

CCS Meeting Minutes January 26, 2023

Thursday, January, 26th 2023 7pm-10pm

Attending:

Rob McFarland (Chair), Jennifer Zedalis (Vice Chair), Paul Fowler, Kristen Levy (NCG, proxy for Jim Lawton of NCG), Christine Kirkland, Rebecca Schifanelli (CSMG), Chris Carter (CG), Kenny Headrick (CWSG), Jeff Goben (CG), Taylor Soderborg, Nicholas Deis, Angela Belic, Tristan Stahl (FRG), Paul Slayback (CSMG), Chad Pedigo (TG), Layla Borgens (SCMG), Hunter Klein, Steve Reames (TG), Carl Bern, Ben Smith, Shannon Glazer, Dan Sullivan (SCMG), David Gnuse, Gerard G., Jon Schow, Kay Cochran (CSMG), Kevin Manley (FRG), Derek Bristol, Ray Keeler.

Rob M. requested to record the meeting to help with the minutes. No objections.

Elections

- A. Current Chairs: Robert McFarland and Jennifer Zedalis
- B. Other tickets: Tristan Stahl asked to be considered for Chair position but did not have a full ticket. Tristan was universally welcomed and encouraged to learn more and stay involved with the CCS.
- C. Vote: Rob M. Chair and Jennifer Z. elected Vice-Chair unanimously.
14 yea, 0 no, 0 abstain
 - Kevin M. commented that he objected to the meeting being called with one week notice that he felt did not give fair time for a ticket to be formed. Rob responded that tickets we called for at the November 7th CCS meeting and this meeting was scheduled formally two weeks out. There were general comments to address the meeting notification time in the bylaws.

Committee Reports

- A. Deep Creek Stakeholders Group (Ken Newton, TG): Rob M. reported for Ken. No stakeholders meeting in 2022. Ken reached out to the stakeholders last summer and the work is still progressing.
- B. Clear Creek Canyon Project (Shannon Glazer, CG): Shannon reported that there is progress on the construction of the bike trail in the canyon and a possibility of a new gate for CJ's. She mentioned that Dave Steinman had possibly found a new species of springtail there and that water analysis is in progress. She also reminded everyone that Fault Cave area would be closed for raptor nesting beginning Feb. 1st. through July 31st.
- C. Mid-Continent Quarry Proposal (Rick Rhinehart, FRG): Jen Z. gave a brief update from Rick R. stating that the BLM is currently reviewing RMI's modified operations plan. BLM's release of the 2019 study of minerals/limestone purity is still awaited.
- D. Fixin' Cliff Cave & Karst Conservation (Kristen Levy, NCG): No current updates. Looking forward to March meetings and site updates.
- E. Great Horned Owl Cave (Nicholas Viau, CWSG): No Update. See November Meeting Minutes for current status.
- F. Witch's Pantry Cave (Robert McFarland, CWSG): No update. No digging or disturbance of materials within the cave is permitted.

- G. Recommendations for Cave and Karst Management (Rob M, CCS): The Recommendations draft is continuing to be improved to help guide management decisions made on public lands (ie, buffer zones to protect caves and karst areas) and to guide the development of cave management plans for caves on public lands. The CCS/WRNF MOU mandates that CCS assist with the development of these management plans. Opportunities to guide federal land management policies are beneficial for cave conservation and continued access. Improvements and edits are continuing, and volunteers are welcome to help!
- Kevin M. and Derek B. asked for clarification as they heard that Forest and Park Service personnel were displeased with the draft.
 - Rob countered that this is not the reception that we have had for the draft, but rather the WRNF Leadership has expressed gratitude and encouragement.
 - Tristan S. also said that he spoke with several people in the Park service and their “karst person” and had the impression that they did not want this.
 - Derek B. asked if the recommendations were asked for by the FS.
 - Rob M. explained that the WRNF asked for assistance in identifying cave and karst areas in order to create buffer zones for new prescribed burn/wildlife improvement projects and that these recommendations were initially formed to help address these issues. As many Forest service personal are unfamiliar with caves and karst, it was beneficial to create a recommendations guide to describe the cave and karst resources and best caving practices.
 - Jen Z. added that the Arizona grotto’s work, specifically Ray’s drafts on their recommendations for cave and karst management helped to guide the development of the WRNF draft.
 - Derek B. felt that the parts of the draft that are not about buffer zones were not requested.
 - Chad P. replied that knowing where caves are is integral to creating these buffer zones, and then when known, these must be managed in some way. He also stated the importance of building a relationship with the FS for continued access and for cavers to be seen as valued volunteers and experts in cave science.
 - Ray K. (Gov’t liaison for the NSS) related that in email conversation with Lima Soto (National cave and Karst lead), she indicated that the Washington office is letting the WRNF take the lead on how to proceed with creating cave management at the Forest level. Ray recommended that CCS set up continuing meetings with WRNF to further discuss this.
 - Rob M. explained that last year CCS decided to create a committee to create recommendations and updated cave management plans. WRNF personnel, Jared Pierce (WRNF Cave and Karst Lead) and Natasha Goedert (WRNF Wildlife Program Manager) expressed their thankfulness for our help. Rob asked if there are any specific dissatisfied people in the Forest service that we can reach out to, to please let us know.
 - Dan S. asked for clarification and specific names of who was displeased.
 - Tristan S. responded that he was speaking of Lima Soto.
 - Derek B. commented that Jared Pierce was thrust into his Forest service position unprepared and likely needed and appreciated the help.
 - Kristen L. expressed that CCS is the organization to represent Colorado cavers in these matters and that we shouldn’t go outside of the CCS to federal land managers to undermine the consensus of the group.

