

WESTERN REGION OF THE NSS

Meeting of March 21, 2009

Speleo-Ed 2009. Rainbow Basin, Barstow, CA

MINUTES

Call to Order

At 7:45 pm, Frank McDonough, Chairman of the Western Region of the NSS called the meeting to order.

Presentation of the New Board Members

The new executive board for the Western Region of the NSS was introduced, being this the first official event presided by it:

Frank McDonough – Chairman.

Jonah Schachner – Vice-chairman. Not present in the meeting, Matt Bowers was his proxy.

Fofo González – Secretary-Treasurer.

Elaine Garvey – Editor of the California Caver.

Each member of the board gave a brief presentation about themselves and their goals as officers of the Western Region of the NSS.

Roll Call

Grotto	Alloted votes	Members present at meeting	Effective votes for meeting
Columbia Grotto – Doesn't exist	any	more	-
Desert Dog Troglodytes	2	Absent	0
Diablo Grotto	3	7	3
Mother Lode Grotto	3	4	3
San Diego Grotto	3	4	3
San Francisco Bay Chapter NSS	3	9	3
San Joaquin Valley Grotto	2	6	2
Shascade Caving Society	2	Absent	0
Shasta Area Grotto	3	2	3
Southern California Grotto	3	6	3
Southern Nevada Grotto	3	Absent	0
Stanislaus Speleological Society	2	8	2

Willamette Valley Grotto	3	Absent	0
Frank McDonough, Chair	1	Present	1
Jonah Schachner, Vice-Chair	1	By proxy	1
Fofu Gonzalez, Secretary-Treasurer	1	Present	1
Elaine Garvey, <i>Cal Caver</i> Editor	1	Present	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>36</i>		<i>26</i>

Quorum met, with 26 out of 36 votes

Approval of Minutes

Fofu González, Secretary-Treasurer of the Western Region of the NSS made available copies of the previous minutes in case anyone wanted to review them. The reading of the minutes was waived and they were approved by acclaim.

Financial Report

The financial report is not ready yet. One of the bank accounts has not been transferred to the current Secretary-Treasurer. As soon as the transfer is finalized the information will be made available to any interested members of the Western Region of the NSS.

Membership

The membership list is not up to date with the current members. It is estimated at 250, but the official count will happen once the membership database is in the hands of the new Secretary-Treasurer, and the numbers will be made public by sending e-mail notes to each Grotto.

Grotto Reports

Desert Dog Troglodytes
(Absent)

Diablo Grotto

Peri Frantz mentioned that the Diablo Grotto is working on vertical training and vertical caving, but they don't get involved in a lot of speleopolitics.

Mother Lode Grotto

Marianne Russo mentioned that they are doing some cave trips, but the important aspect of this is that they are trying to formalize cave training. They are getting new people together at someone's house, and having brief talks about safety, conservation, and other important topics for caving, and when they go to a cave, they have another quick talk about any of these aspects right before going in.

San Diego Grotto

The Chairman of the San Diego Grotto asked how many of the present cavers have been through Thunder Canyon Cave. He asked if people knew about the wooden board in Thunder Canyon Cave [for the safety of the cavers going through the cave, some time ago a board was placed in what was considered a dangerous spot, which had seen accidents happen, but recently the presence of the board has become an issue and there are factions who want to take it out and others want to leave it in]. Jim said that the official position of the Grotto is that they can't prevent anyone from taking the board out or they can't prevent anyone else from putting a new one in. And, in another topic, they are still conducting vertical trainings.

San Francisco Bay Chapter of the NSS

Peri Frantz said that the SFBC has been doing a monthly vertical practice at the Frantz's Manor. It has been very popular and well attended. There has also been a good influx of new people into the Grotto. After being asked how are these new members found, she replied that almost always they find the Grotto through a web search.

San Joaquin Valley Grotto

Peri Frantz commented that the SJVG has been doing a lot of practices and caving trips. Angela Westlake talked about their involvement in the Grotto, they have been with it for about 8 months. They are planning on going to Soldier's Cave. Unfortunately the Chairman of the Grotto has a sever back injury, so he is not caving actively for the time being. They are getting ready to host the regional in September and otherwise they do a lot of practices, roughly once or twice a month they have a vertical ropework one.

