



A Division of the National Speleological Society



August 14, 2013

CCMS Retired

Dear NSS Members:

The Cave Conservation and Management Section of the National Speleological Society is no more. On 6 August 2013 at the NSS Convention in Shippensburg, PA, the section members voted unanimously to dissolve the section and elected me to serve as the final section chairman. The section directed me to close all section affairs as appropriate and reassign all the functions of the section at my discretion. At the meeting, I described what the main parts of my dissolution plan would be, should the section decide to disband and ask me to manage the shutdown of the section.

The conservation function was the only significant area in the NSS that had both a committee and a section, and as result, it was not always clear which group should do what. This structure also diluted the pool of available leaders. The NSS has a Conservation Division and a Cave Management Division, both of which are in the Department of the Administrative Vice President. The Conservation Committee is one of many committees in the Conservation Division.

In recent years the section was beginning to show signs of dysfunction. For example, the section newsletter, The Cave Conservationist, had not been published since November 2011. Dues were only collected sporadically, meeting minutes disappeared, and a new conservation awards chair was not appointed to replace me after my resignation last year.

Duplication of functions may have contributed to the problem. As the number of available people from which to draw leaders became smaller; more people chose to work in the conservation division rather than the section. The new plan will consolidate functions and end duplication. The conservation session at the NSS convention has been reassigned to the Conservation Committee. In the past, the committee often organized the sessions at the convention. The two websites will be combined into one under the Conservation Division. The printed newsletter will end publication and news articles will be available on either the website or on internet social media such as Facebook. Conservation issues can be discussed on Cavechat, Online Cavers, or other such forums. Conservation advocacy, a role that was filled by the section, is now more efficiently done using various electronic communication methods.

The Group and Grotto Conservation Awards will be handled by the Conservation Committee. Due to the ongoing work of the committee with various organizations, the committee chairs are knowledgeable of most of the conservation activities throughout the country and can be proactive in nominating groups for these awards. The section award committee was reactive in granting awards as it relied on third party nominations to select award recipients. The section recommends that the group and grotto conservation awards continue to be presented at the NSS convention closing banquet. The only change will be that on the certificate, the Section part of the name will be dropped, leaving just the words National Speleological Society on the presenter line.

After all of the section's financial obligations are met, the remaining funds will go to the Save the Caves fund. This balance will not be a large amount. The section's seal was given to Dave Luckins to place in the archives. John Hoffelt has the award plaques which will soon be on permanent display at the new NSS office, \$125 will be provided to Val Hildreth-Werker for Kathy Lavoie, the new Group and Grotto Awards Subcommittee Chair, to have plaques made for the two new conservation awards, and \$25 for the gold seal notary type embosser.

I anticipate that this dissolution process will be complete by the end of this year. After that time all section conservation activities will be under the Conservation Division with Jim Werker and Val Hildreth-Werker, Co-Chairs, werks@zianet.com. The Cave Conservation and Management Section is the eighth NSS section chartered and at least the third to disband.

John M. Wilson