

National Speleological Society

Administrative Vice President's Report, Fall 2020

Prepared by Adam Weaver, AVP
adam@caves.org

Introduction/Summary

The Department of the AVP consists of 4 Divisions (Cave Management, Conservation, Conventions, and Education) and two Commissions (National Cave Rescue and Vandalism Deterrence) contained within are 64 Committees and sub-committees.

Highlights this reporting period

1. Launch of the new Education/Conservation/Preserves website Learnmore.caves.org; this will continue to grow.
2. Official launch of the Cave Preservation Network (CPN) Program also at learnmore.caves.org
3. Repurposing of Environmental Education Committee, and new interim chair
4. New interim chair for the safety and techniques committee
5. Creation of the NSS Preserves, Science and Research Subcommittee
6. Creation of the Show Cave Conservation Programs Coordinator position
7. A research project was begun to do a system wide microbial study in the preserves
8. The 2020 NSS Virtual Convention came to a close with record high attendance
9. Planning is in place to do a lot of maintenance and upgrades on current NSS Preserves
10. Thanks to Will Urbanski, we have been able to get all committee chairs access to their caves.org email addresses.

NSS Education Division Fall 2020

EDUCATION DIVISION REPORT

Prepared by Devra Heyer, Education Division Chief
dheyer@caves.org

Progress:

- Created a shared folder for each committee to better aide with communication between AVP and sub committees
- Contacted, jump started and found interim committee chiefs for dormant committees
- September 21, 2020 was an Education Committee meet and greet to try to increase collaboration between committees. In attendance were Adam Weaver, Debbie Spoons, Pam Tegelman, Sharon Holte and Devra Heyer.

Plans/Ideas:

- Lesson Plans being created via the google classroom application to be used for the new NSS website.
- Try to have connections with education grants on the website so if teachers need funding for these lessons they know how to contact the NSS.
- During NSS convention have an outreach booth with the goal to try and engage the outside community in which the convention is held and teach them about the NSS and caves. Youth Liaison

has expressed interest in helping. Need to contact Cave Sim and talk to convention committee members to start this endeavor.

- Need to revise the purpose/restructure the Environmental Education Committee. See Environment Education Committee

Problems:

- Many of the committees currently have one person in them. Active recruitment is necessary. People are being broached but they are also a part of other committees. Currently recruiting and finding people to help with these committees.
- Is there a way that the social media and outreach committees can help the education committee with initiatives? Many of the committees do not intersect with each other and some overlap. Would like to have more collaboration with other committees.
- Carrey Bull stepped down as Safety and Techniques committee chair, currently looking for a replacement. Will apprise as soon as a new committee chair has been found.
- The NSS contacts for the Education committee are not up to date:
<https://caves.org/committee/education/contacts.shtml>
For instance it has Scott McCrea as Safety and Techniques committee chair and Kyle Mills as the Environmental Education Committee chair.
- Education should be a more represented tenet of the NSS. The second point of the NSS constitution is:

National Cave and Karst Management Symposium

Chair: Jim "Crash" Kennedy

cavecrash@gmail.com

Progress:

The 2021 NCKMS will be held in San Marcos, TX on 1-5 November. Currently we have venues locked in, website being finalized, and about 20 cavers on the organizing committee. We'll be doing a big publicity and registration push in about a month.

Plans:

Refining plans for 2021 NCKMS and planning for New York in 2023 and Nevada in 2025. Possibly also South Dakota in 2027.

Problems:

No problems to report

Webinar Committee

Chair: Debbie Spoons

ddspoons@yahoo.com

xplorecaves@yahoo.com

webinars@caves.org

Progress:

Several people have been contacted to do webinars but they have not committed to a specific date for the webinar

Plans:

- Have people commit to doing webinar and have one webinar a month

- Find a person to help with contacting people and schedule webinars.
- All board members are invited to present on a topic of their choice to share with the NSS.
- Collaborate with the Education Grants so that people who receive a grant could also do a webinar and share their experiences and expertise.

Problems:

Webinars are very popular but few people feel like they can do a webinar. The committee could use help with getting people to do webinars and recruiting interested parties in helping with the orchestration of the webinars.

Educational Grants Committee

Chair: Pam Tegelman-Malabad

Pam.teg.mal@gmail.com

Progress:

No grant applications submitted.

Plans:

- Increased grant submissions targeting K-12 submissions.
- Increased projects requesting funding and adequate funding to support these endeavors.
- Continue to fund grant applications that reach out to a K-12 audience.

Problems:

Needs an annual report showing how much money there is in the line item for these grants. Without this report it makes it difficult to advertise and try to get submissions.

Environmental Education Committee

Interim Chair: Dr Sharon Holte

sharonholte@gmail.com

Progress:

Found an Interim Chair for the Environmental Education Committee. Committee is currently looking over current NSS educational material and seeing what needs to be updated and revised. A flyer to send the owners of show caves has been created and a brochure for patrons has been created for the Cave Preservation Network.

Plans:

The Purpose of the Environmental Education Committee needs to be revised.

The initial purpose of the EEC was according the BOG manual:

“57-556 Environmental Education Committee 10-15-94 The Environmental Education Committee is established in the Department of the Administrative Vice-President for the purpose of developing an educational program on caves to be taught at schools (kindergarten through high school) based on Project Underground.”

Currently Project Underground is affiliated with SCCI, therefore the original mission statement of the committee cannot be fulfilled. New proposed description:

“Provides the NSS, caving community and the public with educational documents such as powerpoints, pamphlets, posters and promotional/educational materials that can be used by interested parties. The documents/materials will be proofed by the committee and field experts, revised regularly to make sure content is up to date and pertinent, while being consistent with the NSS missions, ethics and values.”

There are plans to create more education materials to share with members of the Cave Preservation Network such as childrens’ or student work books. Many of these ideas are still nascent. Currently there is only a small group of people working on this initiative with hopes to expand as the network expands.

Problems:

- Purpose of committee needs to be updated

The National Cave Rescue Commission

National Coordinator: Anmar Mirza
anmar.mirza@gmail.com

Progress:

The NCRC has worked on continued curriculum development and is working on ways to continue training with the challenges of Covid19. August 31st there was a NCRC meeting with all region coordinators present. Several of the coordinators shared ways to cave and have rescue training with COVID mitigation strategies. NCRC Standard operating guidelines are being reformatted and developed so that the actual operating procedure and guidelines are aligned.

[NCRC SOGs \(current versions\)](#)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Mc4Ge4gDzAtK0E3s6TvqdNp4YEoZ9uGM?usp=sharing>

Plans:

- We have limited training available but the focus right now is continuing curriculum development.
- NCRC Standard operating guidelines are continuing to develop, some of the actual operating procedures, guidelines and NSS charter are in conflict and they are taking steps to have all documents aligned and in agreement.
- There is a discussion about creating webinars or an online short course as addendums and refreshers to training
- Talks of publishing learning and teaching materials for NCRC instructors

Problems:

The pandemic has been an issue preventing/changing how NCRC conducts certified training, especially without the ability for close contact during exercises. NCRC needs clarification about ownership of the name “SPRAT”.

Safety and Techniques Committee

Interim Chair: Dr. Hazel Barton
safetyandtechniques@caves.org

Most recent chair: Carrey Bull
ruggerteach@gmail.com

Progress:

Met with Carrey Bull on August 17th about committee needs. Currently there is only one member in the committee so there is active recruitment.

Plans:

- Create curriculum documents/learning materials for cavers and grottos to use when teaching caving techniques
- Use materials created by Hazel to coop into new safety and techniques programming
- Create a committee
- Set goals and actionable items

Problems:

Currently there is one person in the committee, the committee chair Carrey was actively recruiting and searching for volunteers.

NSS Youth Liaison

Chair: Allen Maddox
trailsitter@yahoo.com

Progress:

On August 16th meet with Allen Maddox to discuss if he wanted to continue as liaison. Allen is becoming a NSS member again and taking over his role.

Plans:

- To have Allen Maddox reinstated as chair and a NSS member
- To find regional officers/liaisons to help start initiatives
- Create goals and actionable items
- Work with Big-Fork High School Program

Problems:

The Youth Liaison position has been dormant and needs some help to get kick started. Will update again when more progress has been made.

NSS Convention Division Fall 2020

CONVENTION DIVISION REPORT

Prepared by Carol Tiderman, Convention Division Chief
ctider@ymail.com

STEERING COMMITTEE

Adam Weaver, Jean DeVries, Kristine Ebrey, Rich Geisler, Maureen Handler
Dave Lester, Carol Tiderman, Meredith Weberg

CONVENTION STAFF MEMBERS

Caver Co-op – Russ Kennedy – uaim@yahoo.net
Development - Carol Tiderman - ctider@ymail.com
Grants – Buford Pruitt - bpruitt570@gmail.com
Historical Data – Jean DeVries – devriesj@aol.com
IT - Alex Sproul - alexanddru@gmail.com
Publications – Tom Rea - timrea@ccrct.com
Sessions – Bob Hoke – bob@rhoke.net

HIGHLIGHTS

We have a new JSS chair.

COVID affected 2020 and continues to impact future conventions

2020 Virtual Convention had 3,248 unique visitors to the website from 58 different countries

2021 has finalized expense numbers

PROGRESS:

Communicating with the confirmed groups.

Checking on their progress and passing along new information, filling requests for data, history and other materials and answering any questions.

Working with the group who hosted the 2020 Virtual Convention

Assisted in proofing videos for the 2020 Virtual Convention

Working with the group who will be hosting the 2020 Convention in Weed CA

Working with the group who will be hosting the 2022 Convention in Custer SD

Convention Manual was updated with an appendix on hosting a virtual convention

Providing information to groups considering hosting a convention.

63 volunteer hours

PLANS

Attend convention committee planning meetings (any year's) whenever possible

Continue working with confirmed groups

Continue working with groups yet to be confirmed

Continue to solicit new host groups

PROBLEMS - Need host groups for 2024 and beyond

2020 NSS Virtual Convention 3P Report

Progress

- We had a successful Virtual Convention with 3,248 unique visitors to the website from 58 different countries. We had three Luminary Series speakers, the Thursday night Awards Salon show, the Friday night NSS Awards show, Lightning Talks, live meetings of many NSS sections and Internal Organizations, and most of the usual salons. Including the Luminary Series, we had 66 prerecorded presentations that are now available on the NSS's YouTube channel.
- We heard lots of positive feedback and gratitude from many for taking on this daunting and unprecedented task and successfully making the best of a crappy situation.
- Many of the Virtual Convention staff enjoyed a socially distanced After Party in early September. Man, was it good to see other cavers in person!
- We wrote an article with cool graphics by NSS PR person Amanda Willis for the October issue of the *NSS News*.
- We wrote a 20-page appendix on every aspect of holding virtual conventions for the *NSS Convention Manual*, hoping no one will ever have to use it.
- With our main staff of 9 to 11 people, we totaled 1,714 volunteer hours since the June 3, 2020, 3P report. That's 71.4 days!

Problems

- We had no idea how much time this was going to take, but what else did we have to do during the virus times?
- Most problems during the Virtual Convention had to do with the website but we had a super web master who fixed things often within minutes.

Plans

- We plan to take it easy for a while before resuming work on the in-person 2023 NSS Convention in Elkins, West Virginia.
- Rich plans to do an inventory of convention gear (such as JSS vertical gear) that is currently stored in West Virginia.
 - Will ship whatever is usable for the Weed convention sometime in 2021 once they have decided go/no go. If no go (oh we hope not) then we will revisit and come up with a new plan. Need to have a broader conversation on the future of this supply stash—there must be a better way

Progress

- Convention Co-chairs have contacted previous staff and nearly all have agreed to remain in their positions for 2023.

Problems

- We have had no problems so far because it's still so far in the future.

Plans

- Continue monthly calls with Elkins Randolph CVB to maintain good relations moving forward to 2023.
- Will resume formal work on the 2023 NSS Convention in late 2021 or early 2022. In the meantime, we will keep our fingers on the pulse of our staff through periodic casual contact.

***Submitted by Rich Geisler and Meredith Hall Weberg
2020 NSS Virtual Convention Co-chairs***

2021 Convention, Weed, CA

June 28-July 2, 2021

Matt Bowers, Chair (matt.bowers@caves.org)
Daniel Veelik & Betty Farfan, vice-chairs of finance
John Bowling, vice-chair of operations
Kevin Lorms, vice-chair of services
Pat Kambesis, vice-chair of programming

Progress

Since our last report, two site visits have been made to the host college and we are pleased to report that venue contracts are almost done with negotiation. Covid has definitely slowed this down & the college was effectively offline for most of the summer. Once the rental and foodservice issues are solved, we will be able to immediately submit our budget for approval.

