

# The Western Cave Conservancy, Inc.

213 Elm Street • Santa Cruz, California 95060

Voice or fax: (831) 421-0485 • Email: [mail@westerncaves.org](mailto:mail@westerncaves.org)

## **Public Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Western Cave Conservancy, held Saturday, August 4, 2007**

Pursuant to notice duly given to the directors and the public, the summer meeting of the Western Cave Conservancy was held on the above day and date at the office of the corporation in Santa Cruz, California.

### **ATTENDEES**

Rolf Aalbu, Director/Vice President  
Don Dunn, Director (by speakerphone)  
Robert Martin Haye, Director/Treasurer  
Jerry Johnson, Director  
Bruce Rogers, Director (arrived 2:10 p.m.)  
Marianne Russo, Director/President  
Mike White, Director (by speakerphone)  
Dan Snyder, Secretary

Absent: Joel Despain, Director

Guests: Denise Aalbu, Pat Helton (arrived at 2:10 p.m.)

President Marianne Russo called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Don added item: needs replacement for Public Relations Committee Chair.

Martin added item: Land Trust Alliance renewal.

Rolf has an item in his report that may call for action in New Business.

Agenda approved as modified.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF APRIL**

Marianne notes that Avalanche report is truncated. Dan will correct. Approved as corrected.

### **OFFICER REPORTS**

President's Report (Marianne—attached)

Vice President (Rolf—no activity; Martin made all deposits in the last quarter)

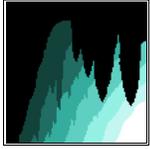
Treasurer (Martin—attached)

Secretary (Dan—no activity except review and comments on Weller Preserve Management Plan)

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Public Relations Advisory (Don states covered by President's report)

Land Research Advisory (Rolf—to be emailed to board by Rolf)



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Land Acquisitions Advisory (Martin—no action, except Mike's proposal to place a conservation easement on Sink Cave)

Property Stewardship Advisory (Joel absent—no report submitted; Marianne states that Pat Helton is currently editing the Weller Preserve Management Plan final draft; Windeler on hold until fall due to heat and nearby marijuana plantation problems; Windeler road gate was intact when checked last by Beth Martinez; Jim Hildebrand responsible for gate design but no news yet; Marianne reiterated that upon reopening the cave, we may find the culvert collapsed.

Human Resources Advisory (Marianne—attached)

Weller Natural Preserve Manager's Report (Marianne—attached)

## **DISCUSSION OF COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Regarding Weller Preserve report: Marianne would like to demolish the rapidly deteriorating structure in the fall. Martin will introduce a motion to demolish the structure in New Business.

Neighbor bordering the north line of the Weller Preserve is planning to split and sell 10 acres of his property.

Advisory Board (created in April): discussion of options and implementation.

Term limits: Mike sees real value in establishing term limits on the advisory committee and the board of directors. It sends a clear message to the community that it is not only ok to step up and volunteer, but it is vital since the current members cannot serve indefinitely. This will be discussed further in Committee of the Whole.

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

The committee was seated at 2:58 p.m.

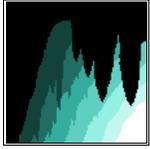
### **Current Projects**

**Rippled Cave:** management plan status, upcoming plans for work on the preserve; building plans; use of Rippled Cave for beginner trips.

Regarding use of the cave by NSS grottos for beginner trips: Marianne outlined the Mother Lode Grotto's new protocol for novice trips to Rippled Cave. The grotto has asked for WCC's permission for this particular use. Bruce noted that if a WCC officer or director is present at such a beginner trip, it could bring home the importance of good landowner relations to introduce him/her to the trip participants.

A motion will be introduced in New Business condoning this use by grottos.

**Avalanche Cave status:** Marianne reviewed the history of WCC's interaction with the corporate landowner. Unfortunately, the company's attorneys have recently decided that any recreational use of its land requires a \$1 million insurance rider. The company arranges (and pays for?) this, but will only permit one trip per year. Marianne has contacted the three NSS chapters that visit the cave annually.



