

MEMBERSHIP DIVISION REPORT SPRING 2026

Awards Department Report

Accomplishments

By January 15, 2026 all nominations for the 2026 awards were sent to the members of the Awards Department, requesting their ballots to be submitted to the appropriate department sub-chairs by February 7.

Plans

By February 15 a report will be submitted to the Director of the BOG on the Award Department vote tallies.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Steele (NSS 8072) FE, LB, CM, AL

Report from Congress of Grottos:

Call for submissions for the 2026 Congress is going/gone out. Submissions will be collected and distributed in time for Internal Organization discussion prior to Convention.

Thanks,
Jon Zetterberg
865-253-6381
NSS 67484

Internal Organizaitons

2026-01-03

Update by Paul Winter, Chair

Accomplishments:

- Sent first wave of reminders for NSS Internal Organization Annual Report - working through providing access to new officers requesting it.
- Reactivated Harrison Crawford Grotto, GROSS was confirmed active and provided updated credentials.
- Supplied copy of bylaws per grotto information request.
- Provided/updated credentials for 16 grottos.

Plans:

- Final Review of new Roadrunner Grotto
- Review application information for potential new grotto in Gila, NM.

- Mail physical charter to PR Grotto, routing through NSS office for ED signature.
- Review all bounced emails.
- Review non-responding grottos, determine if active.
- Provide information about how to get a caves.org email group for internal organizations as best practice for long term access.

Vertical Section Report to NSS 1-20-26

Executive Board positions are:

Chair- Carl Heitmeyer

Vice Chair- Amy Bern

Secretary/Treasurer – John Bowling

At Large- Peter Welles

At Large- Emily Hannigan

Climb Contest Coordinator-Mark Skove

Workshop-Discover Vertical Caving Coordinator-Mark Chai

Education Liaison- Jessica Van Ord

Convention Liaison- Gary Bush

Presentation Coordinator- unfilled

Safety- unfilled

Goals for 25/26 yr

Early producing and communicating the VS activity convention schedule

Increase engagement with VS members

Obtaining more VS volunteers for VS activities at conventions

Executive Board meetings were held on Sept 24th and Dec 3rd, 2025.

2026 VS Convention activity schedule completed

Sunday- access gym & layout

Monday

am rigging

pm climb contest

Tuesday

Am Discover Vertical Caving

Pm climb contest

Wednesday

AM Discover Vertical Caving

PM de-rigging

Thursday

AM Vertical Presentations

PM Awards & Annual meeting/elections

Multiple VS web site updates completed by Gary Bush

Article on Climb Competition Results of the 2025 NY Convention, by Bill Boehle submitted to NSS News

Issues to work on for 1st quarter of 2026:

Membership engagement

Vertical Video of the Month

Nylon Highway

Presentation Topics and presenters

Requests for convention volunteers

Presentation- topics, presenters and schedule details finalized

Respectfully Submitted

Carl Heitmeyer-VS Chair 2025/2026

International Secretary

John Moses, Secretary (7009 CR)(FE), 915-539-6047,

johnmosesqsb@gmail.com; intlsecretary@caves.org

Committee: Val Hildreth-Werker (28963CL)(CM-CO-FE-OS), Hillsboro, NM;

David Larson (13906RL)(FE), Santa Barbara, CA; Tom Lera (14821RL)(CO-PH-FE), Orlando, FL

Accomplishments:

An NSS International Participation Grant was made to help fund Mexican paleontologist, Dr. Ivan Alarcon, associated with the Huautla Project (PESH), to attend the 2025 NSS Convention where he presented and was presented with NSS Honorary Membership.

An NSS Conservation Grant helped sponsor NSS member, Ana Celis, in attending an important UN environmental conference to introduce the importance of recognizing knowledge of karst and speleology in protecting global groundwater resources.

The report on the 2025 Brazilian International Congress of Speleology by the NSS International Secretary was printed in the December 2025 *NSS News* (V.83, I.12). Apologies to photographer G. Ponta and NSS members at the Congress who took time to attend the group photo session, as it was deleted from the published article.

The International Union of Speleology (UIS) approached UNESCO about designating an International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK), as an annual event. The purpose is simply to raise public awareness. We prepared a letter on the subject which was sent for publication, with some success, in American newspapers. At the General Conference of UNESCO in Samarkand (12 November 2025), 13 September was officially proclaimed the International Day of Caves and Karst — a global recognition of the significance of the hidden world beneath our feet. All international caving organizations are asked to begin to promote September 13, 2026, in observance of an IDCK. NSS needs a big push to start now in launching the first official nation-wide observation in 2026. Grottos & other cave organizations should plan local outreach, media, interpretive excursions and citizen science events.