As with the rest of the country, we're optimistically waiting for a vaccine to the current pandemic. To back up that hope, we're also in discussions with a provider of hand sanitizer that can be inserted in all registration bags. Additionally, we may cost out some complimentary face masks that can be given to our guests.

Recent committees are gearing up with their respective task lists. Progress has been made toward publishing an impressive guidebook and program book. Our production coordinator is soliciting prices off-shore for the guidebook. The program will be printed domestically due to time constraints on the content.

Plans

Joel Despain is continuing his surveys of prominent caves in northern California. These maps are expected to be completed in time for the 2021 guidebook. Another survey trip is scheduled for this coming weekend.

The convention senior staff has another site visit scheduled for October 8-12 where we expect to complete our remaining plans. Additional meeting will be with city and county law enforcement, local fire chief and the Weed City Council.

We're test-driving the geology field trip on October 10th. The route needs to be examined to make sure it can accommodate busses.

An exciting addition is currently in development that would provide a showcase for high-end laboratory equipment from a national vendor. Details will be provided in our next report.

Problems

Instability with the host venue's foodservice staff has significantly impacted our efforts to cost out the Howdy Party and banquet. Coupled with a large shutdown over the summer delayed that even further. We're almost done, but significant details still need to be nailed down. Our 2 options are to either rent out the college's entire kitchen or bring in our own sub-contractors to cook, or, to pay the college's existing staff to cater our large events. We need that answer ASAP.

We had to cancel a site visit in September because of the wildfires in California. Many of the convention staff were under evacuation orders. We hope that recent headlines will strongly illustrate why we will not allow campfires in the campground under any circumstances. This will be enforced. Same goes for any attempts at creating a hot tub.

We would like to solicit quotes from event insurance companies that would, most likely, be cheaper than what we have to pay to use the NSS policy. Pushback on this goal is expected, but we feel the convention is over-paying for insurance.

Sonia Meyer asked to step back as co-vice-chair of programs to allow more time for her duties as a member of the directorate.

Report prepared by Matt Bowers

2022 NSS Convention, Custer, SD

Dan Austin (chair) hillscaver@gmail.com – 605-673-3390

Chris Pelczarski (co-chair)

Lydia Austin (promotions)

Adam Weaver (programs)

Dean Faust (sec. treasurer)

Nick Anderson (logistics)

Bobbi Flynn (registration)

Progress

Progress has been on hold since the last report – really waiting on COVID updates nationwide to determine what we're going to do moving forward. This will also dictate the use of the school facilities, since right now there are restrictions on who can enter the school.

Plans

We still need to meet with the school superintendent and finalize costs. Dean and I still need to meet regarding budget and make sure we've got that ready to go. A big meeting still needs to happen with Buffalo Ridge Campground and convention staff, to go over costs / logistics. We're going to continue making progress on guidebook, etc.

Problems

So far, our biggest hurdle has been dealing with all of the COVID uncertainty and trying to work with convention logistics. It has been quite the challenge! Summer is also the busiest part of the year for many of us, so we've had some trouble getting the group together to get moving in a productive direction with all of the external stuff going on. AS the summer is winding down, there will be more opportunity for everyone to meet and we can get back on track.

Volunteer hours spent since the last report: 20

NSS Conservation Division Fall 2020

CONSERVATION DIVISION REPORT

Prepared by Val Hildreth-Werker and Jim C. Werker, Conservation Division Joint Chiefs

valhildreth@icloud.com valhildrethwerker@caves.org

Conservation Division Summary/ Highlights

- Submit articles for Annual Conservation Issue of NSS News before December 31. Send notice to Val valhildrethwerker@caves.org (January 15 drop-deadline for the 2021 issue).
- Petzl published recommendations (and warnings) for decontamination of equipment <https://www.petzl.com/US/en/Professional/News/2020-4-17/Recommendations-for-disinfecting-your-equipment>
- BCI FAQ on COVID-19 and bats <https://www.batcon.org/bats-covid-19-updates/>
- Both Texas and North Dakota were upgraded from Pd detection to bats with WNS disease. Montana has detected Pd. See primary source for WNS info <https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/>
- Congratulations to our **Conservation & Management Tuesday Talks** presenter, Liliana Wolf, on being selected for the James G Mitchell Award for best scientific paper by a student.
- Completing the conservation chapter for Guads Photo Book, a joint NCKRI/UIS International Cave Photographers publication.
- **2021 Promote your seasonal local, regional, and national events as International Year of Caves and Karst events, even if virtual!** Learn how at <https://www.iyck2021.org>

NSS Conservation Vision/Mission

All Things Caving Encompass Conservation

- NSS Conservation is about promoting caves and karst protection for generations to come.
- Support access. Without caver access, there is no active conservation, study, or exploration. We advance science and conservation through minimum-impact ethics in exploration and mapping.
- Make karst a household word, locally and globally! Vital groundwater resources around the world are often clean-karst dependent.
- Value caves as archival vaults protecting Earth's rich heritage. Cave systems protect important cultural legacies and significant natural history. Support cavers, often the best stewards of these key resources.

Conservation Committee/Team (with Sub-committee Reports)

Val Hildreth-Werker and Jim C. Werker, NSS Conservation valhildrethwerker@caves.org

NSS Cave Conservation Teams consist of Committees, Sub-committees, Coordinators, Regional Groups, Conservation Task Forces, Cave Vandalism Deterrence Commission, and Networking Groups. Together, we encourage, involve, document, and network conservation outreach, issues, projects, and progress.

- **Cave Laws Updated!** Thanks to Tom Lera's perseverance, all federal acts and state statutes on cave protection are up-to-date. Great reference tools! The extensive 2020 research/formatting efforts are recognized with an NSS Certificate of Appreciation to long-time NSS Conservation Team contributor, Thomas Lera. See caves.org/conservation/cavelaws
- Organized submissions for **Conservation & Management Tuesday Talks**, pre-corded for the NSS Virtual Convention, held online the last week of July, with presentations remaining available on the NSS YouTube channel.
- Spoke with both Adam Weaver (new AVP) and Nick Anderson (NSS Website Steering Committee) - Overall vision, integration of NSS Conservation Pages, and **secure archiving of historic Conservation & Management Section** web-based material containing 40 years of important NSS advancements in cave conservation/management.

International Workshops / Consultation / Support

Val Hildreth-Werker & Jim C. Werker (NM) valhildrethwerker@caves.org

- Presented talk and participated in workshops during UNESCO Karst2020 Online, August 18-20.
- COVID-induced hold on planning international Cave Conservation/Restoration Workshops and travel.
- Planning to attend Vulcanospeleology in Sicily and ICS in France if safe travel allows.

Conservation Group and Grotto Awards

Kathleen Lavoie, Chairman (NY) lavoiekh@plattsburgh.edu

- Nominate a Group or Grotto (G&G Awards). Submit articles to the NSS News Conservation issue. Post project reports on NSS Social Media.
- Send nominations to lavoiekh@plattsburgh.edu and valhildrethwerker@caves.org
- No G&G Awards given this year due to complications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brochures Coordinator

Cheryl Jones (VA) cs.jones@verizon.net

No funding and no current activity. Looking forward to future funding to continue outreach through Discovering Caves products.

USA Cave Animal of the Year

Gretchen Baker, Coordinator (NV) gretchenmbaker@gmail.com

- We launched USA Cave Animal of the Year website in February 2020: <https://caves.org/conservation/caveanimaloftheyear.shtml>
- [USA Cave Animal of the Year Facebook page](#) has over 200 members.
- Matthew Niemiller and Mike Slay joined the committee and participated in the launch.

NEW! Show Cave Conservation Programs

Ethan Oleson, Coordinator (MT) eoleson0@gmail.com

NSS Conservation Team welcomes aboard Ethan Oleson with his vision of developing broader conservation program outreach to show caves and University students.

- Working on an article about the cave conservation program at Rushmore Cave in South Dakota for the 2021 Annual NSS News Conservation Issue.
- Consulting with Paha Sapa Grotto cavers on best practices for conservation in Black Hills show caves.

NSS Conservation Network

Steve Smith (AZ) stevenlsmith@usa.net

- Rapid alert e-mail list quickly disseminates info to IOs and interested individuals. For posting send alerts to stevenlsmith@usa.net an valhildrethwerker@caves.org

NSS Conservation Pages Website Coordinator

Tony Canike tony@canike.net

Tony executes tasks we request, but does not write reports for the many committee pages he maintains.

Conservation Grants

Val Hildreth-Werker (NM) valhildrethwerker@caves.org

- New proposals for Save-the-Caves grant rewards in review as received.
- Recipients submit articles before January 15 each year for annual NSSNews Conservation Issue.
- No new requests received this period.

Conservation Outreach-Ed with Cave Simulators

Dave Jackson (CO) dave@cavesim.com

I'll be bringing CaveSim to (or through) your state soon. If you'd like to collaborate with me on cave conservation education programs, please let me know. Our programs are aligned with education standards, so schools near you would likely love our program.

Plans: Live online programs for schools in Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and other states.

Progress:

- No new Produced a new video about school programs: <https://youtu.be/y-ZQUHgko9U> (includes teacher and student interviews).
- Produced a new video about distance learning programs: <https://youtu.be/c8SKTQ1V CE>
- Launched a new website: www.cavesim.com
- Completed 2 days of live online lessons for Girl Scouts in Virginia.
- Completed 2 live online lessons for 4th graders in Denver.
- Produced 2 educational videos for the National Park Service (NPS), Buffalo national River. Topic include conservation of caves, karst, and groundwater.
- In progress with 2 more educational videos for the NPS including bat conservation, science of echolocation, and an interview with a visually impaired caver.
- Building 2 new mobile CaveSim systems. One cave is 75% complete, the other 55%. Ran a summer internship program for 3 middle- and high-school students who helped with construction.

Problems: We're looking for organizations that would like to sponsor the new CaveSim trailers to help us reach as many as 10,000 K-12 students per year with lessons about cave conservation and science. We're also looking for more schools that would like to make use of our free distance learning programs. Please contact Dave Jackson dave@cavesim.com for info on these opportunities.

Regional Conservation Specialist Representatives Reports are below blue list of Regions

- [Arizona Regional Assn. \(ARA\)](#) [Based in Arizona]
- [Mid-Appalachian Region \(MAR\)](#) [Based in Pennsylvania]
- [Mississippi Valley-Ozark Reg \(MVOR\)](#) [Based in Missouri]
- [Northeastern Regional Org. \(NRO\)](#) [Based in New York]
- [Northwest Caving Association \(NCA\)](#) [Based in Washington]
- [Ohio Valley Region \(OVR\)](#) [Based in Kentucky]
- [Rocky Mountain Region](#) [Based in Utah]
- [Southeastern Regional Assn. \(SERA\)](#) [Based in Tennessee]
- [Southwestern Region \(SWR\)](#) [Based in New Mexico]
- [Texas Speleological Assn. \(TSA\)](#) [Based in Texas]
- [Virginia Region \(VAR\)](#) [Based in Maryland]
- [Western Region](#) [Based in California]

Arizona Regional Association – Steve Smith (AZ) stevenlsmith@usa.net

Central Arizona Grotto (CAG) – Phoenix

- CAG cavers removed string, tape and tea lights from Crucifixion Cave (Coconino NF).
- CAG and other AZ grottos worked with Coronado NF staff on determining whether caves in the Forest should be closed due to COVID-19 considerations. Decision to only close Peppersauce Cave for a 90-day period.
- Cave and karst management documents for five AZ National Forests now updated, and available for review on the CAG website.
- CAG cavers responded to Kaibab NF request for comments concerning timber harvest in area of the Forest that has numerous sinkholes and recharge for the Grand Canyon NP.
- CAG cavers responded to Gila NF request for comments on proposed revisions to their Forest Plan (the previous Plan had considered caves and abandoned mines to be essentially identical features). In light of the myriad differences between caves and mines, CAG recommended the revised Plan deal with caves and mines as separate and distinct features.
- CAG (along with four other AZ grottos) continues to work with the Tonto NF in developing a Non-Funded Challenge Cost Share Agreement for better management and protection of caves.

Escabrosa Grotto (EGI) – Tucson

- EGI continues to work with the Coronado NF to finalize Management Plans to better manage and protect all the caves within the CNF - especially SP Cave (Huachuca Mountains, AZ) and Crystal Cave (Chiricahua Mountains, AZ).

