

CCS Fall Meeting Minutes - 11/04/2025

CCS Meeting via Virtual Google Meet, began at 6:02pm, November 4 with request to record video/transcript for minutes, adjourned at 8:03pm

Attendees

Alec Matheus, Beth Caughran, Bill Duncan, chris carter, Christine Kirkland , Rob McFarland, Donald Davis, Duncan Byrne, Eoghan Conlon O'Neill, Jeff Goben, Jennifer Zedalis, Jesse Rochette, Jim Lawton , Jim McCarty, Ken Headrick, Kevin Manley, Kristen Levy, LP Sullivan, Dan Sullivan, Paul Fowler, Paul Slayback, Troy Fisher

Updates on USFS caves and projects

CCS/WRNF Coordination Calls

- Jen Z. reported that the BLM and CCS/WRNF fall meetings delayed due to the government shutdown.

WRNF Exception Permits - Groaning and Spring Caves 2025

- WRNF granted the 2025 Exception permit on Aug 20, 2025, later than the agreed July 31st date. Exception trip reports and bat observations will be submitted to WRNF by December 31st, 2025.

Fixin' Cliff, Lime Creek, and Hadley Point Conservation Issues

- Kristen Levy (NCG) reported that Jeff Bosboom, the liaison for the Deep Creek Climbing Coalition (DCCC), had previously removed 2 routes and one near Curtain Cave this summer. Jeff B. shared that the Access Fund may have federal funds (approx \$3500) to assist in the removal of the remaining 14 routes and they are hoping to remove these over four days in summer 2026. Kristen L. also noted that the area is seeing less impact and increased site restoration.

Groaning Cave

- Jen Z. related that the Groaning culvert replacement project was completed over two weekends this June, funded by WRNF and manufactured by IronFly in Denver. Many amazing volunteers from all grottos assisted with the installation, and the WRNF/CG SPA allowed for reimbursement for limited installation expenses and a thank you dinner. Paul S. handled the reimbursement paperwork- thank you!
- A new combo lock changeout location was installed on Steve and Marty Reames's property up Coffeepot road in June for lock changeouts. Rob M. reported that trip leaders who needed to change the combo locks took the locks to Charles Zelenka's house in No Name where he would do maintenance on them. Suggestions to purchase a third lock in case of malfunction for the lock rotation were offered by Kevin M.. Jen Z. said she would communicate with the Groaning combo coordinators for further improvements.

Spring Cave

- Ken Newton (TG) led and organized the project to remove the rusted second ladder from the cave and install a new three section aluminum ladder, bolted in place. This project took place over 3 weekends in September and October, with 17 cavers from several

Colorado Grottos participating. The installation was a one day project with the other days being the preparation, equipment hauling, clean up and removal of materials and tools. Alex Lyles (WRNF) provided support with the installation and limited volunteer expense reimbursement.

- Bill Duncan (TG) and Ken Newton(TG) removed and erased/restored two of the illegally bolted climbing routes (approximately 12 bolts) in the Spring cave entrance. Plans are to continue this effort next season under another volunteer agreement with WRNF. The old ladder was left at the entrance to help with future bolt removal, but an extension ladder brought in would be a safer option. Volunteers are welcome to help out next season with fun and challenging rope work.
- Bill D. and Rob M. and others discussed ideas for epoxy coated hardware or 304/316 stainless fasteners to prevent electrolysis and galvanic corrosion of the new ladder. Recommendations were to monitor the existing fasteners.

Boom & Boom Boom Gravel Pits - no further update.

- WRNF intends to re-activate two gravel quarries along FSR 600, Coffee Pot Rd for road maintenance in 2026 and this project is undergoing the NEPA process of review.

Sweetwater Cave - no further update.

- Access to the cave by NSS Members is permissible under the closure order via an exception permit. WRNF is working on a special management plan for this area including Sweetwater Indian Cave and intends to gate the cave. Scientific studies, historical studies, and limited rec trips which involve no photos of the pictographs may be allowed.

Significant Cave Database

- WRNF(Alex L.) had intended that around 15 caves be nominated for Significant Cave status by the end of January 2025, but this has been delayed.

