National Speleological Society
Department of the Executive Vice President
Board of Governors Meeting
November 2023

The Department of the Executive Vice President is composed of seven committees listed below. The contact information for each committee can be found below or www.caves.org.

Department of the Executive Vice President

American Cave Accident Committee
Exploration Committee International
Exploration Committee U.S.
Journal of Cave and Karst Studies Committee
NSS News Committee
Research Advisory Committee
Special Publications Committee

Report from the Executive Vice President
Scott Engel, NSS 32520 RL, FE

The following highlights initiatives and activities that have been undertaken by the EVP department and subcommittees during this reporting period.

Scott Engel
Executive Vice President
Prepared October 16, 2023
EVP Committee Activities Summary

AMERICAN CAVING ACCIDENTS COMMITTEE

Adia Sovie, Editor
adia.sovie@gmail.com

Committee Members: Andy Armstrong, George Dasher, Richard Breisch, Forrest Wilson, Rene Ohms, Christian Stenner, Yvonne Droms, Sara Richards, Stephen Mosberg, Brian Dickey

Progress
Continued to collect and collate accident reports, improved ACA report submission process on caves.org

Plans
Working with the News staff to determine when to put out the next issue. With the transition of personnel for both the News and the ACA, there have been some delays so will not be published in 2023. It will likely be the February 2023 News issue.

Problems
Many members will directly email the previous editor (Bonnie Armstrong) accident reports. A note was published in the NSS news announcing the change, additional messaging may be needed.

INTERNATIONAL EXPLORATION GRANTS COMMITTEE

Cyndie Walck, co-chair
karstgirl@yahoo.com
Pat Kambesis Co-chair
pat.kambesis@wku.edu

Committee Members: Carol Veseley, Mike Ficco, Ben Hutchins

Progress
Applications for exploration grants were received in May2023. The following awards were granted in June 2023:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expedition Title</th>
<th>Submitter</th>
<th>Award</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEEP23 -Lebanon</td>
<td>Isasm Bou Jaoude</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kučka Korita Expedition -Montenegro</td>
<td>Sara Fleetwood</td>
<td>1150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proyecto Espeleológico Sistema Purificación, Cretaceous Park 2023</td>
<td>Abigail Mack</td>
<td>1150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runaway Creek Nature Reserve, Belize</td>
<td>Kyle Voyles</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expedition Summaries:

**DEEP23 - Lebanon:**
The DEEP23 targets Dara Sinkhole, the deepest cave in Lebanon (depth estimated between 612 and 622 m) located within the eastern Mediterranean coastal mountain range. The expedition objective is to document and protect the cave, which is under threat from fast-encroaching human development including quarrying, and construction of new roads and houses. Documentation and mapping of the cave will be used to make a case for the protection to local communities and government. This will include photography and filming as well.

**Kučka Korita Expedition - Montenegro:** This project has been ongoing since 2017 and has successfully mapped and documented several large and deep caves. Building on the previous mapping and exploration results, a three-week expedition is planned for the summer of 2023. The primary objective will be to continue exploration and mapping of Fever Dreams and Jos Trideset Metara. A secondary objective will be to explore, map and document additional entrances identified via drone and satellite imagery but not yet visited in the field. Based on experience to date, it is expected that these caves will be vertical in nature with extensive rigging necessary.

**Proyecto Espeleológico Sistema Purificación:**
The July 2023 PEP expedition will focus on the sub-area of Purificacion known as Cretaceous Park, located in the western side of the PEP study area and known for its many deep caves. The July 2023 expedition will begin by locating and investigating 316 new Lidar leads, documenting and mapping karst features, and mentoring the next generation of American and Mexican cavers.

**Runaway Creek Nature Reserve, Belize:**
This mapping and exploration project is driven by several ongoing research and management needs at Runaway Creek Nature Reserve (RCNR), Belize. We propose to continue an on-going cave survey, as well as continue to catalog Maya material culture and inventory and monitor invertebrates and wildlife at several RCNR caves. The reserve has over 100 known caves (Wynne 2021), of which only four have been completely surveyed.

**Plans**
Next round of awards will be in November.

**Problems**
The awardees were individually notified of their awards and told to contact the NSS office manager to arrange payment. However, they were directed to contact Michelle’s email address instead of the current staff. Additionally, there was confusion with the bookkeeper as to who to pay because several of the recipients requested that the awards be split amongst multiple individuals so that they could avoid taxes. While this has been a historical practice, it is not part of any written policy. This resulted in some delays in getting the checks sent out to the recipients.

**Corrective Action**
New instructions to all of the grant committees were sent out clarifying the email addresses that need to be included on the award notifications and that we will no longer be splitting checks.
US EXPLORATION COMMITTEE

Jason Ballensky, Chair
email: Jason@ballensky.com

Committee Members: Stan Allison, Dave Black, Hans Bodenhamer, Nikki Fox, Jon Lillestolen

Progress

We have awarded one grant since the last report: 1) Samuel Bona for Little Brush Creek Cave $1000

Summary:
Timpanogos Grotto’s Science and Exploration Committee is planning an expedition to Little Brush Creek Cave between December 31, 2023 and January 7, 2024. This is Utah’s longest cave at over seven miles in length, and we have the opportunity to increase it. Little Brush is only accessible during low water periods, usually September through March. This makes expeditions difficult as it requires sleeping outside in subzero conditions, sleeping in the cave, or staying at a hotel or cabin. I am asking for $1000 to subsidize the cost of renting a cabin, meal provisions, and a drill. The estimated cost of the total cost of this expedition to be between $3,600 - $4,500, depending on attendance. We are subsidizing the cost of housing and food to make the trip accessible for attendees.