- Escabrosa manages access to Onyx Cave (Santa Rita Mountains, AZ), which harbors a summer maternity colony of fringed myotis bats (*Myotis thysanodes*). During five previous summer maternity closures, cavers conducted non-intrusive infrared emergence counts to monitor colony status. With five years of data on Onyx, EGI initiated plan to expand the project to three additional caves within the Coronado NF (two in the Chiricahua Mts and one in the Huachuca Mts.) . . The same non-intrusive infrared emergence counts have continued through the summer of 2020, with a goal of expanding the overall database on maternity usage within the CNF so that Forest officials can make better-informed decisions on whether current seasonal bat closures are biologically appropriate.
- EGI (along with four other AZ grottos) continues to work with the Tonto NF in developing a Non-Funded Challenge Cost Share Agreement for the better management and protection of caves within the Forest.
- It appears that the recent massive forest fire within the Santa Catalina Mountains (Coronado NF) burned over the entrances to all the known caves - EGI is in discussion with Coronado staff to work out a plan for cavers to hike to the entrance of each cave (but not enter the cave) to assess any damage/impact to the entrance and report the findings back to the Coronado.

Cochise County Cavers (CCC) – Sierra Vista

- CCC continues to advise Coronado NF staff as they finalize a draft plan for better management and protection of caves within the Forest.

Rocky Mountain Region – Shannon Glazer (CO) shannon.glazer@gmail.com

Camille Pullham McKinney (UT) cami_mckinney@nps.gov

- On June 2, a federal report was released from the USGS stating that there was a risk ranging from 15 to 84 percent that COVID-19 could be spread to bats through contact with infected humans. An expert panel of biologists collaborated on this risk model, which was not based on actual lab testing (<https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/ofr20201060>). Dr. Hazel Barton, in a reaction to this study, stated that recreational cavers already limit any interaction with bats, indicating that there is no increased risk for human-to-bat infections if these limitations along with standard PPE precautions are carefully followed (<https://rockymountaincaving.com/bl.../86-certain-uncertainties>).
- The US Forest Service is seeking comments regarding the nomination process for Significant Caves under the 1988 Federal Cave Resources Protection Act. October 19 is the deadline for submissions. The USFS is questioning if nominations are worthwhile scientifically and whether collection of such data places a burden upon federal officials. Review the federal notice (<https://www.govinfo.gov/.../FR-2020-08-19/pdf/2020-18174.pdf>) and submit comments via mail to the following address: Minerals and Geology Management, Attn: Significant Cave Nomination, 1400 Independence Avenue, Mail Stop 1126, Washington, DC 20250.
- Due to COVID-19 closure, the caves of Timpanogos Cave National Monument in Utah are experiencing their first real year of rest in 95+ years. Staff members at the cave have taken advantage of the closure by gathering microclimate data without the influence of a constant stream of humans. They only enter the cave a few times a month, and monitoring efforts have been increased to establish a baseline of data that is much closer to natural cave conditions than when the cave is open. A publication regarding water quality data trends is in the works and shows changes in water chemistry from the tour operations. Data from 2008–2018 are being examined for this publication, with changes noted in 2013 when tours were reduced in size and frequency.
- Glenwood Caverns and Adventure Park and Cave of the Winds Mountain Park, both in Colorado, re-opened for tours this summer after they developed new policies and protocols to protect guests and staff, including requiring face masks for all. Cave of the Winds reopened for cave tours on June 13. Glenwood Caverns reopened on June 8 for tours. On August 13 they were forced to close again due to wildfire mitigation efforts for the Grizzly Creek Fire burning nearby. They are currently scheduled to reopen on August 28.
- South Dakota’s Black Hills Cave and Nature Conservancy recently acquired 46 acres for the new Dahm Springs Preserve. This area includes seven known caves, including the decorated Dahm Spring Cave. Marilyn Dahm-Borgeson worked with cavers from the Paha Sapa Grotto to create this preserve. Cavers in the region raised \$350,000 to pay it. It will be managed jointly by the Black Hills Cave and Nature Conservancy and the NSS and is open for visitation by qualified cavers (<https://www.blackhillscaves.org/initiatives>).
- 20 dead little brown bats were recently found in Medora, North Dakota, near Theodore Roosevelt National Park (less than 30 miles from Montana’s eastern border). Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks announced June 15 that Daniels, Richland, and Fallon counties in Eastern Montana have tested positive for *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* fungus.

Montana wildlife biologists are currently searching caves, under bridges, and in other known roosts for additional samples (<https://www.mtpr.org/.../montana-scientists-search-signs-dead...>).

- The Conservation Fund closed on the purchase of 488 acres of formerly private land including Sweetwater Lake and Sweetwater Indian Cave near Glenwood Springs, CO on June 30. It will be added to the White River National Forest very soon. This cave, featuring many significant pictographs, was once sacred to the Ute Tribal Nation. It is expected to be open to the public as soon as the land is officially transferred over.
- The Pilot Hill ranch, 5,500 acres located east of Laramie, Wyoming, is moving from private to Albany County ownership in early August and will be developed as a public park throughout the next several years. The area features recreational trails, limestone outcroppings, caves.
- Montana's Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park celebrated Bat Week, August 10–15^t. The park hosted special talks and programs about bats throughout this week.
- The Grizzly Creek Fire, which has been burning east of Glenwood Springs, CO on the White River Plateau since early August, threatens a number of cave/karst areas. Forest Service caves (such as Hubbards), BLM area caves, and private caves on the Defiance Cave Preserve are at risk. Fire is ongoing and less than 50% contained as of August 25, the extent to which flames and smoke will affect these caves or the bats that live within them is still unknown (<https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6942/>).
- At its September 17 session in Washington DC, the National Park System Advisory Board of the National Park Service will consider adding Sulphur Cave in Steamboat Springs, CO to the National Natural Landmarks program, one of three candidates considered. This cave, visited by Europeans since the mid-19th century, includes many unusual features. The air is toxic and very hot due to the sulphur content in the hot spring waters, and life forms such as snottites and blood-red cave worms thrive in this environment. For more information and to comment on the consideration, visit: <https://www.federalregister.gov/.../notice-of-the-september-1...> Tread of Pioneers Museum in Steamboat Springs currently has an exhibit about this cave that will be open through June 1, 2021.

Southwestern Region – Janice Tucker (NM) janice.tucker@live.com

- Many caving activities on hold due to COVID.
- Mesilla Valley Grotto monitoring javelina activity in Robinson Cave, still present, checked o trail cam.

Texas Speleological Association – Ross Winton (TX) ross.winton@tpwd.texas.gov

The NSS Conservation Team welcomes Ross Winton. Thanks you for taking on this position and we look forward to bulleted updates from Texas!

Mid-Appalachian Region – Dean Snyder (PA) dsnyder3@ptd.net

Still nothing to report due to the pandemic.

Southeastern Region – vacant

Requesting new rep to provide updates.

John Hoffelt responded mossyguy@comcast.net — Nothing going on caving or conservation-wise!

Ohio Valley Region – vacant

Requesting new rep to provide updates.

Northeast Region – vacant

Requesting new rep to provide updates.

Western Region – Pat Seiser (CA) patricia_seiser@nps.gov

We welcome our first report from new rep for Western conservation concerns, Pat Seiser.

- Most grottos are holding meetings via zoom. Trips have been few and far between
- The October Regional has been canceled due to COVID-19. A zoom business meeting will be held.
- Special issue of the Western Caver Magazine will highlight the region for next year's convention in Weed, CA. Articles, pictures, short stories on caves in northern CA and southern Oregon are sought.
- Blasé LaSala with the help of Eric Weaver, has created a three-part virtual Tour of Lehman Caves, Great Basin National Park. <https://www.nps.gov/grba/learn/photosmultimedia/virtual-cave-tour.htm>

- Work continues for the 2021 Weed Convention. The Shasta Area Grotto has been working on cave entrance locations. Various cavers have been working on survey and mapping projects, and a shake down for the geology field trip is coming up soon.
- Lava Beds National Monument survived an amazing fire that burned almost 70% of the park. Cave loop was partially burnt over. The campground also partially burned. Fortunately, all other infrastructure is intact, including the Research Center. The park is asking visitors to stay on designated trails and not cross the burned areas so that new social trails do not reduce vegetation regeneration. We welcome research and exploration projects—Cave Resources Specialist, patricia_seiser@nps.gov.
- Ongoing- Grand Caverns, Grottoes, VA. VA area cavers resumed monthly conservation activity in July when cavern reopened after 3-month closure due to COV19. Work entailed Algae abatement, moss and fern eradication, removing coins from pools.

Virginia Region – Janet Tinkham (VA) janete@shentel.net

- Many conservation activities postponed due to pandemic.
- Ongoing Grand Caverns, Grottoes, VA — VA area cavers resumed monthly conservation activity in July when cavern reopened after 3-month closure due to COV19. Work entailed algae abatement, moss and fern eradication, removing coins from pools.

NSS Conservation Task Forces

CTF reports listed here. CTF reports & inquiries to Val Hildreth-Werker, valhildrethwerker@caves.org

Hawai'i Cave Conservation Task Force

Tomislav Gracanin (HI) tnv@att.net.

Asa Aue (HI) asaau@gmail.com

- HCCTF steps up as needed.
- Ongoing effort to protect a large part of the Kipuka Kanohina lava tube system.

High Guads Restoration Project (HGRP) CTF

Jennifer Foote (NM) highguads@gmail.com

<http://www.hgrp.org> , www.facebook.com/High.Guads.Restoration.Project

- HGRP runs volunteer trips in the Lincoln National Forest to assist the Forest with cave restoration, science, and trail maintenance.
- We have cancelled all trips this year due to COVID-19 related state restrictions including limiting “mass gatherings” over 5 people. On August 29, the restriction was loosened to 10 people, however there is still a 14 day quarantine for anyone who has traveled out of state and most attendees come from out of state. Future trips may start in fall following health screening/social distancing/PPE.
- The LNF is in the process of hiring a new Cave Specialist in the next few months.
- Tentative future dates include: TBD???. Email highguads@gmail.com for more info, we need to know who is coming a few weeks in advance to finalize permits. Sign up for the email list at: <https://groups.google.com/d/forum/high-guads-restoration-project>

Klamath Mountains CTF

Steve Knutson (OR) SssKnutson@aol.com

- Our efforts to work some magic in Ape Cave, southern Washington, is also on hold. The cave is closed. We tried to make the point that a cave closed to tourism is a perfect time to go graffiti cleaning, but to no avail.
- We do have our method worked out. The paint on walls in Ape is on a moist surface and appears to be actually attached nowhere. So nothing drastic and damaging (like sand blasting or chem application) is needed. Chris Forstrom has developed and tested a battery powered water sprayer that easily takes the paint off. However, since the resulting surface is cleaner and smoother than it should be, so he also worked out a light sprayer of ground loose floor lava. We hope this application will help the regrowth of the slime which coats much of the cave walls.
- Important: The water sprayer will also take on the slime graffiti, by making words illegible, but leaving the slime as undisturbed as possible.

- With the pandemic in full swing, we were allowed a group of less than 15 up in the Marbles over July 4, and all seems well. Another group plans to go in Labor Day. Being in the high risk really old group for COVID-19, I chickened out. Social distancing around the campfire!
- The Weed Guidebook is our next concern, because these days the info can so easily become public via the Internet. We will try to keep cave descriptions out of it, and instead volunteer Marbles caving stories. But the editor appears to have complete freedom to include whatever he wants. I have discussed the critical situation with the editor—the caves of the Klamaths are protected ONLY by their isolation and being generally unknown by the untutored public. Additionally, caves such as Butter Creek and Indian Va Creek have locations that can be discerned just from their names. He says he will consider our concerns. We hope to avoid this convention resulting in a conservation disaster. We put a lot in the Yreka convention guidebook, but that was way back, in the days when the owning agency was flush with budget and manpower. Now they are way down in both. In those old days, for instance, there was all season long, a wilderness guard working out of the cabin in Marble Valley. Now you seldom see one, and the last couple years, none. Indeed, last year it looked like no trail maintenance had even been done, with downed trees still across the trail. Even the PCT looked unserviced.

Ozark CTF

Kathy Kriska-Crider (MO) katcntrygrl@sbcglobal.net

CTF on hold — nothing to report. (Thank you for staying in touch each reporting period, Kathy!)

Twin Lakes CTF

John Durall (KY) TwinLakesCCSTF1@aol.com

Steve Gentry, Lead Advisor (KY) SGentry177@aol.com

CTF on hold — no report received.

