

APPENDIX BP

December 4, 2021:24

(Refer to Act 91-976)

Charter of the National Speleological Society Vertical Training Commission

Adopted by the Board of Governors on December 4, 2021

Our trainers recognize that the best teachers are always learning from their students and will use the best practices in education for effective training. Our goal is to improve vertical safety for cavers, while resisting efforts to develop vertical training certifications as a mechanism to limit or restrict cave access.

I) ESTABLISHMENT: The National Speleological Society (NSS) hereby establishes the Vertical Training Commission (VTC or Commission). The VTC is located within the Education Division of the Department of the NSS Administrative Vice President (NSS AVP).

II) CHARGE: The charge of the VTC is to:

- A) Create a training curriculum to help interested individuals obtain the appropriate and sufficient competencies, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills needed to be safe while using vertical caving techniques.
- B) Develop and maintain a vertical training program that provides hands-on experience and training through vertical training courses (“Courses”) that are accessible, attainable, and understandable to people of diverse knowledge sets and backgrounds, while maintaining minimal costs and bureaucratic processes.
- C) Train competent, safe, and active vertical trainers to be proficient in teaching the VTC educational materials.

III) STRUCTURE: The VTC will be composed of a National Coordinator, a Secretary Treasurer, Education Coordinator, Regional Coordinators (RCs), Master-Trainers and Trainers. A Governing Board (Board) will be responsible for managing the overall affairs of the organization, and will coordinate and oversee training operations, including qualification of Master-Trainers and Trainers. The Commission will initially have one standing committee, the Curriculum Committee (CC), which will be responsible for developing and maintaining educational materials for use in VTC vertical training courses.

IV) Governing Board:

A) Membership: The VTC will be managed by a Board of RCs and the following officers:

National Coordinator
Secretary -Treasurer
Education Coordinator

Each RC and Officer will have an equal vote on the Board. No individual will serve in more than one officer position simultaneously.

B) Annual Meeting: The Board must hold at least one meeting annually during the NSS Convention.

C) Regional Coordinators (RCs): The responsibilities of the Regional Coordinators are:

- 1) Identify the approaches necessary to maximize opportunities for the training of interested cavers.
- 2) By a two-thirds vote of the full current membership of the Board, approve materials and curricula developed by the Curriculum Committee.
- 3) Determine the criteria for the qualification of Master-Trainers; conduct Courses to train Master-Trainers using materials and curricula developed by the Curriculum Committee; maintain a record of current Master-Trainers.
- 4) Determine the criteria for the qualification of Trainers and ensure material and curricula developed by the Curriculum Committee is available for this qualification; maintain a list of current Trainers.
- 5) Conduct regional and/or national vertical training Courses as needed for Trainees using curricula developed by the Curriculum Committee.
- 6) Advise the Curriculum Committee regarding the development of materials and curricula.
- 7) Nominate individuals, confirmed by a majority vote of the RCs, to serve as the National Coordinator, Secretary-Treasurer, Webmaster, and members of the Curriculum Committee.

D) Regions: each geographical area must be represented by one RC. These regions are:

North Eastern (CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI, VT)

Eastern (VA, WV, PA, NJ, MD, DE, DC, OH)

South Eastern (FL, GA, SC, NC, TN, AL, MS, PR, VI)

Central (IL, IN, IA, KY, MI, MN, MO, WI)

South Central (AR, LA, NM, KS, OK, TX)

Rocky Mountain (CO, WY, MT, SD, NE, ND)

Western (NV, UT, AZ, CA)

Pacific Northwest (AK, ID, OR, WA, HI, GU, AS, MP)

E) RC Nominations: RCs are NSS members selected from among the VTC Trainers/Master-Trainers within their region by a majority of votes from this same group. Selections must be sent to the AVP for acceptance and appointment. Each RC term will be three years.

F) National Coordinator (NC): The responsibilities of the National Coordinator are:

- 1) Oversee the activities of the VTC and coordinate with the Regional Coordinators and Curriculum Committee.
- 2) Serve as a NSS liaison, reporting directly to the NSS AVP.
- 3) Ensure that at least one business meeting of the VTC will be organized annually.

G) NC Nomination: The NSS AVP must appoint the NC with input from the RCs. The NC will be an NSS member and will take office once written notice has been given to the NSS Board of Governors and the Secretary of the Board. Each NC term will be three years.

- H) Secretary Treasurer (S-T): The responsibilities of the S-T are:
- 1) Coordinate with the NSS Secretary-Treasurer to organize the VTC finances in accordance with NSS policy and practice.
 - 2) Meet annually with the NSS AVP and VTC NC to build the VTC operating budget into the annual NSS Budget.
 - 3) Approve all expenses of the VTC and ensure that the activities of the VTC are financially self-sustaining.
- I) S-T Nomination: The National Coordinator must nominate the S-T who must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Board. The S-T must be an NSS member. The S-T term will be three years.
- J) Education Coordinator (EC); The responsibilities of the EC are:
- 1) Oversee the activities of the Curriculum Committee and coordinate with the Board.
 - 2) Organize the necessary meetings of the Curriculum Committee to create and maintain the VTC education materials.
- K) EC Nomination: The EC is selected from among current members of the Curriculum Committee and nominated by a majority vote of the CC. The EC is appointed by the NSS AVP. The EC term will be four years.
- L) Webmaster: The responsibilities of the Webmaster are:
- 1) Manage a website that provides a means of access to all training materials, including established competencies and training standards to NSS members.
 - 2) The Webmaster need not be a Master-Trainer/Trainer but will have the same voting privileges for selecting the Regional Coordinator in their geographic region.
- K) Webmaster Nomination: The National Coordinator must nominate the Webmaster who must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Board. The webmaster term will be three years.