WRNF Cave Closures and R2 Response to WNS positive in Colorado

- WRNF Cave closure order update - the cave closure order is renewing as the same with the following exceptions:
 - Powerline Cave is still closed for the swarming season. Wednesday Afternoon Cave now has its closure date Aug 15th for swarming.
 - Bat monitoring at Premonition Cave was not conducted in 2025. WRNF would like to access through private land access from the east during the 2026 season.
 - Bat swarming surveys of Eagles Nest and Charlotte's were accomplished by WRNF in fall of 2025.
- WRNF stated that Tier 1 closures will remain in effect with the updated cave closure order and with no plans to move to Tier 2. Plans to ramp up biological surveys over the coming years to collect accurate baseline data for if/when WNS reaches the forest and to see the effects on bat populations. Current plans are to maintain the ongoing closure order, i.e. requiring permits to access caves on the closure list.

Karst LiDAR Mapping Project

WRNF(Alex L.) has been working with the CSMG and Colorado Grotto since 2024 under the Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA) to locate, document and protect caves in the Forest. Protection would be by nominating caves as Significant with no known FS cave management plan as of yet.

- **Holey-lujah Cave** - WRNF has a Challenge Cost Share agreement with Randy Irmis at the Utah Natural History Museum to do a paleontological survey of the bones for paleoclimate data. WRNF plans on gating the two entrances to protect the cave, with the gating and survey beginning in 2026 at the earliest. The CCS requested continued access for science and recreation in the long term.

WRNF/CG SPA

The WRNF joined with Colorado Grotto (CG) and Colorado School of Mines Grotto (CSMG) in a Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA) for a joint cave and karst survey and LiDAR verification work on the WRNF through 12/2028.

- Paul S. and Duncan B. reported that 2026 SPA will continue the LiDAR ground truthing and survey of newly discovered caves on WRNF and further Groaning cave survey projects. Paul S. is the current SPA coordinator and is open for volunteers and new projects, with prioritization of CG projects.

BLM Caves

LaSunder Cave - Stuart Marlatt(CG):

- Stuart M. reported four trips this year - one Admin trip in April (3 ppl), a Timberline trip in June (6 ppl), FRG trip in August (6 ppl), and a WSG trip in October (4 ppl). All except the Timberline trip went to the back section as well as the front.
- The Admin. trip noted the rope being swollen by moisture and was difficult with certain devices on rappel. Later trips also noted this difficulty with the rope. The Timberline trip noted the lock was a little sticky and should be lubricated. The FRG trip noted that the rope pad is showing wear and should be replaced. Suggestions were made to address these issues on a 2026 work trip, with possible rope replacement and /or bolting a reelay to keep the rope away from the abrasion points.
- Stuart M. has begun photo monitoring to help document any changes or impacts to the cave. Ideas for alternatives to flagging tape used as trail markers are sought. Some ideas discussed were galvanized or stainless markers with reflective paint at the top and/or PVC tubes with reflective paint, and lengths of lightweight aluminum chain for areas needing longer trail marking. Further ideas and volunteers are welcome.
- Site administrative visit (without BLM Rec Planner, Alan C.), was taken on April 26th 2025 to photo-document changes or damages and to have a baseline for any future changes. Notes from Carl Bern's 11/2005 baseline impact survey were used for comparison. Stuart has this impact survey included with the biannual report for early next year and can refine the impact database in future years.

Twenty Pound Tick Cave -no further updates.

- CCS continues to advocate for future access for further scientific studies of the geology, hydrology, and also offered assistance with any future maintenance and management.

Witch's Pantry Cave - no further updates

Great Horned Owl Cave - no further updates

Anvil Points Cave

- Rob M. shared that the current access protocol is to contact BLM recreation planners (Alan C.) to access the cave through the Garfield County dump scales area during

landfill limited open hours (closed Sundays). Trips also need to be out before closing hours.

MOU with BLM- no further updates

- BLM had requested creating a more binding agreement to replace the existing MOU, which was originally part of the LaSunder Agreement - pending fall meeting.

Private Caves

Fly and Marble Caves

Christine Kirkland (SCMG) & Talmage Trujillo(SCMG):

- Christine K. reports new trip leaders for Fly and Marble caves: Jesse Rochette, Beth Caughran, and Joe Bartusek. Christine K. and LP Sullivan made a trip to Fly Cave to refresh the PVC register, and Dan and LP donated a hacksaw and dry book for the register, relocated to a dry area down about 50-75' and to the right before the squeeze. Christine suggested donating the old metal NSS plaque in the cave to the NSS headquarters in Huntsville for its historic value.

Active Committee Reports

Deep Creek Stakeholders Group - no further updates- Ken Newton (TG)

Mid-Continent Quarry Proposal - Rick Rhinehart (FRG): Mid-Continent Quarry at Glenwood Springs.