Washington Cascade Mountains Bat Conservation Task Force

Dr. William R. (Bill) Halliday, Founder (WA, TN) wrbna@bellsouth.net

CTF on hold — no report received.

NSS Mammoth Cave Restoration Project

Brian Hunsaker, Director (IL) macarestocamp@gmail.com

Update: Impacts of COVID-19

- Since 1989 the NSS Restoration Field Camp at Mammoth Cave National Park has provided a way for cavers to volunteer their time and efforts to help the NPS preserve and restore the park. The camp currently consists of three, weekend camps in March, May, and November and a weeklong camp that takes place the first full week of August. I took the position as director of the camp in 2018 and what follows is an account of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the group and our camps.
- Our first camp that coincided with COVID-19 was our **March Camp** which **took place** on March 7–8. As of March 7, there were a total of 217 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States. At this time the general feeling was that COVID-19 was not an issue in the US and would be contained through rigorous contact tracing and quarantine. As such there does not appear to have been an impact on the attendance of the March camp. This camp was attended by 31 participants and provided 282 person-hours of labor to the park.
- Our second camp of 2020 was scheduled for **May 2–3**. By the end of March, many states were issuing stay-at-home orders. We monitored the situation and the guidance provided by state and national authorities. On April 5th when it appeared that most states would be continuing "stay at home" orders through May, we **canceled** this camp. The average attendance for May camp is 20-25 people providing approximately 200 person-hours of labor to the park.
- Our biggest camp each year is our **August Weeklong Camp**. For this camp, unlike our weekend camps, the camp provides all meals for the week. Besides the regular meals and restoration activities, several events are planned for the week to include a pizza party, awards ceremony, and several educational trips to unique areas of the cave and surrounding area. Most of the camp participants were hopeful in April and May that COVID-19 infection rates and deaths would decline to a point where we could safely hold the weeklong camp. Come June as many states started relaxing their stay-at-home orders there was more hope that a safe protocol could be developed. By the beginning of July, it was becoming apparent that despite the best efforts of some, the US was experiencing a second wave of

infection. After having discussions with the NPS and many members of the camp it was determined that there was **no safe way to hold the camp given the logistics** involved. As with many events that bring together people from many states there was no way to safely control travel and serve meals to 20-30 people requiring multiple supply runs. A typical August weeklong camp provides approximately 700-800 person-hours of labor to the Park.

- **Looking ahead** to our next camp in **November** there is again hope that we will be able to return to Mammoth. Since our weekend camps require members to provide their food I am hopeful that with proper guidelines we can safely hold the camp. **We will need to adjust** our work to make sure we can provide social distancing during all activities and will most likely purchase a supply of disposable masks to make sure that we can accommodate all situations. Similar in size to the May camp, our November camp sees approximately 20 people and provides around 200 person-hours of labor.

Saturday, March 7, 2020

• **Lint Crew**

- A small crew led by Linda Bundy and Pam Saberton entered through the historic entrance with the Battery Powered HEPA vacuums and removed 55lbs of lint.

• **Concrete Removal from the Bridge Near Echo Spring**

- Rick Olson led Scout Troop to start removing demolished bridge concrete near Echo River spring.
- The group bagged and hauled out approximately 500lbs of concrete. On Sunday, a small group used the concrete and rock as fill along Park Ridge Road in areas where the shoulder had washed out.

• **Separating Concrete from Rock in Bandits Hall**

- Theresa Boerma and Johnathon Lewis led a small group to Bandits Hall where we continued the work of separating rock from concrete and bagging the concrete.

• **Sand Cave Graffiti Removal**

- Gene Pelter took a small group to Sand Cave with propane torches to continue the removal of spray paint from sandstone at the Sand Cave entrance.
- The group was able to remove most of the graffiti except for one specific paint.
- It is our opinion that the remaining paint, which is orange in color, is most likely a high-temp engine enamel and is therefore resistant to the use of propane torch.
- I am reaching out to an expert in the use of lasers to determine if a pulsed laser of the appropriate wave-length would vaporize the paint without damaging the rock. I will present the findings for determination on the feasibility and next steps.

• **Ventilation Shaft Water**

- Brian Hunsaker took two participants into the ventilation shaft via the guide lounge from the Visitors Center. There were two objectives, to unblock water flow from the upper section and to determine how a gutter could be added to the shaft to collect water and redirect out of the cave.
- Water in the ventilation shaft was collecting in the upper section due to the addition of a cinderblock wall. Using hammers and chisels to chip away the cinderblocks, we created two openings approximately three inches wide and one inch tall at the base of the cinderblock wall to allow water to drain from the upper section.
- Where water from the horizontal section of the ventilation shaft falls into the vertical shaft and enters the cave is 66 inches square. A piece of 6-inch aluminum gutter cut to 66 inches with a gutter drop for a 4-inch downspout could be attached to the wall of the vertical section of the shaft using aluminum gutter hangers and stainless-steel screws. From the gutter drop, a 4-inch corrugated drain pipe would lead water down the vertical shaft and out the entrance of the cave. The corrugated drain pipe could be attached to the existing Unistrut in the vertical shaft using heavy-duty cable ties. Surveys of this section could determine the approximate length of 4-inch corrugated drain pipe needed.

Sunday, March 8, 2020

• **Wondering Woods**

- The entire resto camp went to Wondering Woods on Sunday to assist on the railing and entrance trail.
- We raised two long sections of railing to accommodate the height of the new trail in the cave.
- FRP was cut and sized to finish leveling the trail just inside the entrance door.

Cave Vandalism Deterrence Commission

Sarah Richards, Chairman () vandalismdeterrence@caves.org or srichster@gmail.com

No current updates.

Announcement & Thanks added by Val Hildreth-Werker:

Tom Lera, thank you for updating the federal, state, and Puerto Rico Cave Laws reference documents on the NSS Website Conservation Pages. Thorough & impressive! You've established an excellent set of accessible, long-standing resource materials. Thank you for designing the documents so that updates will be easy to add as future changes come to the attention of the Cave Vandalism Deterrence Commission!

Biological Response Committee

VACANT Chairman - committee members consistently continue and serve

BiologicalResponse@caves.org , www.caves.org/WNS/

- The Biological Response Committee is still looking for a chair, please contact AVP@caves.org to volunteer. This committee is responsible for coordinating the NSS response to biological threats to caves and karst. Recent issues have included White Nose Syndrome and SARS-CoV-2, but is not limited to potential bat issues.
- The Biological Response Committee represents the NSS on the USFWS WNS Stakeholder Committee, attended the annual USFWS WNS Symposium by Webinar in June, and has been attending monthly informational telecons.
- USFWS is planning to issue a new WNS decontamination protocol soon. Petzl has published recommendations (and warnings) for decontamination of equipment <https://www.petzl.com/US/en/Professional/News/2020-4-17/Recommendations-for-disinfecting-your-equipment>
- Montana now has Pd detected. <https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/> (primary source for WNS info).
- USFWS is investigating potential risk of impacts to bats by COVID-19, the preliminary report is here <https://doi.org/10.3133/ofr20201060>. Merlin Tuttle published an article on concerns <https://www.merlintuttle.org/resources/concerns-for-covid-19-management-in-north-america/>.

External Conservation Networking Updates

Updates for this period. NSS Conservation Division networks with activities worldwide.

The Cave Exploration Society Inc. *Exploring the world from the inside out.*

John Fioroni (MA) info@CaveExploration.org

- There have been limited cave exploration opportunities for due to COVID19, with the exception being Morca Cave, Turkey. The expedition, led by A.S.P.E.G., finished on Sept 1, 2020. The cave has been explored to -1287m deep, and additional leads may go deeper.
- The CES started a bolt testing program to review and test best practices. Facebook proved to be an easy way to reach cavers and solicit donations without being intrusive. We raised \$600 the first week.
- The first trial, Bolt Hole Cleaning Techniques, is underway. 256 bolts will be tested in wet and dry conditions. This will hopefully yield a normal distribution and allow for a t-test of the data. Tests are in surface karst to minimize ecological impact. Limestone quarries would be an ideal location, but none have granted access. Other trials are planned for September.

Vision/Mission

Through the generous time and dedication of our co-founders, we have established ourselves as an incorporated not-for-profit in our home state of Massachusetts. This group aims to be global, focusing on caving projects that people have passion for. Our goal is to enable members and partners to conduct projects related to caving and find ways to make it happen. This ranges from science, to conservation and exploration, to reviewing and establishing new safety protocols, to creating frameworks for rescue operations.

Progress:

- We created a data management plan focused on the principles of inclusion and openness.
- We are creating an ongoing experiment to measure common bolt placement problems so that we can create databases of common failures.
- We are working on grants to obtain even more advanced scientific equipment.
- In addition to supporting and coordinating cave expeditions, we are focused on conducting research on vulnerable cave systems to assist in preservation.
- We lead expeditions sponsored by the Union Internationale de Spéléologie (UIS), European Speleological Federation (FSE), and the National Speleological Society (NSS) in Cuba to explore virgin caves.
- As partners, we have been supporting a multi-year expedition sponsored by the FSE and led by ASPEG (Turkish caving

club) to explore and survey Morca Cave (-1,200m) in Western Turkey, which may become one of the deepest caves in the world.

- We are co-leading an expedition in Eastern Turkey with ASPEG to search a virgin karst area.
- We have signed contracts with academic partners to deploy novel LiDAR applications and work with manufacturers to refine the hardware.

Problems: Like every other organization, The Cave Exploration Society is facing many existential questions about our role when cave exploration is extremely limited.

The Nature Conservancy—Activity Networking Update to NSS Conservation

Cory Holliday, Cave and Karst Program Manager (TN) cholliday@TNC.org 615-504-7427

The Nature Conservancy of Tennessee, 862 Fort Blount Ferry Rd., Gainesboro, TN 38562

- Cory presented during UNSECO Karst 2020, hosted online by WKU in August 2020.
- TNC-Kentucky chapter is working with James River Cavers to update and improve management plans for James and Coach Caves.
- TNC-Tennessee is engaged in various cave conservation and research efforts including: incorporating cave/karst protection efforts into Tennessee Division of Forestry BMP's and developing a regional migratory wildlife tracking network focused on better understanding cave bat migration and movement in the eastern US.

Problem: TNC/NSS **MOU needs updating**. NSS/TNC Liaison page at caves.org needs updating.

Plan: Review and draft changes.

Progress: None.

Bigfork High School Cave Club in Montana

Hans Bodenhamer, Director (MT) hansb@bigfork.k12.mt.us

- BHS awarded **President's Environmental Youth Award 2020** on Earth Day.
- BHS Cave Club continues mission with resource monitoring in over 60 caves throughout Montana.
- Working to get all monitoring archived at the state and federal levels. Our reports, GIS layers, and photomonitoring will have a home at MT Natural Heritage Program and the FS National Cave Data Base. 16 Gigs of data on a flash drive, if others want to archive. (Should be included-and-updated to NSS Library and NCKRI archives).

Bat Conservation International

Shawn Thomas, BCI Subterranean Program Manager (WA) stthomas@batcon.org

Jason Corbett jcorbett@batcon.org or Nate Breece nbreece@batcon.org

- BCI **FAQ on COVID-19 and bats** <https://www.batcon.org/bats-covid-19-updates/>
- Use #realbatfacts to follow on Twitter.

