advance.

Discuss renewed LaSunder Cave Management Plan and status of proposed changes.

Ken Headrick reports there has been some natural roof fall and formation damage in LaSunder. After some problems were reported getting gate keys, the CCS website has been updated to provide correct current contact information for Stuart Marlatt. It has also been updated require that people turn in waiver forms prior to getting a key, as there have been problems with long time lags in getting these collected after the fact.

Deep Creek Cultural Surveys

Previously from Kim Leitzinger:

“We have been able to find funding and have set up a Cooperative Agreement with Colorado State University to complete cultural surveys in the Deep Creek area this year. This is a requirement that the tribes asked for to see if we are missing any other cultural resources in that area to consider. They will not be completing surveys inside of the caves but may want to complete surveys immediately surrounding the caves and at the entrances. They will also be looking at other areas and taking random survey samples”.

Members of the CCS including Carl Bern, Donald Davis and Kristen Levy will guide the CSU team to LaSunder and a few other caves/shelters. Donald has seen evidence of prehistoric habitation in the area, not necessarily in caves and will share that with the team.

Some discussion about the wisdom of revealing too many exact cave locations to the BLM. This has been discussed previously at CCS meetings without complete consensus being reached.

BLM funds for bat support/research.

Money!!! Kevin Manley/CG is the contact. Review how to request funds.

No further discussion.

3) Private cave issues

Fly and Marble Caves

Discuss status and updates. Reach out to the Blackwells, show appreciation?

The access management team is:

Christine Kirkland (liability waiver coordinator)

agnew200@yahoo.com

Talmage Trujillo

talmagetrujillo@yahoo.com

Update from Talmage: David Blackwell is mostly around the property now, not his father

Larry. Sometimes their daughter Chloe is also there. The current management system is working well and the Blackwells are happy. They do not want any digging in the caves, and this should be told to everyone going there. Bats have been observed there sometimes, but only a very few (1-3) at any time.

Talmage has a preferred new email address; people should use trujillo@salidaschools.org instead of the old yahoo address. The CCS website contact information has already been updated to reflect this.

Christine suggested getting some kind of gift to express our appreciation to the Blackwells. A bat house was one idea raised.

Some questions about nearby Kaesler Cave were raised. The land ownership has apparently changed and the current owner does not want any visitation. Derek Bristol said that there were about 40 bats observed there on an earlier trip, and that Dan Neubaum of CPW has expressed interest in visiting to evaluate the bat presence there. CCS will follow up and try to contact new owners.

Deep Creek Ranch

Muellers bought Deep Creek Ranch and appear to be caver friendly. They attended the CWSG meeting in June to meet more cavers. Rob McFarland and Kenny Headrick can report more.

Update from Rob McFarland:

- 1. Nice people / very welcoming*
- 2. Have access to the canyon floor via rough 4wheeler trail. Lands close to Spinsters.*
- 3. Took trip to Cattleguard (on their land). Wish to continue caver access with waiver/permit via their business website. I offered CCS such as Fly/Marble, haven't heard back.*
- 4. Wish to have a guest ranch on their land.*
- 5. Wish to find large cave on their land. They mentioned guide service to accessible caves. I advised them of push-back from cavers.*
- 6. They know of some cave locations such as Premo and a few other that surprised me.*
- 7. Standing offer to cavers for ridgewalking their land. Currently contact is organized through me. robmcfarland@me.com*

Cave of the Clouds / Defiance Cave Preserve

Gate has been built and hauled up to the cave in multiple pieces and will be reassembled. The cave is reported to now have a bat maternity colony!

From Kenny Headrick: The gate has been taken up to the cave but not fully installed yet. There are probably 50-70 bats living there now.

4) 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.

Shannon Glazer will give a report/update.

Project members:

Shannon Glazer (Chair)	mock5turtle@hotmail.com
Dan Castellari	cavesr4all@yahoo.com
Dave Lambert	cavelambert@gmail.com

From Shannon: There have been break-ins at CJ's. We are working with Jefferson County to build a new, more secure and completely sealed gate for the cave. We are currently waiting on Jeffco to approve the plans and set a budget. Some grottos in Colorado have donated money to help.

5) Further Topics from the Floor

Porcupine cave:

Talmage Trujillo reported that the previous land owner, Frank McMurray, has died. His wife Connie is not very friendly to visits by cavers. There has been vandalism recently by locals. Should we consider offering to help clean up and maybe gate the cave? First we need to find other family members who may be more receptive to us and establish a good relationship again.

Potential CSM grotto:

Blue O'Brennan stated that there are now about 100 students introduced to caving by the very active Colorado School of Mines caving club. They are in the process of getting formally recognized as a new NSS grotto.

Next meeting: TBD

Officers of the Colorado Cave Survey

Chair Kristen Levy kblevy@comcast.net
Vice-Chair Paul Fowler pjfowler1@gmail.com

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
	Sur. Rep: Christine Kirkland	agnew200@yahoo.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 McFarland	robmcfarland@me.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 the CCS Chair.