

MEMBERSHIP DIVISION REPORT FALL 2026

Plans and Progress Report

NSS Awards Department

From Bill Steele, chair

September 10, 2026

What we have done:

The annual awards process ran its course, and 61 certificates were presented on July 10, 2026, at the Awards Banquet of the convention in Corydon, Indiana. Twenty-eight of those were BOG appreciation certificates.

The Awards Department members held both an open and a closed meeting during the convention. In the closed meeting the Department members discussed at length the age requirement for the new Alvin McDonald Award, and changed it from 25 and younger to 30 and younger

An article was sent to the editors of the NSS News about the 2026 awards recipients, along with photographs taken by Dave Black to be included in the September issue.

Also, a call for nominations for the 2027 round of awards was submitted for the September issue. A call for nominations was posted on the NSS Community Facebook page in early August. Nominations have begun to be received.

What we plan to do

We will continue to receive nominations for the 2027 awards until the deadline of November 15. After that date we will follow the procedures outlined in the Awards Department Manual.

Report from Congress of Grottos:

New Chair has sent a written request to have the cog@caves.org email updated to reflect new contacts.

Outgoing Chair has passed on minutes from the 2026 CoG meeting.

After the email address is updated, Chair will solicit the membership for topics in Q4, 2026. No other updates to report at this time.

Thank you,
Angelica Mucciarone Brewer NSS74675
Chair, Congress of Grottos
Chair, Cascade Grotto
[617-771-4801](tel:617-771-4801)

Internal Organizaitons

2026-08-17

Update by Paul Winter, Chair

Plans

Creating an automatic summary of grotto information to assist with NSS inquiries and support IO Committee Function.

Adding new committee members to review all internal organizations and ensure the NSS has a good point of contact for them.

- Any grottos confirmed to be inactive will be placed in *inactive* status.

With support from IT, creating emails for all Internal Organizations that ask to allow phasing out of personal emails where possible. The goal is to reduce the number of annual record updates.

Planning to add "*helpful information for grottos and internal organizations*" as feedback from the 2026 COG meeting.

Progress

Successfully created COG placards for 2026 convention.

IT has resolved an IO update issue: system is functioning normally.

Continuing to update IO access credentials as requested.

Updated the IO Committee Website: now includes sample constitution/bylaws and NSS Internal Organization Application form

- <https://caves.org/org/internal-organization-committee/>

Accomplishments:

Sent first wave of reminders for NSS Internal Organization Annual Report - working through providing access to new officers requesting it.

Reactivated Harrison Crawford Grotto, GROSS was confirmed active and provided updated credentials.

Supplied copy of bylaws per grotto information request.

Provided/updated credentials for 16 grottos.

Plans:

Final Review of new Roadrunner Grotto

Review application information for potential new grotto in Gila, NM.

Mail physical charter to PR Grotto, routing through NSS office for ED signature.

Review all bounced emails.

Review non-responding grottos, determine if active.

Provide information about how to get a caves.org email group for internal organizaitons as best practice for long term access.

Other

Carol Tiderman and Michelle Kesler worked on the Institutional Membership process for numbering, email addresses, and invoicing. Carol requested that a documented process be established to prevent the inconsistencies we currently have.

International Secretary

John Moses, Secretary (7009 CR) (FE), [915-539-6047](tel:915-539-6047), johnmosesgsb@gmail.com; intlsecretary@caves.org

Committee: Val Hildreth-Werker (28963CL)(CM-CO-FE-OS), Hillsboro, NM; David Larson (13906RL)(FE), Santa Barbara, CA; Tom Lera (14821RL)(CO-PH-FE), Orlando, FL

Accomplishments:

Thanks to the NSS for the recent “Certificate of Appreciation” given to the NSS International Secretary citing decades of service in helping international speleologists with participation grants, US visas and as NSS delegate to the International Congress of Speleology.

Meanwhile, several proposals for NSS International Participation Grants were received but we were unable to fund. A US visa letter of request was prepared for a Nepalese speleologist.