Shascade Caving Society
(Absent)

Shasta Area Grotto

Bruce Rogers pointed out that they keep an informal list of caves that's now 670 caves long. They are doing a lot of caving. They don't hold that many official vertical practices, but instead of that, usually on Saturdays people go vertical caving, and that covers the need for having vertical practices.

Southern California Grotto

Scott Schmitt stated that they are planning on going to Providence Mountain Cave. They went to Bakersfield and caves in that area. They are working on Millers and Larks Cave. They are also holding vertical practices, not as often as other groups, but they are caving intensely. They have at least a monthly trip.

Southern Nevada Grotto
(Absent)

Stanislaus Speleological Society

Ron Davis reported that the SSS is on the rise. They had a caving trip with 15 people. They have 10 new members. They are continuing with their digging project in California Caverns, with 500 ft of new

passage. They have a new newsletter and have a vertical practice every three years or so. And they put together this year's Speleo-Ed.

Willamette Valley Grotto
(Absent)

Peri Frantz also observed that the SFBC, Diablo and Mother Lode Grottos are caving together quite often lately. There have been several caving trips with cavers from multiple Grottos, so there is a high level of cooperation and friendship in the Western Region of the NSS.

Old Business

There was no discussion of old business.

New Business

NCRC Seminar

Marianne Russo mentioned that the last week-long seminar had been canceled because of a lack of participants. At the previous Western Region meeting it was discussed that a full week was too long for most possible interested parties, so on May 16, at Rippled Cave, the NCRC will hold a one-day seminar on knots, anchors and rigging. It will be a test to see how this format works out and then perhaps bring this seminar to other locations at Grotto's requests.

Liaison for the Death Valley National Park Titus Canyon Cave Trustee Project

The Stanislaus Speleological Society proposed Roger and Caroline Brown as the sole liaisons between the Western Region and the National Park regarding the Titus Canyon Cave Trustee Project.

The San Francisco Bay Chapter of the NSS seconded the motion.

Discussion: Matt Bowers, speaking for the Stanislaus SS, mentioned that it will be beneficial to cavers if Roger and Caroline Brown are the only point of contact with the Park Service regarding the Titus Canyon Cave Trustee Project. They are not park service employees, so there would be no conflict of interests. And it would be only two persons speaking for the whole region, instead of having all the Grottos contacting the park, consequently avoiding overwhelming the park service with input from several sources, which can be disorganized and even conflicting.

Carol Vesely questioned the need of a liaison and the problem of non-grotto cavers or non-western region members not being fairly represented by this.

Clarification of motion: The Stanislaus Speleological Society moved for the Western Region to appoint Roger and Caroline Brown as the the liaisons between the Western Region and the Park Service regarding the Titus Canyon Cave Trustee Project. The Western Region of the NSS accepted and motioned, the San Francisco Bay Chapter of the NSS seconded the motion. The motion was approved, with 25 votes in favor and 1 against.

Wilderness First Aid

In September of 2007 the Western Region organized a Wilderness First Aid course, contracting NOLS - WMI for teaching it. However, the certification lasts two years, so the persons who took it will find themselves out of certification in September of 2009. It would be a good idea to have this seminar again this year, to get more people certified and to re-certify the ones who took it in 2007. Bill Frantz talked about his experience with his accident and how the wilderness first aid course was essential for helping him in the small-party rescue. The Western Region will look into organizing it, Mark Scott was designated as an organizer, it will be sometime in October, for two full days, in Sequoia National Park.

NSS Board of Governors Report

Peri Frantz asked for specific topics of interest for the people present in the meeting, regarding the activities of the NSS, and the requests were: white-nose syndrome, International Congress of Speleology and the new location for the NSS headquarters.

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS): Bill Liebman gave a report on White Nose Syndrome, with a brief description of the syndrome, when and how it was identified, what some of the current theories about its causes are, and current geographical extent, as well as what is currently being done, for example establishing decontamination procedures for before and after visiting caves at risk. He mentioned that there have been cave closures and there will be more. Even though cavers in California may feel that locals caves are far away and relatively protected from WNS, Californian bats are not immune to WNS, and the caves in the state have very similar conditions to caves where the problem has been noted, so there is a risk. Bill noted that cavers are not the only persons going into caves, there are plenty of other groups that go go into them and are not reached by the NSS (boy scouts, outdoor clubs, etc) and it is imperative that these groups are made aware of the urgency of the situation, for example, by pamphlets or presentations.

