

CCS Meeting Minutes & Summary July 28, 2026

Call to Order & Welcome

- **Chair Update:** Jesse Rochette opened the meeting, welcoming participants and thanking Jennifer Zedalis for handing off leadership responsibilities. Members were requested to represent their grotto's perspectives on agenda items.

Recognitions & Awards

- **Paul Slayback:** Received the **NSS Alvin McDonald Award**, honoring outstanding achievements in young cave explorers.
- **Layla Borgens (Nurse Layla):** Awarded the **NSS Cave Restoration and Formation Repair Colorado Project** lead role under Michael Mansur. She recognized several contributors (Dan Sullivan, LP Sullivan, Patricia Malone, Joe Bartusek, Thomas Dawson) and encouraged participation in upcoming restoration efforts.

Committee Reports

- **CCS Bylaws Committee:**
 - Paul Fowler reported steady progress. Within approximately one month, the drafted changes will be sent to board members (grotto representatives and chairs) for review and feedback.
 - A two-thirds vote by member grottos will be required for final approval, targeted for Fall 2026.
 - **Leadership Engagement & Restoration:** Chad Pedigo proposed encouraging grotto representatives to attend at least one of two annual caving restoration trips (such as the spring Fulford cleanup) to build agency relationships and foster future leadership. It was agreed that this belongs under CCS operational guidelines rather than formal bylaws.
- **CCS Digital Library Committee:**
 - Discussion focused on whether to discontinue efforts toward creating a centralized digital library database due to the difficulty in finding a dedicated librarian.
 - Grottos will be given **one month** to determine if any volunteer is interested in taking on the digital librarian role. If no candidate steps forward, the digital project will be officially tabled/discontinued.
 - Physical document preservation and file access rules will remain fully active as outlined in the bylaws.

Agency & Project Updates (US Forest Service & Public Lands)

- **General Relations:** Meetings with Alex Lyles (USFS) remain highly positive, with strong appreciation for CCS's conservation and volunteer contributions.
- **Exemption Permits:** The 2026 exemption permit request for Spring and Groaning caves was submitted in March and is currently in the final queue for approval.
- **USFS Bolting Policy (2025 Explore Act):**
 - Policy changes affect fixed anchors/wilderness bolting practices. While not directly impacting current operations, USFS advises that CCS maintain flawless, safety-oriented bolting practices using proper stainless steel hardware.
 - CCS will consider drafting an official position statement/comment when public commentary reopens.
- **Site Conservation & Access (Fixin Cliff / Lime Creek / Sheep Herder Road):**
 - High emphasis was placed on respecting closed roads and fragile ecosystems. Cavers must not drive down the old Fixin track/sheep herder roads.
 - USFS will restore broken signage in the area.
 - Kristen Levy, Bill D, and others discussed plans to coordinate with the Forest Service (Mike Beach) regarding the removal/obsolescence of designated climbing routes located inside cave entrances or buffer areas.
- **Premonition Cave:**
 - Premonition Cave remains closed to standard recreational caving.
 - Moving forward, trips may be coordinated under scientific/exemption permits to conduct bat surveys, ecosystem documentation, and cave assessments in partnership with bat biologists (e.g., Joe Lamb).

Next Steps & Action Items

1. **Bylaws:** Draft revisions to be distributed to grotto chairs/ reps within a month for review prior to a fall vote.
2. **Digital Library:** Grotto reps to poll members over the next month for a volunteer lead; if none, the digital library effort will be formally tabled.
3. **Fixin Cliff Bolt Removal:** Coordinate explicit written permission with USFS (Mike Beach) before sending removal teams.
4. **Premonition Surveys:** Structure future visits purely as scientific/documentation trips under the exemption framework.