International Year of Caves and Karst 2021 (IYCK)

George Veni, PhD (NM) - Executive Director, National Cave and Karst Research Institute (NCKRI) and President, International Union of Speleology (UIS) gveni@nckri.org, <https://www.nckri.org/>

- Ready-made events like your local or regional "Cave Fest" just need to be connected to the IYCK. Add the element that caves aren't just of local interest but are important around the world. Of course, with COVID, many events and field trips can be virtual. Use social media, pod casts, and call the local news media to help spread the word.
- We encourage each Grotto to set up a committee to figure out what it can do. Since George Veni will be glad to give a virtual program to your Grotto on the IYCK and help kick-start your planning.
- An encouraging bit of news—The Director-General of UNESCO has invited us to hold the Opening Ceremonies of the IYCK at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Caves have never had such a high-level international stage to promote their importance. We haven't broadly announced this yet as we're coordinating details with UNESCO, including COVID contingencies.
- **No matter how big the stage, the critical work to educate the public will happen at the local level.**
- Let's not miss this opportunity, Please, check out the planning guide AND post your events to <http://www.iyck2021.org/> If you have questions, contact George Veni gveni@nckri.org

Cave Management Division Report for the November 2020 BOG Meeting
AVP Department of the National Speleological Society – 7 November 2020

The fall 2020 Board of Governors meeting will be held online

Cave Management Division Chief - John M Wilson jmwgeo@gmail.com, 808-929-8256

Cave Management Committee Personnel

Chair or Officer	Committee or Function	Phone	Email	NSS Number
Julie Schenck-Brown	Landowner Relations	256-599-2211	LRNC@caves.org	30493RL (FE)
Tom Griffin Julie Schenck-Brown	Nature Preserves & Acquisitions	240-676-3184	Preserves@caves.org	24333RE (FE) 30493RL (FE)
Jeff Karr	Cave Conservancies and Roundtable 2020	863-712-0375	drkarrsalsal@gmail.com	68408RE
Paul Winter	Conservancy Roundtable - SC	412-849-6824	pawwinter@gmail.com	62053RL (FE)
Blake Jordan	Cave Management Research	505-362-0101	blakenjordan@gmail.com	43030RL (FE)
Maria Perez	Caver Village Study	304-594-8976	maria.perez@mail.wvu.edu	53594RE (FE)
John M Wilson	Contemporary Cave Use Study	808-929-8256	jmwgeo@gmail.com	13112RL (OS-FE)
Vacant	CCUS - Technology - SC			
Kristine Ebrey	CCUS – Membership-SC	423-991-3034	caverkristine@gmail.com	58439SU (FE)
Nicole Ridlen	Show Caves	424-255-0873	nicoleridlen@gmail.com	62234RE
John M Wilson	Division Chief	808-929-8256	jmwgeo@gmail.com	13112RL (OS-FE)
Adam Weaver	AVP	605-545-5550	lostlanternoa@gmail.com	62352RL

SC = Subcommittee

Progress

The BOG mandated reporting format below, was sent to all Cave Management Division chairs

Committee Name Chair's name with contact information

Member(s)' names

Progress What was done?

Plans What is hopefully going to be done?

Problems What is inhibiting progress?

The report should cover **only** the time frame since the last report.

Use only 12-point Psalatino Linotype font, left-justified, single-spaced

Bullet point or paragraph form are both fine.

While the reports should be detailed, they should also be succinct.

Plans

AVP Adam Weaver has developed a PowerPoint presentation that explains the role of the NSS in nature preserves and cave conservancies. The presentation diagrams the relationship between the many committees involved in this part of cave management.

Continue the same sound Cave Management Division approach we have practiced for the last twelve years

Problems

New social norms, cultural change, pandemics, and global warming may tend to make long-term objectives of the Division more challenging.

Cave Conservancy Committee Chairman Report for the November 2020 BOG Meeting

Cave Conservancy Committee Chair: Dr. Jeffrey C. Karr conservancies@caves.org.

Cellular: 1-863-712-0375.

Cave Conservancy Committee members: Appalachian Cave Conservancy, Butler Cave Conservation Society, Inc., Carroll Cave Conservancy, Cave Conservancy of Hawaii, Karst Conservancy of Illinois, The Indiana Karst Conservancy, The Michigan Karst Conservancy*, Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy, Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy, Northeastern Cave Conservancy Inc., Pennsylvania Cave Conservancy, Rockcastle Cave Conservancy, Texas Cave Management Association, Western Cave Conservancy, Southeastern Cave Conservancy*, Cave Conservancy of the Virginias, West Virginia Cave Conservancy, Kentucky Karst Conservancy.

*Cave conservancies that are institutional members of the NSS

Progress:

1. We had a very successful virtual Cave Conservancy Roundtable for the 2020 Virtual NSS Convention. We had 24 participants from 3 different countries. Thank to Meredith for help assistance.
2. The NSS cave conservancy web page needed to be updated. With William Gary Busch's assistance, the NSS cave conservancy web page dropped the Texas Cave Conservancy from the "Current Conservancy" listing but was kept in the "Detailed table". Gary also made the page setup consistent with the other NSS pages, by using 'include' files to format the header, navigation bar, and footer on the page. The West Virginia Cave Conservancy was listed in correctly in the cave conservancy institutional members of the NSS, this was corrected as well.
3. I have had some email discussions with Kyle Lassiter, Board Director from the Southeastern Cave Conservancy Inc., about switching the Southeastern Cave Conservancy Inc. from a cave conservancy institutional member to a current conservancy member. After some correspondence, the SCCi board will not pursue this.
4. I have sent an email to Adam Weaver to offer to assist in having the correct cave conservancies of the NSS information in the next Members Manual.

Appalachian Cave Conservancy: Access to their caves are temporarily closed due to Covid 19.

Butler Cave Conservation Society, Inc.: Cave clean ups continue, otherwise no new items to report.

Carroll Cave Conservancy: Cave clean ups continue, they continue to conduct activities both on the surface and in the cave with some minor adjustments in procedure.

Cave Conservancy of the Virginias: Cave clean ups continue, otherwise no new items to report.

Cave Conservancy of Hawaii: Cave clean ups continue, otherwise no new items to report.

Karst Conservancy of Illinois: Cave clean ups continue, otherwise no new items to report.

Kentucky Karst Conservancy: Cave clean ups continue, otherwise no new items to report.

Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy: The US Exploration committee recently awarded a Sara Corrie Grant to the Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy.

Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy: Cave clean ups continue, otherwise no new items to report.

Northeastern Cave Conservancy Inc.: All NCC projects, workdays, Member's Day, ceremonies and events, which require more than one person to be present, are on indefinite hold.

Pennsylvania Cave Conservancy: Cave clean ups continue, otherwise no new items to report.

Rockcastle Cave Conservancy: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, All Rockcastle Karst Conservancy preserves are CLOSED to all visitation until May 8th, 2020, and perhaps beyond, pending lifting of the current State of Kentucky event and travel restrictions.

Southeastern Cave Conservancy: Balcony Sink has been acquired, the 33rd preserve – the iconic Balcony Sink also known as Falling Cave. Balcony Sink is arguably one of the top 10 classic pits in the Tennessee/Alabama/Georgia (TAG) region of the United States, and one that has been closed to most cavers for decades. Update - Balcony Sink is officially open for visitation.

The Steve and Nancy Attaway Mayapple Preserve is a gracious donation from John Attaway in memory of his son and in honor of his daughter-in-law. Including Mayapple and Meander Caves, it is located in Grundy County, TN.

Texas Cave Management Association: As the pandemic has continued to evolve, the board has made the decision to keep our cave preserves closed. The current situation in Texas does not allow us to give an estimate on when we will reopen.

The Indiana Karst Conservancy: the IKC was awarded a *second* EQIP grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to eradicate harmful invasives and to perform some productive timber stand improvements (TSI).

The Michigan Karst Conservancy:

West Virginia Cave Conservancy:

Western Cave Conservancy: The WCC is acquiring 150 acres of property near Volcano, CA, containing over 10 known caves (including Santa Claus/Pearl, Mushroom, Lulu Bell, and Connie's), plus acres of karst with sinks, holes and flowstone fragments.

The Western Cave Conservancy has purchased the bulk of Cave of the Catacombs, including the main entrance. European settlers first discovered this gold country cave in 1850, but it had clearly been known to the natives for much longer, as evident by the presence of numerous human bones in the cave at the time. (The exact origin of these remains is a bit of a mystery since this site has never been formally studied by an archeologist and the remains have not been analyzed or carbon dated.

Cavers in California recently got the unwelcome news that *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (the fungus that causes WNS) has been detected in California bats.

Plans:

Problems: None.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Jeffrey C Karr

NSS member 68408

NSS Cave Conservancies Committee Chair

Southeastern Cave Conservancy member

Florida Speleological Society Grotto member

Tampa Bay Area Grotto Member

Hawaii Grotto Member
863.712.0375

Cave Management Advisory Committee for Research

Blake Jordan, (NSS43030) - blakenjordan@gmail.com

Progress

No additional applications have been received.

Plans

The Contemporary Cave Use Study will not apply until the cave data entry pages can be setup on the internet.

Problems

No new problems

Caver Village Study

María Pérez and John M. Wilson

Progress

We continue to research Caver communities.

Plans

María Pérez and John Wilson will report on their ongoing study of caver villages, at the 2021 NSS convention, which in 2021 is part of the Culture of Caves Session.

Progress

Research continues

Problems

Pandemics

Contemporary Cave Use Study

John M. Wilson, acting chair jmwgeo@gmail.com

Public Relations and Promotion Section - Kristine Ebrey

Progress

No Progress

Plans

“CaveLog.org” will be the primary CCUS URL

Problems - The use of paper caver registers is not practical. I do not anticipate any progress until a workable internet data collection system can be established.

NCA Liaison for NSS and Show Cave Coordinator

Nicole Ridlen 424 255 0873, 417 475 3666, showcaves@caves.org

Progress:

I wrote a short report about show caves during the pandemic that was published in the Sept NSS News.

I have been communicating with Adam Weaver and several show caves to help build a new program, the Cave Protection Network. Right now we plan to start the pilot program in October. It will be a great way to bring the NSS & NCA together for a common cause: Protecting & promoting awareness about caves.

Plans:

The NCA convention was changed to virtual, the same as the NSS this year due to pandemic. The convention will begin Tue Sept 29 (shortly after this report was submitted). I will have more info to share after. Hopefully we can get more show caves excited about the new program.

Problems:

Just not a lot of communication sometimes from both ends. I feel like that has improved over the last few months on the NSS side and I hope we all continue to push forward and make progress.

En Speleo,
Nicole

NSS Landowner Relations Network Committee Report

October 2020

Prepared by

Julie Schenck-Brown, NSS 30493 RL, FE - Chair

Tom Griffin, NSS 24333 FE - Vice-Chair of the Eastern Region

Zach Angstead, NSS 58603 - Vice-Chair of the Western Region

LRNC@caves.org

OVERVIEW

The NSS re-established the Landowner Relations Network Committee (LRNC) in 2016 with the principal goal of interacting with and supporting private landowners. The LRNC works with grottos and internal organizations of the NSS to provide support for questions and inquiries that private landowners have about their caves. Our mission statement is:

The NSS Landowner Relations Network Committee (LRNC) has been established to work on private sector landowner relations at a national level and facilitate access to the resources of the NSS to promote education, exploration, conservation, and access to caves.

Through this mission, members of the LRNC endeavor to establish a relationship with cave landowners that see frequent visitors and reach out to landowners of closed or limited-access caves to bring goodwill from the NSS.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chuck Porter, Peter Youngbear, Earl Suitor, Kim Fleischman, Nathan Farrar, Geary Schindel, Alexander Dobrowolski, Dave & Valerie Howell, Brad Long, Lesley Colton, Andy Zellner, Kristine Ebrey, Shane Stacy, Chuck Sutherland, Megan Atkinson, Samantha Tyler, Mathew Bull, John Wilson, Jean DeVries, Matt Pelsor, Mike Moser, Shawn Hogbin, Jon Zetterberg, Meredith Hall Weberg, Brandon Balkcom, Ben Tobin, Corey Ellis, Alan Hatcher

LANDOWNER RECOGNITION

Cliff & Lois Lindsay of Unus, WV are being awarded the NSS Landowner Relations Certificate of Appreciation for their granting caver access to much of the Culverson Creek System (SSS, Peterbuilt, Upper & Lower Fullers). Cliff is a WVASS and WVACS member a caver and friend of cavers.

Earl and Cheryl Suitor, who nominated Cliff and Lois Lindsay for the NSS LRNC Certificate of Appreciation, published a nice update in the *VAR Region Record* to recognize these amazing landowners for their kindness and generosity towards cavers.

NSS Landowner Relations Certificate of Appreciation

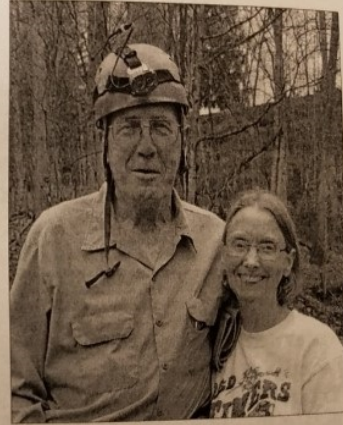
by Earl and Cheryl Suitor

We would like to congratulate Cliff and Lois Lindsay of Frankford, WVa., on receiving the NSS Landowner Relations Certificate of Appreciation.

For years they have let cavers access their wonderful section of the great Culverson Creek Cave System in

Greenbrier County.

