

## Minutes CCS Mtg 11/07/22

- Meeting started 7:00 PM via Google Meet.
  - **Attending:** Rob McFarland, Jennifer Zedalis, Paul Fowler, Kristen Levy, JimLawton, Chris Carter, Kenny Headrick, Donald Davis, Paul Slayback, Chad Pedigo, Hunter Klein, Steve Reames, Micah Ball, Ben Smith, Shannon Glazer, Dan Sullivan, Jim (?) SoCoMogro, David Gnuse, Gerard G., Alec Matheus, Jon Schow, Kay Cochran, Kevin Manley,
- Rob reported that the **Fly and Marble Cave** waivers are now updated and posted on the CCS website. The reason for the change is that the elder Blackwell's passed the property on to their children. Christine Kirkland requested that cavers should now take their own precautions for Covid concerns as needed . Therefore the wording for Covid protocols would need to be changed on the website. **ACTION ITEM** -Paul Fowler to update online. Thank you, Paul!
- **Fault Cave** bat observations - Hunter observed a small colony (approx. 20) bats (*Myotis* sp. ?) this fall 2022. After passing this info on to the county and state wildlife biologists, it is suspected that the bats are using Fault Cave as a transient roost after coming out of maternity. Dan Neubaum of CPW would like to know if any trips in the fall (Sept early) 2023 note any swarming activity. CSMG offered to monitor in the fall and throughout the year for bats as they often take cave trips there.
- **BLM Caves**
  - **La Sunder Cave** - Rob reported that there is an updated CMA, but had errors and needed approval for some simple edits. This CMA is awaiting approval and signatures. BLM has agreed to replace the old ropes in the back of the cave and would cover all costs. The updated CMA would have the back sections of the cave open for a number of trips and new access protocols detailed. Rob went over new updated access protocols. Details: 8 trips per year of 6 cavers each trip, no more than 2 trips per month and of those total trips, 4 trips to back sections of the cave. First come first serve trips among the grottos, with grottos hopefully being considerate of their trip use.
  - **Anvil Points Cave**- Garfield County expanded their landfill so the public access has changed and parking is an issue. Rob reports that CCS is working with BLM for current access details. TBD.
  - **Great Horned Owl Cave** - There have been concerns about the proximity to housing developments, the city of Gypsum and public access trails. There was a CCS Mtg Oct 2022 with BLM with Nick Viau, who is coordinating the management and monitoring of the cave. BLM agreed to provide discreet (out of sight of the entrance) signage for cave conservation, hazards in cave, and WNS bat concerns. Signage for the lower water area would warn about potential danger of further collapse. There were agreed upon triggers for changes in management status, such as increased observed human use, increase of bat use, sale of adjacent private properties, et al.
- **WNS updates** for Colorado
  - Positive Pd swab results this summer from 3 Colorado locations. Bent's Old Fort, Otero Co. and Skull Canyon, Baca Co. (*M. yumanensis*), and Gateway Natural Area, Larimer Co. (*M. lucifugus*)

