

Colorado Cave Survey Meeting

June 17, 5:00-7:00pm

Location: Google Meet online

Attendees:

Blue O'Brennan (CCS chair)
Kristen Levy (CCS vice-chair; NCG + proxy for Jim Lawton)
Paul Fowler (FRG)
Kevin Manley (FRG)
Christine Kirkland (SCMG)
Paul Slayback (CSMG)
Danny Piccone (CSMG)
Rob McFarland (CWSG)
Chris Carter (CG)
Ken Newton (TG)
Rick Rhinehart
Donald Davis
Shannon Glazer
Derek Bristol
David Gnuse
Eric Raymond
Dave Schmidt

A voting quorum was present throughout the meeting.

*Summary and discussion below is in **italics**. Minutes are based on notes from Blue O'Brennan and Kristen Levy.*

Meeting Agenda

Previous minutes

USFS Updates

CCS Cave Updates

Committee Reports

Bat Working Groups

Other Updates and News

Topics from the Floor

Minutes from previous meeting, as previously published and distributed, were approved by voice acclamation.

USFS caves:

USFS Region 2 COVID-19 Response

From late April to the first of June, caves in the White River National Forest were closed and no new permits were issued. This was an effort by the Forest Service to minimize the risk of human-to-human transmission of the virus. Kay Hopkins reached out to the CCS beforehand

and continued to answer questions throughout the closure to help us better understand the situation.

In May, the CCS wrote to the regional directors of the USFS and BLM, as well as the director of CPW, to request that future responses to COVID-19 should be treated in the same way as other forms of recreation. We cited the willingness of cavers to adopt safe practices and the low risk of transmission of the virus to bats.

Kristen Levy: In addition to the CCS letter, the NSS has now put out statements that caving COVID should not be used as an excuse to shut down caving.

Upper Fryingpan timber harvest (including Lime Park)

A lawsuit has been filed to stop the harvest by people living in the general area so work will be delayed indefinitely. No further updates. (No new information)

Kristen Levy: Next time Kristen calls Kay Hopkins, she will ask if there is any update.

Fixin' cliff cave and karst conservation

3/20/20, a conference call was held with representatives of the CCS, Access Fund, DCCC, and USFS to discuss progress on protecting Deep Creek caves. Reports submitted by Kristen and Paul in the fall were discussed and will be used to inform management strategies.

Most of the discussion focused on creating a 100ft buffer zone around caves in which no climbing routes can be placed, and how to remove/disable existing routes within that zone. Jeff Bosboom from the Climbing Coalition expressed concern that climbers would be unhappy with buffer zones, but FS representatives warned that climbing privileges in the area could be completely revoked if people are not compliant.

Plans were made for Access Fund and DCCC members to assess climbing routes and removal options during the summer, but these plans may be impacted by COVID-19.

Blue, Kristen, and Jeff are coordinating on signage for buffer zones and along the walkdown into the canyon, but future discussions have been delayed due to COVID-19.

Kristen Levy: We do not have full buy-in from climbers yet, and Jeff has been resistant to the 100ft buffer zone. Another site visit is planned to determine placement of small signs and a larger sign at top of cliff or fork in trail.

Kevin Manley: Signs at the downclimb and edges of the allowed climbing areas make sense.

Groaning and Spring Caves

The CCS will put in an exemption permit for these caves.

Information on access to Groaning Cave can be found at the CCS website:

<http://coloradocavesurvey.org/managed-access-caves/groaning-cave/>

The current access coordinators are Mary Klaus (waiver coordinator), Dave Lester, 303-771-8408, Randy Macan, Charlie Zelenka, Rob McFarland, and Layla Borgens.

No further discussion during meeting.

Deep Creek Stakeholders Group

Updates from Ken Newton:

The drafting committee met before COVID, but no real progress or changes have occurred. The timeline is still the same, with hopes of having a draft to present in 2023 for legislation. The CCS will need to gather and supply information that supports the values of the Karst within the Canyon. Much has been done already, but we will need to make the information digestible for legislators.

Options for water resource protection are being discussed and the group will hold a virtual meeting July 7th.

Ken Newton: This has been ongoing since 2008; it is a slow process.

Kristen Levy: How much longer should we expect this to take?

Ken Newton: Hopefully all done by 2023. The caving community can help in demonstrating the value of geologic features.

CCS Managed Caves

LaSunder Cave

BLM registered 3 trips in 2018, 4 in 2019, and none so far in 2020. Stuart may provide more details during the meeting.

Access coordinators are Stuart Marlatt and Carl Bern.

No further discussion during meeting.

Fly and Marble Caves

Access coordinators are planning to reopen the caves with temporary recommendations for COVID-19. These are available on the CCS website. <http://coloradocavesurvey.org/managed-access-caves/fly-and-marble-caves/>

The access management team is:

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

Talmage Trujillo ttrujillo@salidaschools.org

Christine Kirkland: Marble was broken into in the spring. NCG paid for the new locks. We are considering adding saws to the entrance caches, similar to what has been done in CoW.

Krsiten Levy: Both locks have been replaced. Also the bolt cutters were stolen.

Active Committee Reports

Mid-Continent Quarry Proposal

Updates from Rick Rhinehart

The Environmental Assessment for the test wells is anticipated within a week or so. I learned from a knowledgeable source they were nearly ready to release the EA to the public a week or two ago, but Larry Sandoval had numerous questions that were not addressed. So, presumably they are revising the assessment to address his questions.