We were going to give it at the Old Timers Reunion or the Elkins Convention if they were in attendance. But COVID-19 had interrupted this. It will be framed and presented at the next available cave function that will be open. *



Tom Summers

Nomination Submitted by Geary Schindel, NSS President

Tom Summers is an NSS member and owner of Cave Without a Name (CWAN), a well-established and historic commercial cave in Kendell County, Texas. Tom has been a big supporter of the NSS, opening his cave up for off trail caving trips by the Bexar Grotto and others, as well as offering the use of his campground and cave free of charge for the Texas Hydro Geo Workshop. The event, which has an average of 300 attendees each year, is an educational program for college-aged Earth Science majors, as well as practitioners from across the mid-west. A major part of the workshop is cave and karst education and includes a keynote speaker in the cave. Tom has also opened this property to the Texas Speleological Association for regional meetings, as well as university researchers and the Edwards Aquifer Authority for regional tracer testing. Tom is deserving of acknowledgement as an outstanding landowner.

Bill Cofer

Nomination Submitted by Geary Schindel, NSS President

Bill Cofer is an owner and ranch manager of the Annandale Ranch located in Uvalde County, Texas. His multi-thousand-acre ranch is located over the recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer, the regional groundwater resource for south-central Texas. The Annandale Ranch has been in the Cofer family for five generations and Bill has opened his ranch to responsible cavers for more than 30 years. There are some large caves on this property that are both important bat nursery colonies (Frio Bat Cave) as well as several caves with unique geology. The Annandale Ranch has also won numerous awards for conservation and stewardship at the state level. They were also some of the first ranch owners that have placed much of their ranch into conservation easements partnering with state and regional governmental organizations to protect and preserve their land.

Jack Lynch

Nomination Submitted by Anne Grindle

Five years ago, when a storm knocked down some trees along the hike to the cave, Jack went up and flagged a new route to the cave. Six years ago, at age 84, Jack led me and my husband up 200 feet in elevation to see a hole that he thought we could get into. He carried a full-sized crowbar and was very interested in what we found down in the pit and waited up top while we explored. Jack has passed his generosity down to his daughter, who is open to caver visitation as well. Jack has not disturbed the land around Lynch Pit, showing his respect for the cave and is a deserving landowner!



I only wish Jack understood his award (Alzheimer's), but his daughter and caregiver were quite pleased!

Joyce Moore

Nomination Submitted by Geary Schindel, NSS President

Joyce Moore is the manager and co-owner of Honey Creek Ranch which contains Honey Creek Cave, the longest cave in Texas at 22 surveyed miles. Known as a world class water cave with a 2.5-mile-long through trip from the drilled entrance to the spring entrance – most of which is swimming - cavers have been exploring the cave for more than 30 years. Before Joyce's father Johnny Gotzs passed, cavers developed a deep friendship, which has expanded to include Joyce and her sister. They have hosted the Texas Cavers Reunion which more than 300 people on their ranch and opened up their property to cavers and entered into a formal agreement with the Texas Cave Management Association to help manage and protect the cave. Cavers have helped the family build roads, repair fence, cut and bail hay, and cut cedar. Joyce has also opened the cave for diving trips which have helped expand the length of the cave and provided a better understanding of the hydrogeology of the region.

The Wuest Family

Nomination Submitted by Geary Schindel, NSS President

The Wuest Family are owners of Natural Bridge Caverns, one of the most important show caves in Texas, which has a long association with the NSS since the initial discovery by members of the St. Mary's Grotto of the NSS in the early 1960s. Recently, exploration and dome climbing in the cave has resulted in the discovery of additional new cave. Brad Wuest, who is the president and co-owner of the cave and also President of the National Caves Association (US Show Caves Association), and Travis Wuest, along with Bill Steele were the primary explorers and organizers in combination with a number of cavers from Texas and TAG. The new

discoveries have resulted in interesting paleontological discoveries in the dating of guano deposits and the explorations have been extensively documented.

Richard & David Sell

I first met Mr. Sell back in August 1981 when requesting permission to explore Hipple Cave, which is located close to his residence and preserved the cave in its natural state. Although, Hipple Cave was once commercial (1928-1940), it has been allowed to return back to its natural wild condition. Only the concrete steps remain going into the entrance. The cave has a small meandering stream that much of the cave passage follows. Through the years, Mr. Sell has given cavers permission to visit this nice cave as he still does even today. Mr. Richard Sell is now well into his senior years and we should not forget good caver friendly landowners such as him and his son.

Yours in Caving,

Garrett Czmor, NSS 22709 (R) (FE)

NSS Manager for the Tytoona Cave Nature Preserve & Sec./Tres of the Huntingdon Co. Cave Hunters, Inc. of the NSS

One of the premier caves in central Pennsylvania for decades has been Hipple Cave. Formerly a commercial cave, it has mostly reverted back to a wild state.

The owner, Mr. Richard Sell, has graciously allowed visitation of the cave for years by responsible cavers. For many cavers, a visit to Hipple and its decorated passages is the place where they first fell in love with caving as a pursuit.

Both Richard, and now his son David Sell, have been instrumental in the formation of many caving careers, and their kindness and welcoming of cavers to their property throughout the years is commendable.

As Chairman of the HCCH, I highly recommend that they be awarded the NSS Landowner Certificate to acknowledge the thanks and gratitude that the HCCH has received from these gentlemen throughout the years.

Derek Flaig, NSS 34158

Chairman of the Huntingdon County Cave Hunters

Richard and Dave Sell have allowed members of our grotto access to their property for many years. For most of our members, Hipple cave has been among their first underground experiences. The openness and warmth of welcome has been invaluable for us in teaching not only basic caving techniques, but also conservation practices and sensitivity towards landowner relations.

Pittsburgh Grotto members wish to express our deep appreciation to the Sells for their providing the opportunity and experience to enjoy visiting their property.

Dennis Melko, NSS 36693 (L)

Current Treasurer and Former Chairman of the Pittsburgh Grotto

The Sell family is quite welcoming and caver friendly. They have welcomed cavers to their property for decades. The only restriction is a 2-car limit in their lot.

The cave is a wonderful resource, amply described by Garrett Czmor. I am honored to second all of the remarks made by Garrett, Derek and Dennis; in the interest of brevity, I will not repeat their statements but will simply state that I agree with all.

Yet it goes beyond access. Even after cavers visit, the Sells' hospitality is apparent. The Sells go so far as to provide a spigot to wash Pennsylvania cave mud off boots and coveralls after cavers come out of their cave.

Curt Harler, NSS 22735 CLR (FE)

Cleveland Grotto Board of Directors & Former EVP/NSS

LeAnn Smith
Nomination Submitted by Julie Schenck-Brown



After a recent survey trip, LeAnn Smith was presented with an NSS Landowner Relations Certificate of Appreciation. The late Charlie Smith was a legendary TAG landowner who always welcomed cavers to his property. His wonderful daughter, LeAnn, continues that legacy of hospitality and has welcomed us as we have surveyed the Smith family's caves in Charlie's honor. The Certificate was but a small gesture for her family tradition of kindness and generosity towards cavers.

COMMITTEE PROGRESS

- Since the inception of the NSS Landowner Relations Certificate of Appreciation in 2016, a total of 64 landowners have been recognized.
- Several members of the Committee continue to report limited contact with landowners because of the pandemic.
- Responded to an inquiry from Corey Ellis, an NSS member, who requested support and guidance to re-establish a landowner-caver relationship for Swirl Canyon Cave in Tennessee. A referral was also made to Jay Clark, NSS General Counsel, who prepared a specific release for the landowners. We are excited that Corey has joined the Committee and even more excited by his work to maintain access to caves.
- Earl Sutor reports Flower Pot Cave near Whitmer, WV is CLOSED because of the death of the owner. Caver Stacy Waggy (a local resident and friend of the owner's family) is checking into it, but please respect the family's wishes to not be contacted by others at this time.

- Jon Zetterberg and Julie Schenck-Brown began a project to replace a water line in an Alabama cave for the landowners. The waterline runs more than 500' into the cave and includes replacement of Schedule 40 PVC and a 12" collection head.
- A suggestion was made by Tony Canike to move the NSS Outstanding Landowner award under the purview of the NSS Awards Committee. Tony, who is a member of the NSS Awards Committee and the NSS IT Committee, thought this would provide greater promotion of the award, which could increase the number of candidates. Mike Backe, NSS Awards Committee Chair, has been approached about this suggestion, but no reply has been received.
- Letters were mailed to TAG landowners to notify them of the cancellation of the TAG Fall Cave-In. The Cave-In Advisory Board was concerned that landowners would wonder why they did not receive their traditional invitation to the second largest cave event in the country. The letter advised landowners that there would be fewer cavers in the area during mid-October, when the event is traditionally held, and reinforced our appreciation for their kindness and generosity.
- Shawn Hogbin continues to maintain contact with the landowner of Lost Innocence in West Virginia. Shawn reports the landowner continues to be supportive of cavers during non-hunting seasons and supports mapping efforts.
- Tom Griffin continues to have routine communication with Dr. Richard Latterell, landowner of Moler's Cave. Dr. Latterell, has moved into a nursing home in Colorado and has a caretaker at his property. Tom reports that Dr. Latterell has provided instruction to allow cavers to access his property.
- Shawn Hogbin reports that one of the intermediate landowners of Middle Earth Cave, whose property is crossed when accessing the cave, has erected two new fences. This may signal a change in ownership and has been mentioned to others in the WVACS community. However, nothing was known about the property changing hands.
- Jon Zetterberg produced an aerial map for the Lazy G Wedding Chapel and cabins, who will share this information with their customers. The landowners, Tommy Griffin and Melinda Sutton-Griffin have welcomed cavers to their property for several years and were also the exceptional hosts of the 2019 SERA Cave Carnival.
- Duplicate copies of the NSS LRNC Certificate of Appreciation are still being printed in hopes they will be displayed at the NSS HQ when the next phase of construction is complete. The copies are being placed in the NSS Archives to ensure the Certificates are preserved.

PLANS

- Continue to solicit nominations for the LRNC Certificate of Appreciation and the Outstanding Landowner-Caver Relations. Our goal is to recognize at least one landowner in every state.
- Compile a spreadsheet of award recipients for upload to the new NSS website.
- Submit an article to the *NSS News* to recognize John Attaway as the recipient of the 2020 NSS Outstanding Landowner Award and acknowledge his generous gift which created the NSS Myrna Attaway Nature Preserve.
- Upload NSS LRNC documents including award nominations, awards notifications, outreach material, etc. to the NSS Google Drive to allow access by the NSS AVP, NSS LRNC members, and the NSS Archivist.
- Increase social media posts on the NSS Facebook, particularly photos of landowners receiving awards.

PROBLEMS

- None currently thanks to frequent communication with Adam Weaver, NSS AVP.

NSS Preserves Committee Report

October 2020

Prepared by

Julie Schenck-Brown, NSS 30493 RL, FE & Tom Griffin, NSS 24333 FE

Preserves@caves.org

NSS Preserves Committee Report

see next page

NSS Preserves Committee Report

October 2020

Prepared by

Julie Schenck-Brown, NSS 30493 RL, FE & Tom Griffin, NSS 24333 FE

Preserves@caves.org

OVERVIEW

The NSS currently owns or manages 21 Nature Preserves throughout the United States. Each NSS Nature Preserve is overseen by a team of NSS members who serve as the interface between the public and the NSS as they provide oversight and maintenance, as well as manage access. The NSS Nature Preserves are a commitment to future generations and ensure cave conservation, access, education, and exploration.

SUMMARY OF PRESERVE MANAGERS REPORTS

McFails Cave Nature Preserve, New York

Peter Haberland and Jason Siemion, Preserve Managers

- Six permits were issued this quarter and two visits were cancelled by the permit holders due to the threat of thunderstorms.
- Groups were asked to avoid difficult to reach sections of the cave to minimize the risk of a rescue during the ongoing pandemic.
- Visitors were asked to cancel their trip if any members of the group were exhibiting signs of COVID 19.
- Repairs to the kiosk and parking area were completed last year, so no improvements were necessary this year. The parking area and trails have been cleared multiple times.
- We do not keep track of our time. Likely 40+ hours including preserve visits and communicating with potential visitors via email.