- Only WNS death in bat species was in Ft. Laramie, Wyoming. Idaho has a positive Pd at a hibernaculum of *Myotis sp.*
  - 250 m radius of a positive identification triggers the FS Tier 1 to Tier 2. WRNF has been in Tier 2 since the Pd reports in Wyoming last year, however has not made any changes in cave management taking a wait and see stance. FS biologists have commented that bat to bat transmission is the most likely vector however want to prevent any undue mortality due to stress.
  - Missy Dressen is the new R2 FS Wildlife Program Leader and will coordinate the WNS response policies of forests in R2. CCS has reached out to introduce ourselves and offer assistance and maintain a good working relationship.
- **Climbers Accountability for WNS** - There was discussion of potential Pd transmission via caver/climbers and concerns of equality and accountability. Climbers on WRNF are not asked to decon gear or clothing even though they bring these gear and clothing within the entrance zones of many caves in the climbing areas.
  - **WRNF cave projects** - Rob related that WRNF has given much gratitude and accolades for cave projects on the forest this past year: Hanging Lake Source Project (CWSG, NCG, SCMG), Lime Park Prescribed Burn (CCS), Spring Cave Clean Up (TG, NCG), and Karst Mapping and Cave Identification (CSMG)
    - **Spring Cave** - Timberline Grotto had a restoration cleaning trip and inspection of the ladder (2nd) for removal or replacement and provided their report to the WRNF under the Exception permit. Jim Lawton commented that the 2nd ladder is not necessary for competent caver access. Comments were made that it would not be desirable to be gate keepers for Spring. TG pulled lots of junk and old rope out. If ladder is to be pulled, it would be hoped that it would delay any opportunistic access trash. If ladder is to be replaced, it would be safer. Chad Pedigo suggested that cleaning the junk rope might help the cave stay cleaner for longer. Rob also noted that this cave is gated but has no management plan. Repeated requests to create a management plan have been stalled by WRNF claiming lack of staff.
    - **Groaning Cave** - please submit Exception permit trip reports by Dec 15th -
    - Rob asked Chris Carter to reach out to Mary to submit the annual report by Dec 15th.
    - **Groaning Cave CMA draft** is up for review with the WRNF and CCS and cavers at large. All comments are welcome and appreciated. Changes have been made to the 1985 to reflect current conditions and protocols and to change the trip leader age requirement from 21 yr to 18 yrs of age.
    - **Fixin Cliffs and Lime Park Canyon** - Kristen Levy will be meeting with Amanda Wheelock (?) Nov 8th for further climber/caver communication and coordination. WRNF Rifle, Eagle, Blanco and Aspen/Sopris districts all have climber conflicts in cave and karst areas. Reports of illegal bolts Lime reek area caves.
    - **WRNF Cave Significance project** - notes from agenda. Cavers voiced their concerns of WRNF closing caves that are designated as significant. It was also noted that certain caves would benefit from this designation if under and threats. Much discussion here noted that it would be a delicate balancing of what caves to designate as significant. It was noted that current FS regulations already restrict digging in caves but the Significant designation could further complicate this.
    - **CCS/WRNF MOU** (background - Rob noted the current "one-way" location conversation favors WRNF and needs to change so cavers can understand how the FS uses any shared information). Ray Keeler suggested updating the MOU to align with the NSS/USFS MOU - adding a line item facilitating the two-way sharing of location and data information in return. Rob has discussed this with WRNF and they are reluctant to make changes to the current CCS/WRNF MOU 2021-26, preferring to wait for a pending national

agreement. Ray has a mtg with Lima Soto Monday noon Dec12th, 2022 and can include CCS reps in discussion.

- **Recommendations for Cave and Karst Management** - WRNF has expressed appreciation for the Recommendations as it has been helpful for those FS employees not so familiar with caves and or karst.
  - The Research section (Section 5/App. B) is currently being amended and further suggestions are welcome. Amendments are being made to align more closely with the NPS research protocols.
  - Rob suggested adding a Recommendations Section for caver recommended WNS response.
  - Outreach was made in renewing the Committee for further discussing and developing Recommendations.
  - Ray suggested using the FS known significant caves list and then classifying these caves as per the Recommendations for a substantive example for WRNF.
  - Appreciation for the FAQ document describing the the Recommendations was expressed.
- **Topics from the floor**
  - Ray submitted 9 previously closed caves in WV Monongahela NF to be open for NNS 2023 convention.
  - Ray submitted his proposal project the clean graffiti from Tongue river area caves over next Labor day, September 2023.
  - Ray described the process of graffiti removal in Ape Cave lava tubes on his recent project and their success with the equipment.
  - Rob called for any interested parties to think of elections for CCS positions in Jan. 2023
- **Next Meeting** - 3rd week of January 2023