The City of Glenwood Springs has joined in the lawsuit between Garfield County and Rocky Mountain Industrials, in which RMI charges that local governments have no say in mining. The county also adapted new rules that specifically and legally detail their authority under state law. Glenwood's City Attorney said in a Facebook Live session that a key concern is that if RMI is allowed to do whatever they want in mining, that sets a national precedent that local residents, businesses and governments have no say whatsoever in any mining decisions.

A potential return visit to Witches' Pantry Cave with BLM personnel is coming at some point this spring. The source told me that a trip later in June will probably be scheduled as the state pandemic restrictions loosen. Apparently, once the BLM has a chance to examine the cave and talk to cavers, they will be prepared to allow digging. This will allow cavers to dig open the low crawl and descending chimney, and work on the blowing lead. This also will allow for scientific work, such as bringing paleontologist Don Rasmussen to the site for examination.

There is interest by the BLM in running additional electrical resistivity survey lines near Witches' Pantry Cave and elsewhere within the expansion footprint to see if any anomalies are found that could be cave passages.

A group of us have been working a new cave area east of the abandoned Marblehead Quarry on BLM land. I'm presently working on a report for the June RMC on our discoveries (the caves are new only to cavers, in that miners in 1900 excavated two of these caves for better access). None of the caves are particularly huge, but they are interesting and indicate more caves are most likely within the region that haven't been documented, even caves that do not have entrances.

Rick Rhinehart: There has been increasing pressure from the DoI to push things along. Eventually, they may just start quarrying and wait for a lawsuit to stop them again. We expect an environmental assessment soon, though results may be skewed to promote the quality of the limestone in the quarry. The city is worried about a lack of regulation.

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:

Shannon Glazer

mock5turtle@hotmail.com

Dan Castellari

cavesr4all@yahoo.com

Dave Lambert

cavelambert@gmail.com

Shannon Glazer: Data loggers are working well! Data submitted to JeffCo per agreements. Norm Thompson took some good pictures. We hope to have another trip to the caves in September.

Cave of the Winds

Updates to be given by Christine

Christine Kirkland: CoW is limiting itself to 50% capacity. We are unsure what caving will look like in the fall. No wild caving until after Labor Day as usual. There is a new WCP website: <https://williamscanyon.org/>

Bat Working Groups

Mountain Prairie WNS Coordination Meetings/Region 6:

Purpose: To discuss white-nose syndrome (WNS)-related topics including WNS strategic planning, communications, surveillance, grants, and research projects. This meeting is specific to states in the USFWS Region 6 (Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming).

Updates to be given by Christine

Christine Kirkland: They have switched to quarterly meetings. They recommend we do not touch bats.

Colorado WNS Working Group

Paul Fowler attends the Colorado interagency WNS working group phone conferences chaired by Dan Neubaum (CPW). Tina Jackson (CPW) also involved. The main item to report from there is that despite considerable testing in the last year, there are still no positive Pd or WNS results for Colorado.

Colorado Bat Working Group (CBWG)

Works cooperatively to conserve bat species and habitat in Colorado. Participants include Kirk Navo (CPW), Rob Schorr ((CNHP/CSU), Dan Neubaum (CPW)

Annual Colorado Bat Working Group-chaired by Dan Neubaum.

No further discussion during meeting.

Other Updates and News

P. Destructans Identified in three counties in Eastern Montana

Montana FWP has prohibited the capture of live bats in favor of sampling bat droppings.

CCS Website

The domain name has been paid for through 2021. Payment ~\$18 will need to be made to Paul Ryan in spring 2022.

Topics from the floor

*Kristen Levy: We should encourage the NSS to send more communications to land managers.
Derek Bristol: Writing letters by committee is a drawn-out process. They'll likely continue to*

move slowly.

Dave Schmitz: The road to Fulford will be closed until September for culvert maintainence.

Rick Rhinehart: Eagle Holy Cross district has a new ranger who we should get in contact with.

Rick Rhinehart: I sent some info to Kay, Kristen, Paul, and Blue about possible damage to the Lime Creek area from climbers

Kristen Levy: At some point, it would be good for cavers to visit to see impact and if caves are affected. FS is concerned more with overuse and human waste.

2020 Officers of the Colorado Cave Survey

Chair Blue O'Brennan blueobrennan@gmail.com
Vice-Chair Kristen Levy kblevy@comcast.net

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: Chris Carter	ccarterskis@yahoo.com
Front Range Grotto	President: Kevin Manley	kevin.manley@colorado.edu
	Survey Rep: Paul Fowler	pjfowler1@gmail.com
Northern Colorado Grotto	Rep: Kristen Levy	kblevy@comcast.net
	Chair: Jim Lawton	quinoa@frii.com
Southern Colorado Mountain Grotto	Chair: Dustin St. Germaine	varikdragonking@gmail.com
	Rep: Christine Kirkland	agnew200@yahoo.com
Timberline Grotto	Chair: Ken Newton	cavekids@comcast.net
	Survey Rep: Carey Hunter	mushmc20@netzero.com
Colorado Western Slope Grotto	Chair: Ken Headrick	cavecritters@gmail.com
	Rep: Rob McFarland	robmcfarland@me.com
School of Mines Grotto	Chair: Danny Piccone	dannypiccone@mymail.mines.edu
	Rep: Paul Slayback	Pslayback@mymail.mines.edu

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.