- Tristan S. said that he felt that the Recommendations draft was introduced as a new doctrine and that requests for volunteers to help edit are an unrealistic burden for working people.
 - Rob M. requested Ray K. to speak further with Lima Soto.
 - Ray replied that he felt Lima misunderstood and thought that the Recommendations draft was being presented as a proposed cave management plan. The draft is simply a set of guidelines with no obligation for the FS. Ray explained that the Recommendations were adapted from Region 3, where there are no cave closures, and that the wording has been adapted and is still being improved upon.
 - Tristan S. questioned why lava tubes were referenced in the draft.
 - Jen Z. explained that the reference to lava tubes was edited out after the first draft and that the current Rev. 3.4B has been available for review and improvements since Fall of 2022.
 - Ray emphasized that there have been much editing and improvements made on the current revision.
 - Hunter K. pointed out that a further meeting with Lima S. would be a good opportunity to rule out any misunderstandings.
 - Chad P. stressed the importance of the Recommendations draft in strengthening positive relationships with the FS and continued cave access, and he encouraged more caver involvement.
 - Tristan S. expressed that he felt there was nothing beneficial in the Recommendations draft and that the recommendation's cave designations were very arbitrary. He suggested that we end the efforts with this document and start anew.
 - Chad P. suggested that Tristin create a new one for review.
 - Tristan S. (FRG) made a motion to end work on the Recommendations draft.
 - Derek B. seconded the motion.
 - Kevin M. said that the motion should go under new business but since already seconded on the floor should go for a vote.
 - Vote was started and then Layla B. (SoCoMoGr) requested and made a motion to table the vote until the next meeting so as to be able to speak with her grotto further on the matter. Seconded by Rebecca S. (CSMG).
 - Chad P. supported keeping the document in progress and encouraged all to review, edit and bring constructive comments to improve the draft.
 - Kay C. stated her support and said that the Recommendations document had been created with good intentions and should not be slain.
 - Vote: Motion to Table the previous vote until the next meeting.
 - 12 yea, 0 nay, 2 Abstain (FRG reiterated a Vote to Kill, and did not enter a vote on the Motion to Table.)
 - Dan S. requested that he would like FRG to bring forth an alternative document.
 - Tristin S. stated that he likes the "permit" system (trip registration) as it currently exists for access and would not like any further cave management policy.
- H. Colorado Bat Working Group (Paul Fowler, CDS): No updates . See minutes from October 7th meeting.
- I. Colorado WNS Working Group (Paul Fowler, CDS): No update.
- J. Mountain Prairie WNS Coordination Meetings/Region 6 (Jim Lawton, NCG): Minutes from Jan. 25, 2023 meeting available. Monitoring continues and the possibility of

applied vaccine by rabies protected volunteers and other means of prevention of WNS were discussed.

- K. Western Bat Working Group (Paul Fowler, CDS): No update.