Shelta Cave Nature Preserve, Alabama

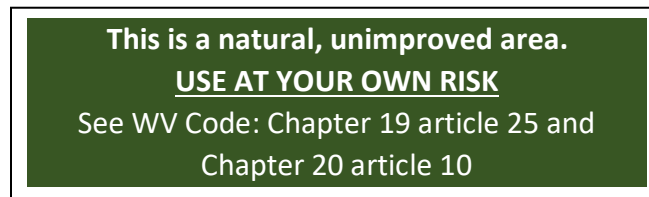
Kevin Reeves and Bill Torode, Preserve Managers

- Biological research being conducted by Dr. Matt Niemiller, a Professor from UAH, continued as he collected water samples from their mesocosms. The Alabama Cave Shrimp and the Alabama Cave Crayfish still have not been detected in screen eDNA water samples collected from various sites in the cave.
- Several members of the Huntsville Grotto and Dogwood City Grotto had a trip in September in conjunction with their super meeting.
- Some trash has started to accumulate on the property and was removed. In addition, there have been problems with people loitering and they were advised to not trespass.
- In 2020 there have been 24 volunteer hours dedicated to research and Preserve Management which equates to \$610.32 invested into the local community.

John Guilday Caves Nature Preserve, West Virginia

Earl and Cheryl Sutor, Preserve Managers

- Hamilton Cave and New Trout Cave are open for visitation, but overall it has been quiet at the Preserve.
- There continues to be a small amount of graffiti or some small amount of trash, but the trail looks good. A tree blocking the trail near Hamilton Cave was cut up.
- Cheryl is working on the proposed new logo and is happy to help the other Preserve Managers as she is an artist & art teacher.
- Planning to order a new sign for placement near the kiosk that will say:



- *Chairmen's Note: The sign has been reviewed by Jay Clark, NSS General Counsel, who has approved the sign, but has also suggested use of the NSS Preserve signs that are discussed later in this report.*

Kingston Saltpeter Cave Nature Preserve, Georgia

Larry Blair and Kevin Glenn, Preserve Managers (Managed for the Felburn Foundation)

- The Preserve, which is a significant biological sanctuary is technically not open with no visitation allowed unless accompanied by a committee member.
- We are currently arranging with the property owners (Felburn Foundation) to have some minor work done on the chain-link fence surrounding the main entrance. As the Preserve is not owned by the NSS, there will be no cost to the Society.
- The Clocktower Grotto in Rome, GA has really stepped up with their volunteering efforts. Although we can't account for how many hours total, they have contributed in the past year. The Felburn Foundation also provides a small stipend for visits.
- In 2020, the Preserve Managers have dedicated 20 volunteer hours to Preserve Management which equates to \$508.60 invested into the local community.

James Gage Karst Preserve, New York

Bob Simmons, Emily Davis, & Michael Warner, Preserve Managers

- The caves were open, but very limited as visitors needed to follow New York State Covid 19 guidance with respect to social distancing for most of the period.
- Due to Covid, caving throughout our region was light to nonexistent this season. With the relaxing of some restrictions, we have seen a slight uptick in activity as people are looking to get underground before a large majority of the caves in the region close for the bat hibernation season of October 1st.

- Our next-door neighbor continues to mow the grassed portions of our roadway and local volunteers and management have kept the trails clear of downed timber and brush growth.
- We are keeping a donors list in conjunction with NSS HQ concerning the donations made for the cabin replacement and these will be formally recognized. In particular will be Seth Perlman, formerly a New York caver, now living in Italy, that put up a \$5,000 cash match.
- A caver from Connecticut shot a visually interesting video in Balls Caves, in particular the “wet side” of the cave. This video was submitted to the NSS Salon this past Convention and received an Honorable Mention:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6xh5fT4dWQ&feature=youtu.be>
- In 2020, there has been 37 volunteer hours dedicated to Preserve Management, which equates to \$940.91 invested into the local community.

Warren Cave Nature Preserve, Florida

James Hamlin and Dave Lizdas, Preserve Managers

- Light visitation for the cave, as it has been a very slow summer for caving in Florida.
- We were prepping for an exploration push/survey and had a caver videographer interested in filming Warren Cave; neither happened due to the pandemic.
- Last quarter, the cave was broken into (the lock on the cave gate was missing.) It happened once again a week into this quarter. Other than the destroyed/missing locks, there was no damage or vandalism of the cave or the gate.
- Long term plans to replace the cave gate are proceeding and an inventory of extra steel was completed.
- In 2020, there has been 28 volunteer hours dedicated to Preserve Management, which equates to \$712.04 invested into the local community.

Donald R. Russell Nature Preserve, Oklahoma

Clayton Russell, Preserve Manager

- There has been no activity at the preserve this year, which is a protected biological habitat site.
- Two survey trips were scheduled but had to be cancelled since there was not enough participation.
- Hopefully, before the year is up, we can finish surveying Sassafras Cave.

Schoharie Caverns Nature Preserve, New York

Christa Hay, Preserve Manager

- No major concerns with the overall condition of the Preserve and a project list with a timeline has been provided for long range planning.
- The cabin reopened in July after Schoharie County went into Phase IV of reopening.
- From July to current there have been nine permits granted to groups and the largest group was 10 people. The lower Preserve visitation is attributed to COVID. I tried to

make sure only one group per stay or to inform each that another group could be there and to make sure to social distance.

- The cave is closing October 1st to May 1st, so the weekend of September 25-27th was busy, but only 15 people.
- Due to COVID the local grotto was not able to help with an annual cleanup.

Mill Creek Sink Nature Preserve, Florida

Charles Roberson, Preserve Manager

- No significant changes to the cave system or property have been reported and six visits have been completed this quarter, including visits to the cave.
- The surrounding land was purchased by a developer ending the proposed purchase and protection of surrounding land by Alachua County Forever.
- The stairs, which provide access to the sinkhole, have been repaired and improved by volunteers. Howard Smith and Roberts Culbert put in about 15 hours of time each repairing the stairs not to mention the money for materials.
- *Chairmen's Note: Per Adam Weaver, NSS AVP, the NSS Cave Diving Section (CDS), has agreed to provide reimbursement for expenditures related to the stairs, including materials purchased by Howard Smith (\$522.70 documented on receipts) and Roberts Culbert's approximate expenses of \$400 of materials for which there are no receipts. The additional request for funds to complete this project will also be covered by the NSS CDS.*

Tytoona Cave Nature Preserve, Pennsylvania

Garrett Czmor, Preserve Manager

- Sporadic visitation continues, perhaps due to Corona virus mandated state restrictions. Holiday weekends produce the maximum visitation.
- Culprits did their yearly deed by building a rock dam across the stream from the erosion wall and cave entrance. Such a structure would back up the water to form a pond and allow erosion to occur. This would also allow high water to spill over the bank creating more erosion. The good news is we dismantled the dam.

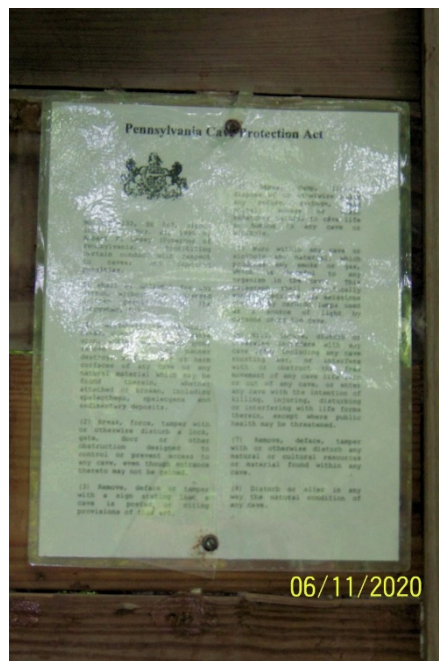


Damn placed illegally at Tytoona Preserve



Damn placed illegally at Tytoona Preserve

- A Plexiglas cover over the “Pa. Cave Protection Act” sign was smashed. The sign itself is intact and readable. The Plexiglas cover will be replaced in the next quarter.



Vandalism to PA Cave Protection Act Sign



Remnants of the vandalism (smashed plexiglass).

- Inspected general property and cave including the parking area, main path to cave entrance, Canyon area and surface area around top of sinkhole entrance.
- In 2020, there has been 15.5 volunteer hours dedicated to Preserve Management, which equates to \$394.17 invested into the local community.

Wells Cave Nature Preserve, Kentucky

Bob Roth and Duke Hopper, Preserve Managers

- We are beginning to receive more routine contact from cavers about Preserve visitation and the 10-person limit is being enforced per Kentucky COVID regulations.
- Volunteers to recognize this quarter included:
 - Ken Bailey who replaced the viewing bench at the main entrance.
 - Steve Vaughn who cleared and leveled an area for the bench.
 - Chris Morris who is serving as the Cartographer for the resurvey and connection push of Anniversary Complex.
 - There are many people working in and out of the spotlight. The old survey crew is providing the history and the new crew is creating more. There are 6-7 people in the history portion and 10-12 have participated in the new survey.
- Preserve Management activities this quarter include:
 - Multiple trips into various sections of the cave.
 - Continued to clear brush and trash around the main entrance.
 - Clean up of the sinkhole on the back of the property.
 - Began surveying cave on neighboring property and pushing a connection. In the month of August alone, we have surveyed over 3,000 feet and are still not connected to Wells.
 - Cutting grass, including the road frontage owned by Bolton.



Bolton's road frontage on Rt. 192 and the Well's house and county store in the background.

- Upcoming projects include:
 - Replace signage which is worn and outdated. (*Chairmen's Note: Preserves signs are being ordered and will be provided.*)
 - Parking area up-grades, which Duke is coordinating with the County.
 - Weather Station installation to monitor rainfall. Working with Ben Tobin, Chair of the NSS Preserve Science & Research Subcommittee, on this project.

Great Expectations Cave Nature Preserve, Wyoming

Bob Montgomery & Savannah Sawyer, Preserve Managers

- Savannah Sawyer, who has provided hundreds of hours in volunteer work at the Preserve, has officially joined Bob Montgomery as an NSS Preserve Manager.
- Bob and others spent eight days inspecting and repairing fence on the east, north, west and south sides of the property. The fences were in poor condition and we replaced wooden fence posts, put in metal fence posts, strung new wire in many places and rebuilt gates. We also cut trees that had fallen on the fence and repaired the fences where the trees had damaged them. Not including travel time, we had 82 hours of volunteer time, which equates to \$2085.26 invested into the local community and savings in labor costs.
- We noticed that the lower west gate was open, and cows were on the property. After chasing them out, the gate was wired shut. On the next visit the wire had been cut, so the gate was again wired shut and new NO TRESPASSING signs were placed on that gate along with a metal fence post placed in the middle of the gate. If this continues the gate will cease to exist.

- New fence construction is needed on the southern boundary of the preserve. This will probably cost \$500 for supplies and require 80 to 100 hours of volunteer time. Removal of dead trees above the entrance is needed. This will probably take 10 to 20 hours. We still need to identify invasive plants and have an archeological survey of the preserve.
- We had several visits to the preserve and there is an attached report outlining the resurvey of the cave, which is being coordinated by Derek Bristol. We also had one through trip in association with the Great Expedition in August which resulted in a total of 697 volunteer hours (not counting travel or planning time).
- Volunteers to recognize this quarter included:
 - Derek Bristol and the Great Expedition to resurvey the cave.
 - Al Hinman, Barb Bentzin, Kacey Cory, David Worthington and Bob Montgomery for fence repair.
- With the popularity of the video taken on the Great Expedition, we anticipate an increase in visitation and additional through trips since there will now be additional experienced cavers to lead through trips.
- An additional survey weekend occurred over September 25th-28th and it is anticipated that the resurvey will be completed next year.
- Hazel Barton, who submitted a research request for all NSS Preserves. is scheduled to sample in Great X during the first weekend of October.
- A stream gage will be installed at the upper and lower entrances to record data and make a comparative analysis of water levels in the cave to determine when the cave may sump. This data will help assist with planning through trips.



Great Expectations Cave Entrance



Reconstructed east gate looking toward the entrance of Great X Cave



Johnny Creek Cave Entrance



Looking east across the Preserve from the Johnny Creek Cave Entrance



Johnny Creek Moose

Richard Blenz Nature Preserve, Indiana

Anmar Mirza and Dave Everton, Preserve Managers

- Given the dense vegetation of the preserve, other than the cave which I (Anmar) visit weekly, I only walked the nature trail once this summer.
- As local Covid-19 restrictions have been easing, we have increased the number of people who can visit the cave in one group up to our previous maximum of 15 on a case by case basis. We still are asking patrons to wear masks while caving outside of household groups.
- Overall visitation is about half of the pre-Covid levels. The Bloomington Indiana Grotto held its meeting at the shelter as the outdoor location allowed for appropriate physical distancing and good air flow.
- An addition to the shelter and a porch roof over the stone wall next to the fire pit is planned. Costs will be minimal and will be taken care of entirely by donations and native materials will be used (lumber to be milled on site from trees selected for forest management).
- No progress has been made on various planned projects.
- In 2020, there has been approximately 350 cumulative volunteer hours dedicated to Preserve Management, which equates to \$8,900.25 invested into the local community.

