



Cavers found me four years ago, with my college friends at an event in the desert for exploring abandoned mines. These SoCal Grotto folks asked if we'd heard of caving and patiently explained the spelunking vs. caving nuances. They spent evenings teaching us vertical skills and kept inviting us on caving trips until we felt confident enough to actually take them up on it. My personal background informs my thoughts here, but above all I want to represent YOU at the national level. My experiences being a member of multiple grottos and caving in multiple states, and my leadership as the Chair of the San Francisco Bay Chapter (SFBC), have shown me that there is no one right way to cave, but that we all care about caving and, most of all, each other. The challenges of caving in California are not the same as elsewhere -- heck, they're not even the same in different parts of the state -- and, as national directors, we must listen to and learn from members from all over.

I am running to help make the NSS a truly 21st-century organization. What does that mean? First, we must embrace technology that allows us to spread our appreciation for caves and karst, and that allows us to further cave science and conservation. Second, we must strive to serve 21st century Americans, and make sure all people have excellent experiences caving. Doing both allows us to meet cavers where they are along their caving journey and support their growth in a sustainable way.

We are already along the right path in terms of leveraging technology with the website redesign. Attendance at the Topics in Cave Rescue series and NCRC waitlist lengths make it clear that cavers are eager to learn, and the NSS's online archives, ACA reports, and committed community are eager to teach. Cavers can't cave without access to caves, so the NSS should maintain a registry of caves with steward contact info, trip reports, maps, survey data, etc. Centralizing this information will aid in research, conservation, and safety efforts. As a director, I will use my software engineering skills to support the NSS's digital presence through the pandemic and beyond.

To attract and retain cavers, the NSS must reflect the needs of a changing society, and diversity, equity, and inclusion must be central to our approaches to doing so. As a director, I intend to provide more opportunities to learn and share best practices, especially for allies and grotto leaders wishing to design for inclusivity. We need to listen to our existing minority cavers about what most impacts their caving experiences, and effect change to provide a great experience for all. This is how we have always shown respect for our fellow cavers, and it is how the NSS will sustain itself long into the 22nd century.

We need to meet potential new cavers where they are. I know cavers who got started in urban exploration, climbing, and hiking. There are many canyoneer-cavers in Southern California precisely because cavers there have reached out to that adjacent community. The NSS has experienced a decline in membership, but there isn't a dearth of aspiring cavers -- in fact, most spelunkers are just cavers who haven't found organized caving -- and, as a director, I will work with adjacent organizations to provide more first-caving experiences and find such cavers.

It is so crucial that we also provide avenues for growth within the NSS; if we don't, interested cavers will still cave without access to best practices and crucial safety, and others may become disillusioned and degrade the important partnerships the NSS has as a cave advocacy group. Navigating the expectations of the caving world is also daunting, so as a director, I plan to create a mentorship program. Every new caver should have access to someone who can interpret caving etiquette and politics, so that they can focus on building their skills. As they become an experienced caver in their

own right, they can share their knowledge with the next cohort of cavers. And, they can give back by leading the NSS.

Reach out anytime -- I would love to hear your thoughts.