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V o i c e o r f a x : ( 8 3 1 ) 4 2 1 - 0 4 8 5 • E m a i l : [mail@westerncaves.org](mailto:mail@westerncaves.org)

More worrisome, when Dan spoke to Tim Feller, district supervisor for the landowner's Tahoe district, Tim stated that a group had been to the caves without "following proper protocol," i.e. without signing the company's liability releases. He did not know the identity of this group. Also, he stated that a group had accompanied the foresters on a pre-harvest inspection and attempted to "tell us what trees we could and couldn't cut." Again, he did not know the identity of the group, but Dan (at that time calling as a Mother Lode Grotto member requesting permission to lead a trip to the caves) feared that Tim had heard a garbled account of WCC's visit last year with Carl Bystry and Wes Crum. Dan reiterated to Tim that WCC has never opposed the timber harvest, or logging in general; also that Marianne provided the three area caving clubs with the liability releases.

**New Melones Cave Survey Project:** Marianne has done nothing, being discouraged by the \$1M insurance requirement, which she believes we are unlikely to be able to fulfill. She will call Dan Holsapple and Glen Malliet, however. Mike and his friends intend to proceed on a voluntary basis to maintain a good relationship with the New Melones staff.

Bruce suggests to Mike that the Bureau may have workers compensation insurance for volunteers under the VIP (Volunteers in Parks) program, which he believes has been expanded to include all land managers under the Department of the Interior.

### **Sink Cave Conservation Easement Proposal:**

Mike recently spoke to [REDACTED], the tenant on the Sink Cave property, whose home he happened to visit on a professional service call. Mike spoke at length to the tenant, who is the father of the property owner. Bruce and Dan have previously had cordial relations with the owners and their parents, having mapped and investigated the cave in 1994. During that investigation, Bruce Rogers and USGS colleague Johanna Fenton discovered a fossil bone deposit in the cave that proved to be about 22,000 years old.

Bruce will take the lead in pursuing this project with the owners, in cooperation with Bill Frantz, our CE specialist. Marianne will call Bill Frantz to get him involved.

### **Prepayment Options for Rippled Cave:**

Martin notes that WCC's present cash assets would permit us to pay all outstanding loans, leaving about \$500 in unrestricted funds and \$2,500 in the restricted Windeler Fund.

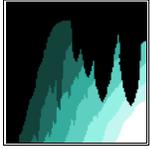
Outstanding loans:

[REDACTED]: \$7,260  
[REDACTED]: \$5,086  
[REDACTED]: \$2,593  
[REDACTED]: \$2,074  
[REDACTED]: \$1,037

A motion will be introduced to pay off the largest loans ([REDACTED] & [REDACTED]).

Ten minute recess at 3:43 p.m.

### **Insurance Subcommittee**



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Marianne contacted Mike Walsh of the Texas Cave Conservancy, to learn how they obtained LTA's insurance. They obtained this insurance as a "quasi-commercial" operation, as they lead docent tours of tightly controlled caves that they manage for a local government. It appears that their situation is quite different from WCC.

Bruce has obtained material from Charles Fox, a lawyer specializing in liability who has been working with CRF trying to get them liability insurance. CRF's insurance does not cover any caving activities. Fox tried for two years to find affordable insurance and the best he could find was a restrictive policy with a minimum premium of \$40,000/year. Fox does not believe we will find affordable liability insurance, and does not believe that insurance to cover caving activities is available at any price.

## **Website Issues**

Dan recently learned that the last newsletter has never been posted to the website, and no email announcement has gone out for it. Mike offered some insight into the issue; Martin will follow up.

## **Email Inquiry Regarding Publication of Cave Surveys**

No action required.

■■■■■ (Arizona)

Martin has already shared with the board by email Tom Gilleland's information that a contractor has been engaged to clean up the pit. No further information.

## **Weller Natural Preserve Management Plan**

Pat Helton reported on her editing of the management plan. She thinks it needs a couple more passes; however, this will not happen until early September, as Pat will be back east.

## **2007 Indiana Convention**

Joel was unable to attend the Cave Conservancies Roundtable.