New River Cave Nature Preserve, Virginia

Jonathan Roberts, Preserve Manager

- Visitation to the Preserve appears to be decreased, with fewer entries in the logbook and less email contacts.
- The goats have not been seen lately. They seem to come and go--while they reside near the cave often, they likely also go to adjacent properties as well, thus they have not been relocated as anticipated.
- Ray Sira is to be recognized for his preserve management and work with local landowners.
- As I am no longer actively caving or engaged with any members of the local caving community, I would like to step down as Preserve Manager. I don't know anyone locally that would be interested in this position. Taren Woulk, the previous Preserve Co-Manager, moved away from the area when she graduated. (*Chairmen's Note: We will be working with VPI Grotto to locate a new Preserve Manager and appreciate Jonathan's offer to stop by the Preserve as able, until we locate a new Manager.*)
- In 2020, there has been 20 volunteer hours dedicated to Preserve Management, which equates to \$508.60 invested into the local community.

William J. Stephenson Nature Preserve, Alabama

Kevin Reeves and Bill Torode, Preserve Managers

- The Huntsville Cave Rescue Unit, which trains routinely at the NSS HQ, had a training session in Tree Root Cave to practice vertical hauls and lowers.
- Bill Torode continues to dedicate countless hours to the landscape of the NSS HQ.

Sims Sink Nature Preserve, Florida

Buford Pruitt Jr., Kelly Jessop, & Paul Moler, Preserve Managers

- The Sims Sink Nature Preserve is not “open” for visitation as it is a protected biological habitat site, however research is permitted.
- Kelly Jessop’s crayfish and water quality research continues to be suspended due to COVID-19. Sean Denney’s research project has obtained some of the permits needed for his fauna and water quality research in Sims Sink Cave and other Florida caves; however, high rainfall resulting in brown-out conditions forced investigations to be deferred until autumn at the earliest.
- The purchase of an aluminum ladder for research divers to more easily access the cave has been approved by NSS preserves leadership but has not yet been obtained due to COVID-19 concerns.
- Hazel Barton proposes to conduct research on hyper-dissolution of limestone by bacteria within NSS preserve caves. The brief description of her data collection methods implies (but does not specify) that sampling would be limited to subaerial substrates. Carbonate dissolution occurs more rapidly subaqueously than subaerially, so I recommend that research also include subaqueous (especially phreatic) substrates. Such investigations in Sims Sink Cave would be welcome. (*Chairman’s Note: This has been shared with Ben Tobin, NSS Preserve Science & Research Subcommittee Chair*).

Haggard Nature Preserve, Tennessee

Brad Long and Lesley Colton, Preserve Managers

- Contact with the Marion County Sheriff’s Department to have an alternate parking area have been successful. Although there is only room for one car, a nearby Super Market allows cavers to meet and carpool.
- Related to the new parking area, the Sheriff has asked that his contact information be included on the permit that is left on the dashboard of a caver’s car to avert any issues.
- Contact has been maintained with Hank Lee who provided parking for several years.
- A boundary survey will be completed in the winter. Jon Zetterberg will be helping with LIDAR imagery to understand the Preserve boundaries and surface features.

Albert and Ethel Ogden Nature Preserve, Tennessee

Megan Atkinson, Chuck Sutherland, & Anne Elmore, Preserve Managers

- Overall visitation appears to be down, possibly due to COVID.
- We have contact information and good communication with the new adjacent landowner who constructed the road on the boundary of the Preserve. The landowner is also going to give us access to his road when we build the gate. The Morgan Pit owner is still providing access to cavers too.
- An initial planning meeting was held with David Springhetti, a Black Hills caver with extensive experience fabricating bat friendly gates. We are planning for installation in April and anticipate excellent volunteer support from the Upper Cumberland Grotto.

- Working on estimates for a gravel parking lot. This may be delayed until the gate construction as we will need a backhoe to transport the gate assembly to the cave.
- The Preserve sign is being changed per the direction of Jay Clark, General Counsel.

Thunderhole Cave Nature Preserve, Tennessee

Megan Atkinson and Warren Wyatt, Preserve Managers (Managed for Jason Cathey)

- Preserve management includes routine visits to check access along the trail and near the cave, as well as visitation into the cave.
- Due to COVID, the cleanup of the bottom of the pit, which will be completed with the Upper Cumberland Grotto, has been postponed until at least the Spring.
- The preserve sign is being changed per the direction of Jay Clark, General Counsel.
- In 2020, there have been 10 volunteer hours dedicated to Preserve Management, which equates to \$253.40 invested into the local community.

Dahm Springs Nature Preserve, South Dakota

Rene Ohms, Dean Faust, & Adam Weaver (Black Hills Cave & Nature Conservancy)

- This was our first quarter as a preserve. There were three recreational trips to caves on the preserve, and seven management visits.
- Marilyn Dahm Borgeson kindly hosted cavers at her home in July. Dave Springhetti presented her with an award from the National Speleological Society, for promoting outstanding landowner-caver relations. Thank you for your hospitality, Marilyn, and for making the Dahm Springs Preserve possible!



Marilyn Dahm Borgeson being recognized by David Springhetti with the NSS Landowner Relations Certificate of Appreciation

- We are continuing landowner relations now that we have acquired the property, and plan to work with our neighbors to gain additional access points to the property.
- Upcoming projects include stabilizing the ladder in Brooks Cave, and placement of a trail camera at the Brooks Cave entrance to monitor wildlife and any unauthorized entry. A trail is also needed across the preserve for access to the caves. There will be no cost associated with this project but will require significant volunteer labor/hours (approximately 200 person-hours).
- We constructed and installed a cave gate on Dahm Spring Cave this quarter. Approximately \$2800 of materials were donated for the gate. Dave Springhetti donated significant time, labor, and materials to the project. On the installation day, the following additional volunteers worked on the project: Adam Weaver, Nick Anderson, Dean Faust, Emily Faust, Sharon Weaver, Kevin Chase, Chris Sterling, Ken Steinken, Jessica Reese, and Ethan Olsen.
- Individuals or organizations who donated \$1000 or more this quarter are: Dean Faust, Jeanne Gren, Martin Springhetti, Dave Springhetti, Rushmore Cave LLC, Black Hills Energy, and Sammi Langendorf. In addition to these individuals, Adam Weaver, Ken Steinken, Nick Anderson, and Rene Ohms also contributed significant volunteer hours to the preserve. A total of \$20,005.93 was donated to the Black Hills Cave & Nature Conservancy this quarter.



Brooks Cave was recently acquired by the Black Hills Cave and Nature Conservancy and is one of seven caves in the Dahm Springs Preserve. (Photo by Dan Austin)

Myrna Attaway Nature Preserve, Tennessee

Maureen Handler & Kristine Ebrey

- This is the newest acquisition for the NSS with the deed transfer from John Attaway for the donation of 17 acres and Red Trillium Cave occurring in late July. However, we had two permitted trips already.
- When the preserve description makes it onto the caves.org website, we need to specify high clearance vehicles only to access the preserve.
- Plans are to clean up the camping area, removing excess vegetation to permit more camping or a grotto meeting. We are also planning to evaluate the climb up to the trunk passage for a potential permanent hand line.
- *Chairmen's Note: The Preserve Managers requested Preserve Boundary signs, which will be delivered to them. We will also ensure the Preserve description on caves.org mentions the need for high clearance vehicles and plan to consult with Jay Clark, NSS General Counsel, about the placement of a permanent hand line at the climb up as this will need to be reviewed by him.*

SUMMARY FROM THE NSS PRESERVE CHAIRS (Tom Griffin & Julie Schenck-Brown)

- The NSS Preserve Managers Meeting was held on Wednesday, July 29th during the 2020 Virtual NSS Convention. We had 37 attendees, which was our biggest meeting ever and hope the capacity for Zoom would continue at the 2021 NSS Convention since not everyone can attend in person.
- The *NSS Preserve Managers Handbook* which outlines expectations, as well as procedures related to Preserve Management, was distributed, and discussed at the annual NSS Preserve Managers meeting. This document will be reviewed and updated annually at NSS Preserve Manager's meetings during the NSS Convention.
- Preserve Managers have been asked to submit ideas and suggestions to create a unique logo for each NSS Preserve. As we have 20 designs to create (the Dahm Spring Preserve already has a logo), we appreciate Cheryl Suitor's offer to lend her experience as an artist. The design submission can be written out or include a simple sketch, whatever is easiest to convey your ideas to our team of graphic artists.
- Please welcome Dr. Benjamin Tobin as the Chair of the NSS Preserve Science & Research Subcommittee. Ben has started pulling together a basic document on why this group exists, including the Vision and Purpose. The general goal is to promote research on NSS Preserves (and potentially affiliated ACA show caves) that help bring us closer to the goals of the NSS: namely, improved cave conservation and education through a better understanding of caves (and resources within them) and how we use caves and the surrounding karst landscapes.
- Dr. Hazel Barton submitted a proposal to the NSS Preserve Science & Research Subcommittee to conduct research at the NSS Preserves. We are eager to have a world-

renowned scientist, who is also a prolific caver and NSS member, conduct research in our caves and appreciate the support of the NSS Preserve Managers.

- Only a handful of Preserve Managers replied about the email address reassignments from SheltaCommittee@caves.org to SheltaPreserve@caves.org or Shelta@caves.org as we want to reduce the formality of the old emails. We are working with the NSS IT Committee to create these new emails and plan to have the older email addresses routed to the new address for several months.
- We met with Pete Johnson, caves.org Steering Committee Chair, and Amanda Willis, NSS Public Relations Division Chief, to discuss the NSS website redesign. We are excited about the ideas they shared, as well as the energy they bring to their positions. The redesign will use Word Press, which will allow updates to the NSS Preserves information by the Preserves Chairs and Managers.
- Discussions are proceeding with the SCCi about their permit system and software requirements and we plan to share this information with the NSS IT Committee and caves.org Steering Committee Chair. We are also planning to have cloud access for the permit system, so all documents can be stored and easily referenced.
- Kiosk construction, including uniform educational material is being planned with the Preserve Managers and NSS Education Division Chief. While not all Preserves need kiosks, we want to have them in place by the Spring.
- Jay Clark, NSS General Counsel, reviewed the signs at the Albert & Ethel Ogden Nature Preserve and the Thunderhole Nature Preserve requesting changes to the verbiage. The signs will be a template for use at all NSS Preserves.
- Grant requests were received from:
 - Rockcastle Karst Conservancy who was awarded \$2,000 to assist with paying off the purchase of the Sloans Valley Preserve in Pulaski County, Kentucky.
 - Indiana Karst Conservancy (IKC) has submitted a grant request for their recent acquisition that expands the Robertson Nature Preserve. A recommendation has been made to Adam Weaver, NSS AVP, to grant \$2,000 to this request. Keith Dunlap, who submitted the grant for the IKC, has been notified and appreciates the assistance if granted.
- The issue of the NSS not having a Board Act regarding “Cave for Pay” was brought up by Emily Davis, NSS Preserve Manager, at the annual meeting. Adam Weaver, NSS AVP, is working on a motion and suggestions provided by Emily and others have been forwarded to Adam. The motion will not exclude students or University classes that may visit our Preserves, as we want to promote more research and engagement in the field of academia, as a tool for understanding and managing our Preserves. When the motion is placed on the NSS BOG agenda, please send comments to the NSS BOG as they represent the membership and need your comments and suggestions.

- We have been amazed with the progress that Adam has made with the Cave Protection Network (CPN) and are extremely excited to see the official launch after approval from the NSS BOG. At the very heart of the CPN, we will expand our NSS Preserves, strengthen our relationships with other conservancies, improve our outreach and education with the public, and increase our contact with show cave owners. And as a bonus, we will have a tremendous fundraising opportunity to support these programs with a perpetual revenue stream. The CPN embodies the Society's support of cave conservation, access, exploration, and education, thus we greatly appreciate this visionary path forward.
- With the development of the Cave Protection Network, we are no longer requesting donation reports for the NSS Preserves and Acquisitions Funds as these are being tracked by the NSS AVP and discussed with the NSS Preserves Chairs. We anticipate great things for the CPN and look forward to growing our Preserves with the money generated from this program.