Bill mentioned that a very good starting point to learn more about WNS is the NSS website. There is a link on the NSS homepage that takes to the Rapid Response Fund page and from there to a lot of information on WNS, from the NSS and other groups.

The Stanislaus Speleological Society made a motion for the proceeds of Speleo-Ed 2009 to be donated to the White Nose Syndrome Rapid Response Fund of the NSS. The Mother Lode Grotto seconded the motion. The motion was approved, with 25 votes in favor and 1 against.

Frank McDonough motioned for the Western Region creating a flyer that will be distributed to the Grottos to be used for increasing the general public's and other groups' awareness of the issue. The Stanislaus Speleological Society seconded the motion. The motion was approved, with 26 votes in favor.

International Congress of Speleology: Peri Frantz talked about the 15th ICS in Kerrville, TX, and the pre and post-congress trips.

New location for the NSS headquarters: The current NSS headquarters are in Hunstville, AL, in what used to be a church. When the NSS acquired the plot, it was considered that there was enough land to expand the building in case it was necessary. However, it is known now that most of the land is on top

of a cave, so it can't be expanded without affecting it. The NSS needs more space, therefore there is currently a request for ideas on where to locate the headquarters. There have been rumors about the determination to move it out of Huntsville, but these are not true, one option is to stay in Huntsville. Other options are Bloomington, IN and Horse Cave, KY. The NSS is looking for ideas and input from its members.

NSS Congress of Grottos Report

Gale Beach was not present at the meeting, that being the case, there was no report.

Western Cave Conservancy Report

Marianne Russo thanked everyone for attending the fundraiser. She also reminded everyone about the Schnapps tasting right after dinner, and that all the money that is donated during the tasting goes to the WCC.

In January the WCC had their public meeting. It had very low attendance, and the lesson learned from it was that public meetings should not be scheduled on holiday weekends. The building in the Weller Preserve (Rippled Cave) is finished. There is still the need to finish paying it, nonetheless. The gate is not finished yet, but there is a tentative date in April to begin installing it. There is a project in Cliff Cave, in cooperation with the Park Service; Joel will be looking for volunteer welders. Marianne asked for help in identifying other projects where the WCC can be of help, by managing, acquiring, consulting, etc. They have an advisory board program, which started last year.

Every last Saturday of the month during winter they've had work weekends at the Weller Preserve.

CRF – Sequoia-Kings Canyon Report

Bill Frantz mentioned that there was a trip to Lilburn Cave in February. The whole issue with the cabin is under review, because the area is going to be officially declared wilderness and John Tinsley is working on this. The project in Mineral King continues.

CRF – Lava Beds Report

Bruce Rogers said that the last season saw six major expeditions, with 15-20 people each. The park service has asked to resurvey *all* the caves in Cave Loop. And also, the national CRF expedition for this year will be in Lava Beds, in October. There are now 756 recorded caves in Lava Beds.

Conservation and Research Grant Fund Report

No committee members were present, and as a consequence there was no report.

Next Speleo-Ed Seminar

The Stanislaus Speleological Society would like to host Speleo-Ed in about a years time from this year's Speleo-Ed, on behalf of the Western Region of the NSS, and the location was briefly discussed as either the Mendocino sea caves or Baker, NV. After that, the Stanislaus Speleological Society would like to challenge the Diablo Grotto to be hosts of Speleo-Ed. Diablo accepted the challenge. The Stanislaus Speleological Society motioned for hosting, on behalf of the Western Region of the NSS, the Speleo-Ed Seminar in 2010. The Diablo Grotto seconded the motion. The motion was approved, with 26 votes in favor.

Next Annual Meeting of the Western Region of the NSS (“Regional”)

The San Joaquin Valley Grotto will host this year's Regional, in Sequoia National Park. They are still in early planning stages, considering some campsites like Dinky Creek and Wishon. There will be more information at a later date.

Meeting Adjourned

At 9:10 pm there was a motion to adjourn, which was seconded and immediately approved, all in a matter of fractions of a second.