



Many, if not most, caves are formed by water, yet there seems to be a division between those cavers for whom the cave ends at the water and those for whom it starts. Cave divers in the NSS Cave Diving Section (CDS) form a large proportion (around 10%) of the NSS membership, but there appears to be a disconnect between them and the rest of the NSS. Many cave divers have little or no interest or knowledge of regular caving. Some CDS members do not even want to be members of the NSS.

Professionally I am a physician, an anesthesiologist, and an associate professor at the University of Florida in Gainesville. I serve as the Director of Congenital Cardiac Anesthesia in the Congenital Heart Center at University of Florida Health, which involves managing a team of highly skilled doctors caring for some of the most complex and challenging patients in a referral area that covers much of the southeastern USA.

I have been caving and cave diving for nearly three decades and have contributed to the exploration of many underwater caves domestically and abroad, including the two deepest water-filled caves in the USA: Phantom Spring in Texas and Weeki Wachee Spring in Florida. I am a director of Karst Underwater Research, a non-profit that has conducted underwater cave exploration, mapping, sampling, and other science for nearly 25 years. With over 50 individuals directly involved, we resemble a grotto of cave divers of all levels of ability, and we are the most active underwater cave exploration group in the country. We have been granted permits to dive in caves on properties owned or managed by the Florida State Parks Service, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida State Forests and many private landowners. Our belief is that documentation and raising public awareness of underwater caves is the best way to preserve them and the groundwater that flows through them.

I am running for the NSS Board of Governors, and the Cave Diving Section Board of Directors, to fulfill one primary function: to bridge the divide between 'dry' cavers and cave divers. Each group has so much that they can offer the other. Better collaboration in exploration, conservation and access to caves, above and below the water surface, can be nothing but beneficial to all NSS members. The fundamental purpose of the NSS is to connect cavers together, and my goal is to bring greater cohesion and understanding between all cavers, whether they are caving while submerged or not, and if elected I promise to do so with integrity and humility.