Plans:

UIS Adjunct Secretary Val Hildreth-Werker is collaborating with the UIS Informatics Commission to add official Cave Conservation Symbols to the approved UIS Cave Mapping Symbols List. The Conservation Symbols reflect the Minimum-Impact Caving Protocols in wide use today and introduced in The NSS publication, *Cave Conservation and Restoration* (Hildreth-Werker and Werker) which is now an open access download at website: <https://caves.org/conservation/>

Romania was selected to host the 20th International Congress of Speleology in 2029. The university city of Cluj-Napoca will be the primary venue. The website for the event is now available at speleo2029.org. Two NSS members, Bogdan Onac and Gheorghe Ponta, are on the Congress organizing committee (president and vice-president, respectively).

To celebrate the first UNESCO International Day of Caves and Karst, speleologists in Postojna, Slovenia will host an event from September 10-13, 2026 to which all are invited. Additional information is available at the website uis-speleo.org.

Grant monies may be requested through the International Secretary Committee to assist NSS members (or individuals sponsored by the member) with international speleological participant

Membership

Accomplishments

Completed video
Posted to all IOs and social media.

Developed software to send reminders to those who have lapsed
Started sending reminders daily

Plans

Increase the size of the department.
Encourage IOs to get non-NSS members to join
Circulate the benefits of joining
With permission from IT Divisio

Convention Steering Department

Rich Geisler - Chair
Maureen Handler – NSS2024
Ken Moore – NSS2025
Mike Warner – NSS2025
Dean Wiseman – NSS2026
Laura Demarest – NSS2026
Jim Kennedy – NSS2027
Alexander Reed – NSS2028 (bid) Lee Florea – NSS2028 (bid)
Nick Socky – NSS2029 (prospect)
Dave Lester
Dave Socky
Blake Jordan
Blake Goodsell
Carol Tiderman

Progress

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

Problems • None at this time.

Plans

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

Convention Development Department

Department	Name	Phone	Email	NSS #
Caver Co-op	Myrna Attaway	205-369-9173	crazybatlady@aol.com	16921
Development	Rich Geisler	804- 338-2345	richgeisler11@gmail.com	33708
Grants	Buford Pruitt	828-450-5492	bpruitt570@gmail.com	17920
Historical Data	Rich Geisler	804- 338-2345	richgeisler11@gmail.com	33708
Membership	Carol Tiderman	410-792-0742	ctiderman@caves.org	10604
Publications -	looking for a replacement			
Registration	Margot Geisler	804-572-0022	margotgeisler@gmail.com	29761
Sessions	Bob Hoke	301-725-5877	bob@rhoke.net	19274

PROGRESS

- Del Rio, TX confirmed as the site of site of the 2027 NSS Convention ... 14-18 June 2027
- Continued communications with the confirmed and prospective groups: checking on their progress, passing along new information, filling requests for data, history, and other materials, answering any questions, etc.
- Soliciting hosts for future conventions.
- Providing information to groups considering hosting a convention.

PROBLEMS

- No officially confirmed host for NSS2028 and beyond

PLANS • Attend convention committee planning meetings (any year) whenever possible.

- Continue working with the group hosting NSS2026 in Corydon, IN
- Continue working with the group hosting NSS2027 in Del Rio, TX
- Continue working with the group bidding to host NSS2028 in Stevenson, WA
 - Scheduling a site visit sometime in April to early May 2026
 - Assist preparing the bid package for presentation at NSS2026
- Continue to solicit groups looking to host NSS2029 and/or beyond.

2026 NSS Convention

Summary: With only 5 months left before the event, everything is accelerating as expected!

Accomplishments

- Registration site is live with 157 registered; new features have recently been added for purchase (merchandise, field trips, workshops, on-site RV option) as well as 'Know Before You Go' section and 'Who's Coming' (NSS password protected)
- Sponsorship outreach has commenced
- Staff leaders are building out their teams of volunteers to assist as necessary
- Finalizing merchandise options for registration packets, badge holders, online store, etc.
- Entertainment has been contracted and some promotional material is being created to announce these acts later this spring
- Site visits to the Fairgrounds, high school to further discuss site logistics
- Large-scale informational 'Zoom' meeting held October 2nd @ 7pm ET to provide general updates to grotto leaders, regional cavers, unassigned volunteers, and other interested local parties
- Distributed info to io@caves.org for grottos to share convention content in their newsletters
- Updated budget and submitted to K. Ebrey for review (Oct 2025 copy pending final edits)
- Confirmed printer for Guidebook publication; all article drafts received and being reviewed
- Vendor information has been distributed and reservations are being made