The International Union of Speleology (UIS) worked with UNESCO about designating an International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK), as an annual event. The purpose is primarily to raise public awareness. The NSS was a formal sponsor. UNESCO officially proclaimed 13 September as the International Day of Caves and Karst — a global recognition of the significance of the hidden world beneath our feet. All international caving organizations are asked to begin to annually promote September 13, in observance of an IDCK. To celebrate the first UNESCO International Day of Caves and Karst, speleologists in Postojna, Slovenia hosted a global event September 10-13, 2026. Additional information is available at the website uis-speleo.org. The NSS conducted an open house at the headquarters office and public tours of Shelta Cave. The IDCK was also publicized on the NSS Facebook page. Organizations which conducted events are asked to submit info on how the day was celebrated to the International Union of Speleology www.caveskarstday.org.

Plans:

To educate and help publicize the problems facing the world’s caves and karst, the UIS created the “List of Endangered Caves and Karst” (LECK). No US caves or karst are presently on the list. To contribute to LECK, contact the Working Group on Endangered Caves and Karst via uis.wgeck@gmail.com.

Romania was selected to host the 20th International Congress of Speleology in 2029. The university city of Cluj-Napoca will be the primary venue. The website for the event is now available at speleo2029.org. Two NSS

members, Bogdan Onac and Gheorghe Ponta, are on the Congress organizing committee (president and vice-president for programs, respectively). Their web site is accepting email sign-ups for further info on the ICS.

Grant monies may be requested through the International Secretary Committee to assist NSS members (or individuals sponsored by the member) with international speleological participation and research projects. The NSS web site provides grant proposal criteria.

Membership Department Accomplishments

N.S.S. Membership Ambassador Program -- talk to the Congress of Grottos about this. Sent something out to the Internal Organizations (IO's).

Suggestion -- 2027 Convention, new registration of non-members. People automatically get N.S.S. membership, once they pay for Convention, unless they opt out.

Timeline history of N.S.S. - future goals - article for NEWS and/or social media

From 26 Mar 2026

Josh Shultz - Chair of Board - asked him about making the BOG meetings more accessible - getting access to recordings

Younger people want (vintage aesthetic)

Stickers

Patches

-- new stickers this year for cave animal of the year.

The entire group will review anything going out to grottos, members, and the News.

Membership Brochures - Carol has the brochure that Sierra worked on and has sent it over to the office.

Ambassador Project - Amber Jackson - video

-- this is going to be a whole new video

N.S.S. News Article - Dennis Malko

-- still working on that with Dennis
Renewals - Josh White
-- he's doing a great job with that.

Outreach to non-N.S.S. cavers to get them to join

Solicit grottos to encourage their members to join the N.S.S.

Letters to Grottos - still formulating the letters
Ambassadors Program *

Need directions for I/O's to subscribe to Zoom Meetings

Institutional Membership

~ perks?

~ maybe get them discounts?

~ list them in N.S.S. News every couple of months?

Reach out to Grottos and Regions. Have the leaders reach out directly to the N.S.S. and let them know when an event is going on. IT@caves.org

Recruit people for N.S.S. Membership Committee

Convention Steering Committee

Rich Geisler - Chair

Maureen Handler – NSS2024

Ken Moore – NSS2025

Mike Warner – NSS2025

Dean Wiseman – NSS2026

Laura Demarest – NSS2026

Jim Kennedy – NSS2027

Ethan Perrine – NSS2027

Alexander Reed – NSS2028

Nick Socky – NSS2029 (prospect)

Dave Lester

Dave Socky

Blake Jordan

Blake Goodsell

Nadya Poon

Carol Tideman

Progress

- Have added prospective convention chairs to the department and have been focusing monthly meetings on future conventions.

Problems

- None at this time.

Plans

- Continue hosting monthly meetings
- Continue addressing problems that may arise
- Continue supporting confirmed and prospective host groups
- Continue fostering brainstorming conversations towards future convention improvements & new ideas

Convention Development Department

Department	Name	Phone	Email	NSS #
Development	Rich Geisler	804-338-2345	richgeisler11@gmail.com	33708
Grants	Buford Pruitt	828-450-5492	bpruitt570@gmail.com	17920
Historica I	Data Rich Geisler	804- 338-2345	richgeisler11@gmail.com	33708
Membership	Carol Tiderman	410-792-0742	ctiderman@caves.org	10604
Publications	looking for a replacement			
Registration	Margot Geisler	804-572-0022	margotgeisler@gmail.com	29761
Sessions	Bob Hoke	301-725-5877	bob@rhoke.net	19274