V) Curriculum Committee (CC) Membership:

- A) The CC must be composed of a minimum of five and up to seven members, including the Education Coordinator. Each member will have a vote on the CC.
- B) Members of the CC must have the following qualifications and experience:
- 1) At least two members of the CC must be Master-Trainers.
 - 2) At least one member of the CC must have professional experience in pedagogy.
 - 3) At least one member of the CC must be experienced in advanced vertical caving techniques or have technical expertise with vertical equipment.
 - 4) At least one member of the CC must have international caving experience.
- C) Duties: The responsibilities of the CC are:
- 1) Develop educational materials for three tracks of training:
 - Master-Trainers:* Those individuals who wish to train trainers;
 - Trainer:* Any individual who wishes to train others in vertical techniques through grottos and other NSS organizations;
 - Trainee:* Those who wish to receive training at any level.

- 2) Evaluate the effectiveness of the education materials and revise them as necessary.
- 3) Solicit input and recommendations on VTC education materials and effectiveness from all interested parties.
- 4) Select the individual, confirmed by a majority vote, to serve as the Education Coordinator.

D) Nominations: Members of the Curriculum Committee are nominated from individuals who demonstrate the necessary skills and an interest in serving on the CC. Nominations are approved by a majority of votes of the Board and must be sent to the AVP for acceptance and appointment. Each CC member term will be four years.

VI) Term Limits, Vacancies, and Removal

A) Regional Coordinators:

- 1) No person may be appointed to a Regional Coordinator position more than three times in any 12 consecutive calendar years.
- 2) A vacancy for a Regional Coordinator occurs from any of these events: (a) death; (b) they resign; (c) they are removed; (d) conclusion of a one-month grace period after expiration of their NSS membership; (e) they move out of the region they represent; or (f) their term expires.
- 3) Regional Coordinators may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the full current membership of the Board. Regional Coordinators serve at the pleasure of the NSS AVP and may be removed by the AVP with or without cause.

B) Officers

- 1) No person may be appointed as the National Coordinator for more than two consecutive terms in any 9 consecutive calendar years. The Secretary-Treasurer and Webmaster may be re-appointed for additional terms at the discretion of the NSS AVP with input from the Board.
- 2) A vacancy for an officer occurs from any of these events: (a) death; (b) they resign; (c) they are removed; (d) conclusion of a one-month grace period after expiration of their NSS membership; or (e) their term expires.

C) Curriculum Committee

- 1) No person may be appointed to the Curriculum Committee or as Education Coordinator more than twice in any twelve consecutive calendar years.
- 2) A vacancy on the Curriculum Committee occurs from any of these events: (a) death; (b) they resign; (c) they are removed; (d) their term expires.
- 3) Members of the Education Committee may be removed by two thirds vote of the full current membership of the Board. Members of the Education Committee may also be removed by the AVP at any time, with or without cause.

VII) Trainers

A) Master-Trainers

- 1) Any NSS member may be qualified as a Master-Trainer upon demonstrating sufficient knowledge, skills, experience, and proficiency in training Trainers through the Master-Trainer coursework, and upon a majority vote of the full current membership of the Board confirming that the individual has met the criteria

for qualification and is also suitable to be a Master-Trainer. Completion of a Master-Trainer course does not automatically mean that the individual has met the criteria for qualification.

2) The Board may impose additional criteria for requalification after a fixed period or any other criteria, as determined by the VTC Bylaws.

3) Master-Trainers serve at the pleasure of the AVP and at the pleasure of the Board. Master-Trainers may be removed either by the AVP or by a two-thirds vote of the full current membership of the Board, with or without cause.

4) Master-Trainers may conduct Courses to train cavers in the safe use of vertical techniques, to train cavers to become Trainers, and to train Trainers to become Master-Trainers. All such Courses must be conducted with the prior knowledge and approval of the National Coordinator and must use materials and curricula developed by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the Board.

B) Trainers

1) Any NSS member may be qualified as a Trainer upon demonstrating sufficient knowledge and skills to teach a specific vertical training course level, upon a unanimous vote of all of the Master-Trainers conducting a Trainer course that the individual has completed and that the individual has met the criteria for qualification. But such a unanimous vote is subject to veto by a two-thirds vote of the full current membership of the Board. Completion of a Trainer course does not necessarily mean that the individual has met the criteria for qualification.

2) The Board may impose additional criteria for requalification after a fixed period or any other criteria, as determined by the VTC Bylaws.

3) Trainers serve at the pleasure of the AVP and at the pleasure of the Board. Trainers may be removed either by the AVP or by a two-thirds vote of the full current membership of the Board, with or without cause.

4) Trainers may conduct Courses to train cavers in the safe use of vertical techniques and equipment. All such Courses must use materials and curricula developed by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the Board.

VII) Operation of the VTC

A) The NSS Board of Governors may, by majority vote, remove any authority of the VTC, veto any action by the VTC, or exercise any authority otherwise given the VTC.

B) All financial accounting and disbursements for the VTC must be handled in accordance with the Acts o

f the NSS Board of Governors and financial and reporting requirements established by the NSS Secretary-Treasurer.

C) The VTC may not construct a website outside of the accepted NSS IT structure, and the VTC online presence must be in alignment with current NSS website strategies. The VTC secretary-treasurer must likewise manage VTC finances in accordance with the current practices as specified by the NSS secretary treasurer.

D) The Board and Curriculum Committee may appoint additional committees to accomplish the work of the VTC. The Board may establish additional Offices in its Bylaws to address the needs of the VTC, but no other office will have a vote on the Board.

E) The attached bylaws will govern the initial operation of the VTC. Thereafter, the VTC may amend its bylaws only by a two-thirds vote of the full current membership of the Board, followed by approval of the NSS AVP.