- Program schedule has been drafted and ready to post publicly soon ●
- “Focus” meetings held for Cave Central planning, emergency management, volunteers, logistics
- Most of the convention items (signs, badge printer, medical tote, etc.) have been picked up from NSS HQ and transported to Indiana

Ongoing

- Treasurers using Quickbooks Online in coordination with NSS Treasurer, Kristine Ebrey and applying for state non-profit status (must be updated each month in compliance with Indiana regulations)
- Social media outreach continues via regular updates on NSS Convention Facebook page with good engagement
- Cave trip planning/access coordination - over 100+ caves available for visitation within 1 hour drive
- Volunteer Coordinator compiling and updating contact list and recommending staffing assignments ○ Providing verbal and written updates to regional grotto leaders and other locally influential community leaders
- Maintaining records on Google Drive, including subfolders where team leaders can store files/share work
- Pursuing/creating written agreements and contracts with various businesses
- Orientation to Cave Rescue training is being planned for the end of March in conjunction with local emergency services
- Working to compile information for pre/post camping and other activities on a webpage to be added to registration site

Plans

- Continue monthly planning meetings for primary staff (4th Sunday of the month at 7:30 pm ET) and scheduling ‘focus’ meetings with smaller groups as necessary (Zoom and in-person/on-site)
- Finalize contracts for Indiana Caverns (Howdy Party), Schnitzlbank (food), Fellows & New Members party site (Harrison County Discovery Center in Corydon), Organic Robot merchandise ASAP
- Prepare necessary documents for Program publication
- Set up convention ‘help line’ phone number and start advertising soon for guests
- Confirm details for meal pass at High School cafeteria and make available for purchase on registration site
- Solidify transportation for Howdy Party, JSS, daily shuttle, and other needs
- Decide on beverage/alcohol offerings and logistics; apply for necessary permits
- Equipment rentals for entertainment (stage, sound, etc.), vendor space (floor covering, pipe-and-drape), tables/chairs, etc.
- Formalize several field trips and proposed events; make them available for purchase on registration site

Accomplishments:

90% of staff positions are filled. All staff actively pursuing their responsibilities.
Monthly Zoom planning meetings to track progress and enable staff to do their jobs.

Facilities selected, and we are working on contract details with each.

Guidebook articles being written.

Web site begun, but not public.

Cave owners being contacted for Convention trips.

Invitations initiated to Mexican caving groups.

Convention swag being decided and designed.

Showers and porta-potties being planned and researched.

Howdy Party, Fellows Reception, and Banquet planning underway.

Geology field trip planned and guidebook section being written.

Buses and other transportation options investigated and decided upon.

Plans:

Upcoming site trip to confirm rental details.

Continue to fill unfilled staff positions.

Solicit sponsors.

Secure more caves for trips.

Request more guidebook articles.

Get facility contracts to Carol and Rich.

Keep on plugging away at the thousand little details needed to make this event fun, and a great success!

JSS 3P Report 01_2026

Tor Steinke JSS Department Chair

Accomplishments

- Continuing the process of engaging with past and present JSS Stakeholders to help to Augment/Enhance/Improve JSS best practices based on past successes and failures
- Continuing to work on a central Database/Library of JSS related information to help current and future JSS Convention Coordinators Plan
- Continuing work on the vertical gear retirement and replacement process for JSS.
- Updated JSS gear inventory post convention to see what our needs are for 2026
- Working with Vertical Section to get the correct vertical gear on our wish list. Developing a realistic budget and timeframe for acquiring gear and equipment
- Assisting Indiana and Texas Convention Staff with JSS Convention Coordinator duties

- Working to update the safety and security protocol and procedures for JSS to be more inline with The Boy Scouts of America(Scouting America) Youth Protection Training
- Working to create content for the JSS section(JSS Journal) in the NSS News dedicated to JSS related content including 2026 Convention Preview(JSS)

Plan

Work with JSS Convention volunteers for 2026 and 2027 to develop JSS plan and schedule for 2026 and 2027

- Start to acquire needed gear to augment our current and aging inventory.
- Work with Vertical Section to revamp our JSS Vertical Training Day at convention to be more efficient
- Advertise and promote new JSS Journal section of the NSS News and work to establish regular content submissions
- Work towards formalizing lower(7-12) and upper(13-17) age divisions within JSS

CDS

NO REPORT