Updates on Fly and Marble Caves

- A. There was a general discussion of the proposed changes to the Trip leader requirements. Christine Kirkland asked that the CCS website page for Fly and Marble Caves be corrected to show David and Christine rather than Larry Blackwell. New trip leader requirements would be amended to include that new trip leaders must (a) have been to the caves at least once previously and (b) have been vouched for by the cave access coordinators and/or other trip leaders for competency and be familiar with the rules and regulations. Website to be updated. Motion by Rob M. to make these changes for Fly and Marble Caves, seconded by Dan S. Vote was taken and passed unanimously.
- B. Updated waiver and contact info is available on the CCS website.

Updates on BLM MOU and caves

- A. BLM/CCS MOU - BLM has stated that they would like to develop a cooperative agreement with the CCS that is separate from the current CMA's.
- B. Anvil Points Cave - Rob M. reported there is no current public access for the cave. Hunter K. suggested access from the nearby compressor station parking area, but this area Rob reported is now barred and gated and posted. Hunter offered to look into right of way access and give an update. Rob added that there are limited options available through the BLM, such as possible administrative access permits to go through the landfill gates. This would require an annual visitation report to BLM. Further ideas for access were solicited.
- C. LaSunder Cave
 - A. Rob M. reported that the LaSunder CMA Amendment has (finally!) been signed by both parties. Awaiting new/updated forms from the BLM. BLM suggested that we could make the new forms ourselves by edited the previous ones.
 - B. Rob asked if Carl B. had any of the original report forms which we could update more quickly to have them ready for the upcoming caving season. Carl had the pdf's and Kevin M. offered to update them to align with the new rules and updates for trip requirements.

WNS Updates

- A. General discussion was had on how to best clarify to the FS about caver compliance of WNS decontamination in order to prevent any future cave closures. Hunter K. reported that Lima Soto and other Park Service managers were displeased with decon stations at last years NSS Convention, specifically with the lack of cleaning supplies and hot water available. Hunter also reached out to the NSS Convention Committee for assistance and stated that NCKRI would be willing to help with this year's decon stations as well. Kevin M. asked what new requirements might there be in the WV region.
 - Ray K. added that NSS is reviewing upcoming decon stations for the convention and appreciated the offer of NCKRI's help. He offered the suggestion to have Knutt Pedersen's mobile decon station and gear set up at the NSS WV convention site to ensure that the FS would be aware of caver compliance on current decon protocols.

- Tristan S. recommended reaching out to the Indiana grottos for their experience in decon from 2007 convention.
- Hunter asked what we can do to help as Colorado cavers.
- Ray responded that a National convention is a different creature than caving locally in Region 2, so advised to keep consistently following the current decon protocol and to know the procedures when asked.
- Rob M. proposed that grottos draft correspondence to NSS Leadership regarding the development of WNS Decon procedures based on current USFWS Guidance. No correspondence was yet recommended.
- It was requested that the NSS Leadership provide clear communication about the usage of clearly defined decon procedures and the rationale for their implementation.
- Ray K. offered to keep that communication ongoing and emphasized there would be a good working decon station set up at the WV Convention.
- Rob M. suggested that all grotto reps and chairs encourage their members to not only decon properly but to know the current protocols readily if asked. This would help reassure the FS personnel that cavers are compliant and are working to help with conservation of threatened bat species.
- Ray K. mentioned that there would be a relevant WNS bat monitoring study presented at the Arizona Regional Association (ARA) Winter Technical Cave Science, Projects and Conservation Presentations National Speleological Society (NSS) January 28, 2022 – 9:00 am to 5:00 pm for all interested cavers.

Updates on WRNF caves and projects

- A. CCS will submit an annual Exception request letter to WRNF for Spring and Groaning Caves by April 30th, 2023.
- B. Rob M. reported that WRNF has repeatedly thanked CCS for their volunteer work and CSMG cavers for having contributed to the success of the Karst Mapping and Cave Identification project.
 - Concerns have been raised by several grottos and CCS members regarding the nature of this volunteer work and its effect on the ability of CCS to negotiate with the WRNF.
 - Since WRNF clearly regards CSMG members as participating in conjunction with CCS, CSMG should provide regular reports to CCS on their activities with WRNF.
- C. WRNF continues to pursue Significant Cave Designations. However there is currently no agreement in place between CCS and WRNF to share location information. CCS has participated in very limited, documented, projects which have involved cave locations, recommending that all cave information and location be kept out of any public reports.
 - WRNF has not commented on their management plans or future access to designated caves. The current chairs are unwilling to discuss any cave designations until these plans are revealed. As karst mapping and cave identification projects continue, this becomes more of a concern.
 - Currently, WRNF is publishing public relations articles on the internet on the success of these projects. Articles found contain general location information and photos of cave entrances, however, lack any information about the current R2 Cave Closure Order or WNS concerns, including decon protocols.
 - A. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/natural-resources/geology/caveskarst/beneath-the-forest/20220715>