- No updates recently regarding the quarry

Clear Creek Canyon Project - Shannon Glazer (CG)

- The Sea to Summit bike trail project is underway along Rt 6 west of Golden. Construction is set to start this month on a new door for CJs, consisting of a very strong steel door with a small antechamber outside it to serve as airlock. The lock for the main door is at the end of a tube (like in Williams Canyon style gates). The funds for this come from the Sea to Summit project.

Bat Working Groups

Colorado Bat Working Group (CBWG)

Paul Fowler (CDS):

- Paul F. reports that there are 40 states with positive WNS tests. There's been good results in lab tests with vaccines and with certain fungicides, and the USGS is scaling up to produce more vaccines. The challenge is still to test effective field methods to deliver vaccines and/or fungicides. The challenges may be even bigger here in the Rocky Mountains, where many of the bats roost in dispersed trees, talus slopes, and rock crevices, rather than massed together in mines, caves, or buildings. Colorado currently has 9 counties with positive WNS tests: Boulder, Douglas, El Paso, Grand, Jefferson, Larimer, Otero, Teller, and Weld. An additional 5 counties have positive Pd results: Baca, Jackson, Montezuma, Pueblo, and Routt. Species affected by WNS here include big brown bat, little brown myotis, fringed myotis, Yuma myotis, long-legged myotis, and Western long-eared myotis. Mexican free-tailed bats have also been found that tested Pd+. Pallid bats may be impacted now also, but the tests so far have been inconclusive.

- Paul F. also noted that the national listing of tricolor bats as an endangered species is still on hold. Tricolors had previously been identified from guano and from acoustic monitoring in Colorado, but at this meeting CDOT told us that they had identified a road structure that was being used as a regular daily roost by tricolors, and they had been able for the first time to physically capture one and make the positive identification in the field. CDOT also said they have identified a previously unknown large colony site of Mexican Free-tailed bats in one of their bridges or culverts, confirmed by CPW.

Mountain Prairie WNS Coordination Meeting

Jim Lawton (NCG): Oct 15th meeting delayed due to government shutdown.

Western Bat Working Group

Paul Fowler (CDS):

- Discussions were had on accuracy of acoustic bat monitoring software, some being more accurate and some having more false positives for species identification.
- Pd detected in Lincoln County, west of the Continental Divide in Montana in one of our largest known maternity roosts for *Myotis yumanensis*/*Myotis lucifugus*. Bats looked healthy other than dehydration. Bat submissions in Colorado (Dan Neubaum CPW) did detect Pd in new locations.
- A PBS Nature Documentary was released highlighting WNS bat vaccine work: [youtube.com/watch?v=GNPeHhpBAnE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNPeHhpBAnE)

New Topics

Proposed Colorado hosting of National Cave & Karst Management Symposium 2027

- The National Cave & Karst Management Symposium (NCKMS) is the preeminent forum meeting biennially to discuss a broad range of cave and karst management issues. New techniques are discussed, issues addressed, solutions developed and effective working relationships formed to help protect and conserve caves, karst, cave ecosystems and water resources. Mike and Donna Frazier (SoCoMoGro) attended the 2025 NCKMS event, where there were many cave scientists presenting and cave managers attending. Attendees included park service employees, private contractors such as Cave Gators, private landowners, cave mappers, etc. Mike and Donna were asked if the Colorado Grottos would be interested in hosting the 2027 event. Possible locations would include the CMC campus in Rifle. NCKMS symposium would begin on a Monday night and wrap up on Friday afternoon and is budgeted to be self-financing, so the host group only needs to commit volunteers' time. Sourcing sponsorship funding is encouraged. Organizational guidelines give an outline of the responsibilities of the organizers, as well as the expectations and scope of the event, found at NCKMS.org, and many Colorado volunteers would be needed and coordination required via a volunteer chairperson. CCS representatives were requested to discuss this proposal at their next grotto meeting and provide feedback on interest and possible volunteers.

Proposed hosting for digital cave publications

- Rick Rhinehart (FRG - not present) previously approached the CCS with a proposal that the CCS might host a digital collection which he has been scanning from older grotto cave publications for a historical archive. Discussion was had as to whether an amendment to the CCS Bylaws and Constitution should be made to create a newly elected position of CCS Librarian to manage and coordinate sharing of these files within the framework of the existing Confidentiality agreement. Discussion was also made on the importance of digital confidentiality and copyright violation issues. The CCS representatives were requested to discuss this proposal at their next grotto meetings and provide feedback.

CCS Elections - Call for nominations for 2026 Chair/Vice Chair tickets.

- Note to all grottos with January elections: please email with newly updated CCS reps if applicable so we can update the website! Thank you!