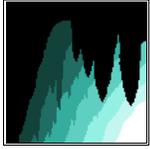
## **Promotional Pens**

Bill Papke has offered to donate promotional pens for use as give-aways. They have space for three lines of text. The board is curious whether these pens are available with waterproof ink. Bill's offer of free advertising is welcome. Don wonders whether, if WCC paid to upgrade to waterproof, these might be saleable.

## **Revisit Name of PR Committee**

Marianne wondered whether the PR Committee's new, simplified name (omitting "Fundraising") might confuse people who don't equate PR with fundraising. The consensus is that this is not important enough to worry about.

## **Email Inquiry Regarding Publication of Cave Surveys**



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No action required.

## **Credit Card Processing Rule Change**

Martin researched the issue during recess and learned that since we are a “Level 4” credit card processor, we can complete a self-assessment questionnaire and have our computer network security evaluated yearly, which will cost on the order of \$50. It appears, therefore, that the new rules probably won’t make credit card acceptance prohibitively expensive for WCC.

## **Term Limits for Directors**

Martin notes the appeal in terms of bringing in fresh blood. Don reiterates Mike’s point that this allows people to run for the board without feeling they’re challenging established directors. Don nevertheless expressed reservations about the precipitous loss of expertise that would result if this were implemented carelessly.

Rolf feels that we should first get the advisory board up and running, so that we have a pool of successors.

Mike states that there have been comments in the caving community about lack of term limits, as well as others who have felt too intimidated to show interest.

Marianne suggests that we proceed cautiously, first establishing the advisory board.

Don would like to see us incorporate a discussion of the need for fresh blood and solicitation of ideas for bringing on new people at our grotto presentations.

Martin believes that enacting term limits now will only help fill the advisory board. Telling people we want to change without a decisive action like this sounds wishy-washy to him.

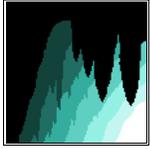
Mike related the example of Columbia Grotto, where successors for the chairmanship only emerged after he stepped down.

Dan notes that the board can enact term limits as a change to the bylaws or as a board resolution. In the latter case, if indeed term limits do not inspire greater participation from the community, they can be repealed.

Don expressed concern that we have not actually talked to members and the public to see if this is an issue for them.

Marianne returned to Don’s idea that we first broach the idea at our grotto presentations, and that though she feels “90% there” she thinks we should wait until fall or even the public meeting in January, when the impact of the announcement would be greatest.

Mike addressed concerns about loss of experience by asking whether WCC could institute a system whereby an incoming officer or committee chair has a period of overlap with the outgoing person in order to orient and train.



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Also, Dan clarified with Mike that Mike proposes term limits not only for directors but also for officers and committee chairs. Rotation of positions (other than directors) would be fine.

The committee rose at 5:00 p.m.

Marianne Russo called the meeting back to order at 5:22 p.m.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

*Whereas fundraising efforts for Rippled Cave have been very successful, and*

*Whereas several loans remain outstanding, but*

*Whereas the conservancy wishes to maintain a prudent cash reserve, therefore be it*

*Resolved, that the Treasurer is authorized to immediately pay off some of the outstanding loan balances, not to exceed \$13,000. (B2007-3-1)*

*RESOLVED, that the existing building on the Weller Natural Preserve be demolished, salvaging such materials as are deemed useable for the construction of a temporary shed or structure for storage of the toilet, tools and other supplies to be kept on site. (Rogers B2007-3-2)*

*RESOLVED, that the WCC allow permitted organizations to use Rippled Cave for beginner or novice training trips, provided that the following information is clearly communicated:*

- 1) The access policy in the Weller Preserve Management Plan is described, with an explanation of how it works and why the policy was set.*
- 2) The property is regularly monitored by the preserve manager, volunteers and neighbors who will report trespassers to the sheriff.*
- 3) We suggest that newcomers be made to feel that they are now part of our community and thus have a personal stake in the ownership and successful management of Rippled Cave.*

*(B2007-3-3)*

*By consensus, the next meeting of the board of directors will be held at the Weller Natural Preserve on November 17th, 2007 at 1:00 pm.*

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

I attest that the above is, to the best of my knowledge, the true and complete record of business conducted at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the Western Cave Conservancy held on August 4, 2007.

Daniel S. Snyder, Secretary