PROGRESS

- Stevenson, WA confirmed as the site of the 2028 NSS Convention ... 26-30 June 2028
- Continued communications with the confirmed and prospective groups: checking on their progress, passing along new information, filling requests for data, history, and other materials, answering any questions, etc.
- Continued soliciting hosts for future conventions.
 - Directly addressed both the BOG and COG at NSS2026 as to the need for convention hosts ... challenged them all directly to return to their regions / grottos and at least discuss the possibility of hosting.
- Providing information to groups considering hosting a convention

PROBLEMS

- No officially confirmed host for NSS2029 and beyond
- As of yet no responses from my challenges to the BOG and COG

PLANS

- Attend convention committee planning meetings (any year) whenever possible.
- Continue working with the group hosting NSS2027 in Del Rio, TX
- Continue working with the group hosting NSS2028 in Stevenson, WA
- Continue to solicit groups looking to host NSS2029 and/or beyond.
 - Follow up on my challenges to the BOG and COG

2027 NSS Convention 3P report

Jim “Crash” Kennedy, 2027 Convention Co-Chair

September 2026

Progress

Monthly whole-staff planning meetings continue. We have 66 individuals on staff.

Individual teams also holding planning meetings as necessary.

Multiple site visits have been made to Del Rio to meet with community leaders, venue representatives, and Chamber of Commerce personnel.

Excellent relationship established with CoC, resulting in cost savings on facility rentals.

Guidebook content planned and articles being authored.

Geology field trip already planned, and guidebook section written.

Website launched and registrations open (currently at 157).

Excellent response to Convention table at 2026 Indiana Convention.

Merch in planning stages, quotes being acquired.

Transportation is almost, but not quite, locked in.

Rental contracts for our venues are slowly trickling in.

Vendor rates and agreement letters drafted and nearly ready to send out.

Volunteer Coordinator already has a list of potential minions to assist during Convention.

Timeline with deadlines developed to keep us on task.

Plans

A few more trips to Del Rio are in the planning stages.

Meetings will continue throughout the next nine months.

Still recruiting for the last couple of Staff positions.

Articles for *NSS News* and website and social media are already being drafted and distributed for publication.

Initiating push for Staff to give local presentations promoting the Convention, and writing articles for local newsletters.

Problems

We are running into the stereotypical laconic West Texas attitude about our contracts, which is making me nervous. We still haven't heard back from some of our venues. Our wonderful Chamber of Commerce rep is assisting us with that issue, and we hope to have everything worked out soon.

We also are making contingency plans for the heat, and our bare-bones campground. We are using our media outlets to alert everyone to the reality, and to encourage shade structures, fans, misters, etc. We plan to have cooling tents with swamp coolers, and a fully air-conditioned med tent. Our Convention registration swag will also provide handy items for keeping cool in the Texas heat.

Lack of venue contracts is also making us a bit nervous about our budget, but we should still be OK in the end.

Ethan Perrine, 2027 Convention Co-Chair

September 2026

Progress

The following are items not covered by Co-Chair Kennedy's report to avoid redundancy.

1. Communications with potential larger donors and local partners have been going well.
2. Biology guidebook section is nearing completion.

A Discord (web and mobile communication platform for organizations) channel was created and is being successfully used for staff planning and coordination

3. Multiple current and potential sponsors were visited on a late August Del Rio trip to strengthen relationships, discuss specifics, and record promo footage
4. A 2027 staff member with prior experience with legal language pertaining to sponsorship/donation incentives and tax implications has helped guide the sponsorship committee
5. Some progress has been made answering questions and contacting TABC representatives though contradictory information and staff changes require further communication to resolve.
6. Additional shortform and vertical promo footage were recorded at attractions and accommodations around Del Rio for releasing targeted video content in the build up to next year.

Plans

1. Additional trips to Del Rio for sponsorship negotiation and promotion.
2. Alcohol and Beverage Commission logistics to be finalized.
3. Local and remote grotto meeting presentations for promotion.

Problems

1. The amenities at the campground (lack thereof?) are a recurring question for many potential attendees. To mitigate this, a tour of local alternatives for camping, lodging, and camper hookups was conducted in late August, promotional content was collected, and discounts are being negotiated.