Plans
Waiting on new proposals to be submitted.

Problems
None

RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Donald A. McFarlane, Chairman, 23523RE
Professor of Biology, W. M. Keck Science Center, the Claremont Colleges
925 North Mills Avenue,
Claremont, CA 91711-5916
909-607 2564
dmcfarlane@jsd.claremont.edu
http://www.caves.org/committee/rac/

Committee Members: Joyce Lundberg, (Assoc. Prof, Carleton University), John Mylroie (Mississippi State Univ; emeritus), Keith Christenson

Progress
No new rewards have been issued since the last report.

Plans
Waiting for new grant applications.

Problems
None
Progress

Progress: The September 2023 issue of the Journal was not published due to a lack of material being ready. There was only one manuscript cleared for publication at the time of the submission deadline. Therefore, it was decided to hold that material over to the December issue. We are still quite behind in manuscript copyediting with six manuscripts currently awaiting copyediting. Bert Ashbrook is now our full-time copyeditor and is doing an excellent job but we are still behind from our unexpected personnel changes in the last year.

We are continuing to receive high-quality manuscripts for consideration for publication in the Journal from throughout the world, but fewer than in past years due to our slow publishing rate the past few years. Publishing four times a year is a significant plus for the Journal. No other karst journal publishes as often as the Journal is published. We also continue to receive numerous poor-quality manuscripts that are rejected, often outright, without the need to submit to external reviewers. Our rejection of these poor-quality manuscripts shows that we continue to maintain very high standards. It must also be noted that some manuscripts are also rejected outright because they lack adequate focus on karst-specific issues. These manuscripts also suggest that many researchers want to be published in the Journal, but it adds to the review and editing burden. This has been recognized as an industry-wide problem, not limited to the Journal.

We still have several manuscripts working their way through the system (10 as of this writing), but our backlog is the smallest it has been in a number of years. We continue to reject approximately half or more submissions that we receive and some manuscripts that are eventually accepted have to be revised
two and even three times before they are accepted if we are to maintain our high standards (note each review and revision often take several months of time).

I routinely receive praise for the quality of the Journal, especially from foreign authors. This is a testament to the hard work our staff of AEs, our copyeditor, and our production editor put into each manuscript we receive.

Permissions: None this period.

Plans
Greg McDonald and Jim Mead have proposed publishing a series of papers presented at a recent paleontology conference. It is expected that this special issue will be an excellent addition to the published literature and is progressing nicely. Jim Mead, has been added to our staff as a temporary Associate Editor for the special paleontology issue.

Problems
The new NSS website does not allow for the registration of DOI numbers to individual manuscripts. We are working with Peter Johnson to get the Journal content pages updated and more accessible.

NSS NEWS COMMITTEE
Editors:
Joel Despain
Adam Weaver

Committee Members:
Ian Reuter-Newsletter Review
Philip Rykwalder-Caver Chronicles
Val Hildreth-Werker-Conservation Editor

Progress
Joel and Adam took over the NSS News beginning with the January 2023 issue, and they are continuing to learn and improved in their new roles and revitalize the News. Adam is continuing to make changes to the formatting and welcomes comments or suggestions.

The fonts used in the last several issues have been more favorably received than the first half of the year.

Plans
We are working to revise the guide to authors and submission guidelines to reflect current processes and content delivery.

Problems
We have had some minor issues with authors dissatisfied with how their submissions were edited for space and content. This is frequently the result of authors submitting too much content for the available space or poorly curated content. Having recognized this as a problem, we are working on revising the submission guidelines as noted above to make it more clear for what and how authors should submit to the News.
SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Dave Bunnell, Chair
davebunnell@comcast.net
Elizabeth Rousseau-layout and design

Progress
No new report from Dave this period.

Plans

Larry Matthews is working on finishing his next book in his TN series, it will likely be ready for next summer, hopefully in time for convention in TN. It will likely be comparable in size and cost to the other recent books by Larry.

On Rope Revision Progress:
Co-editors: Hazel Barton and Derek Bristol
We have approximately 128 pages of written content, which is in various stages of preparation (some near complete, some really preliminary). We have moved on from waiting for authors who have not submitted content and will be developing that with others.

As far as the images, that has been proceeding much more quickly. We spent some time working with the illustrator to gauge costs and decided that we will need to use much more photography than originally planned, based on the expense of the illustrations. We will therefore work with the illustrator just on images that would be difficult to capture using a camera.

The VTC student materials are ~110 pages long but all that imagery will probably be used in On Rope, so it’s been good practice. Of the 42 photographers, we have written copyright material from 28, with verbal or written commitments to return the copyright form from all but 3 people. Those remaining photographers either rejected the idea of providing any kind of copyright to the NSS or wanted payment for their images, so replacement photos are in the works.

Current goal is to have draft complete by next summer. Everything has been self-funded to date, so no costs are incurred yet.

Problems
I will be initiating a search to replace the Special Publications Chair.

--- End of EVP Report ---