- D. Rob M. stated the concerns above and added that CSMG cavers volunteering with the WRNF project described above have been perceived as representing CCS and therefore are making the efforts to work with the FS much more difficult.
- Paul S. and Hunter K. explained that their volunteering was an opportunity for younger cavers to discover new caves and did not intend to be representing CCS, only as individuals and CSMG members.
 - Kristen L. and Rob M. expressed concerns over CSMG being misinterpreted as CCS volunteers and requested that they share the scope of their work so that the CCS could be better informed in negotiations with the FS.
 - Paul S. stated that he shouldn't be required to share information, and that they are under agreement with the FS to not share LiDAR data.
 - Rob and Kristen confirmed that there is no requirement, only a request to share any information they are comfortable with so that CCS may work better with the FS.
 - Hunter K. and Paul S. offered to give a separate presentation of their work in a neutral environment such as a grotto virtual meeting (see below) and requested that any CCS concerns be made specific in writing.
 - Derek B. expressed that CCS should be supporting this type of volunteering.
 - Kay C. said that her grotto would also like to hear reports of their efforts and expressed concerns on how quickly caves can be damaged as information may accidentally be made public.
 - Kevin M. stated his thanks and emphasized that cavers are under no obligation to share information unless they are representing the CCS.
 - Hunter K. and Paul S. explained that they were not intending to represent the CCS and are happy to share emails with Erin Dundas (WRNF, Cave and Karst Resource Technician, term 2022) and Marjorie Jerez (WRNF, Renewable Resources GIS Specialist) showing this.
 - Rob M. explained that whereas that might be true, the upper levels of WRNF management, with which the CCS works, have perceived their work as CCS involvement.
 - Derek B. suggested that this is an opportunity to work with the FS and develop some sort of management plan for establishing buffer zones and mitigating any possible future damage and stated that the CCS had not done any work in that regard.
 - Jen Z. stated that this is exactly the kind of work the Recommendations draft is meant to cover and welcomed more involvement.
 - Tristan S. expressed confusion over the fact that CCS is not like other state's cave surveys and there should be some parameters for sharing information.
 - Paul S, Hunter K. and Rebecca S. all clarified that they cannot share LiDAR data and don't have ownership of the maps and trip reports but suggested asking the FS for that info.
 - Rob M. explained that the concern is not about sharing specific info, but to have clarification of the general work CSMG is doing so as to assist with CCS's interactions with the FS. He encouraged CSMG to think of what happens to the cave data after it is collected and stressed that there has been accidental public postings of cave locations in the past such as Facebook postings during recent fires.
 - Hunter stated that he was confident and happy with the work CCS is currently doing with the Recommendations draft to deal with these very issues.
- E. Groaning Cave visitation report was submitted to WRNF on December 16th, 2022. Thank you, Chris C. and Mary K.

- F. Groaning cave - updated CMA draft is still awaiting feedback from FS.
- G. WRNF was slated to hold a meeting in January to discuss the impacts of climbing activity in caving areas. CCS was not invited and the agenda is unknown. No new information on this topic.

Topics from the Floor

- A. Rob M. proposed changing the CCS bylaw: 30 day notice for a meeting. General discussion from many cavers requested that the 30 day notice be maintained as it is helpful for scheduling. Left as such.
- B. Discussion for reviewing remaining bylaws is set for a special meeting by end of March.
- C. CCS Google Group maintenance - Rob M. asked who controls the Google Group for CCS. As a Manager, Rob is able to add interested people to the group upon request. Tristan S. requested to be added.

CCS Goals for Next Meeting(s)

- A. Late March: Constitution and Bylaws edits special meeting TBD
- B. Early/Mid May: Full CCS Meeting TBD

Meeting adjourned at 9:54pm

Colorado Cave Survey Representatives, 2023

Survey Chair: Rob McFarland (robmcfarland@me.com)
Survey Vice-Chair: Jennifer Zedalis (jenzedalis@gmail.com)

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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.

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