2028 Convention Report - Alexander Reed chair

Progress:

Planning for the 2028 Convention began in October of 2024.
Formal monthly staff meetings have been taking place since December 7th 2025.
NSS BOG voted to approve the 2028 convention bid for Stevenson WA.
Received a letter of intent from the NSS to host the 2028 convention in Stevenson WA. The letter was distributed to all venues, and contract negotiations have begun.

Plans:

Actively campaigning to fill some of the vacant staff roles with local grottos and neighboring regions.
We currently have an all staff meeting on the first Sunday of every month as well as division focus group meetings.
Establish meetings with local division heads and their respective venues to get them acquainted with locations, facilities, and venue staff.
As we head into the fall season, with school back in session, we plan to continue negotiations with local venues and work toward finalizing contracts. Meanwhile, we will continue filling staffing positions and identifying which Grottos and I/Os would like to take on larger roles at the 2028 convention. All in all, the convention staff and local community are getting really excited about hosting the convention. With the majority of local cavers having never attended a convention before, many are beginning to realize what a great opportunity hosting a convention is for the region.

Problems:

We are currently working with Kristine Ebrey to determine an appropriate deposit schedule for the venues. One venue, Skamania Lodge, was adamant that we immediately make a deposit and sign a contract. Nadya Poon has been in direct negotiations with the lodge to arrange an alternative deposit schedule.
Initially, the lodge requested a \$30,000 deposit by August 19. Negotiations are progressing well, and an alternative arrangement appears to be within reach.

JSS 3P Report 01_2026

Tor Steinke JSS Department Chair

Accomplishments

- Ran the JSS Program for the 2026 Indiana Convention when the 2026 JSS Coordinator went down with a heart attack the week before convention.

- Continuing the process of engaging with past and present JSS Stakeholders to help to Augment/Enhance/Improve JSS best practices based on past successes and failures
- Continuing to work on a central Database/Library of JSS related information to help current and future JSS Convention Coordinators Plan
- Continuing work on the vertical gear retirement and replacement process for JSS.
- Updated JSS gear inventory post convention to see what our needs are for 2026
- Working with Vertical Section to get the correct vertical gear on our wish list. Developing a realistic budget and timeframe for acquiring gear and equipment
- Assisting Texas Convention Staff with JSS Convention Coordinator duties
- Working to update the safety and security protocol and procedures for JSS to be more inline with The Boy Scouts of America(Scouting America) Youth Protection Training
- Working to create content for the JSS section(JSS Journal) in the NSS News dedicated to JSS related content including 2026 Convention Wrap Up(JSS)

Plan

- Work with JSS Convention volunteers for 2027 to develop JSS plan and schedule for 2027
- Start to acquire needed gear to augment our current and aging inventory.
- Work with Vertical Section to revamp our JSS Vertical Training Day at convention to be more efficient
- Advertise and promote new JSS Journal section of the NSS News and work to establish regular content submissions
- Work towards formalizing lower(7-12) and upper(13-17) age divisions within JSS
- Work on a succession plan for JSS Department Chair (replacement for me) for after the Texas Convention.

3P Report – NSS Salons Committee – September 12th, 2026 – Blake N. Jördan, Co-Chair

Plans – The Salons Committee is investigating future Salon Award Prizes. We have discussed the possibility at the OTR event, and an email was sent to the Salon Chairs as a suggestion. The suggestion for the Salon Prizes which originated from David Socky:

1. Best of Show for each Salon: \$100 cash prize plus a nice plaque (\$25 to \$30). This will depend on how much money is available.
2. Each Merit Award: A nice certificate (similar to those given out for the Friday Night NSS Awards), plus a ribbon and pin.
3. Each Honorable Mention: An award ribbon and pin (like we do now).

The Salons Committee is also in discussion for a coffee table book with the best of the Photo Salon. A concrete plan has not been completed, but we will continue to discuss the possibility.

Progress – The Awards for 2026 NSS Convention have mostly been posted and the archive is being updated. Submission forms are in the process of being updated with the 2027 information.

Problems – There have not been many issues that need attention, but a decision has been made that any Fine Arts Salon Opening will not have any alcoholic beverages from now on. It has been a trend that the Fine Arts Salon has been held at school libraries and spaces where alcohol is not allowed. The Salons Committee wants continue to encourage Fine Arts Salon to have an opening to encourage patrons to gather and view artistic works with small snacks and non-alcoholic beverages.