



Western Cave Conservancy

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Minutes for the Meeting of the Board of Directors of January 28, 2012

Held at the home of Bill and Peri Frantz in Los Gatos, California

Call to Order: 1:00 pm

Attending were: Martin Haye, Marianne Russo, Jerry Johnson, Eileen Belan, Bruce Rogers, Mike Spiess, Pat Helton, Bill Frantz, Peri Frantz, Ray Beach, Gale Beach, Kelley Prebil, Kaedean Doppelmayer, Marc Hasbrouck, Nick Schmalenberger, Rich Steiger, Zack Westlake, Barb Ruble, Steve Ruble, Eileen Belan, Joel Despain, Gail McCoy, James Lakner, Claire Lakner, Denise Fourès-Aalbu, Richard Minert

Attending by phone: Dave Cowan and Steve Knutson

Approval of the Agenda

Item added: Announcement about award given to Matt Leissring & Heather McDonald at MLG Christmas party.

Motion to approve the agenda with the above added item; seconded; all in favor.

Approval of the Minutes

Marianne Russo moved that we distribute the minutes (also the minutes for the August meeting) via email and approve via email in the next week.

Reports Discussion

Officers and directors briefly recapped their emailed reports and discussed any questions.

President's Report: Martin Haye

He helped work on the membership database and did some board recruiting. Dan has assisted by taking over some clerking duties & wants to do more as well (he takes in checks, scans them, and sends them to Eileen Belan & Mike Spiess). Martin coordinated this meeting, resolved some issues with the email list, posted job descriptions on the WCC Website, sent management plans to Kelley Prebil to put on the Website (or he will post them himself). He will put the minutes on the Website & continue adding to the Website, and will transition duties to Marianne Russo as the new President.

Vice-President's Report: Marianne Russo

She has been overseeing Special Projects, and she's often the WCC contact person for projects etc.

Treasurer's Report: Mike Spiess

We have about \$28,000 in the bank; Mike would like to double that. We're in the black but our revenue is way down (our only significant income is from membership dues); expenses are also down for now. Financial items are finalized but need to be approved. A membership drive should help things. (Immediate donations were received from both Peri Frantz and Bruce Rogers.)

Secretary's Report: Eileen Belan

No report.

Acquisitions Report: Bruce Rogers

Bruce worked on several projects, including: issues about the Cave Next Door in Oregon; the possibility of working with the Bureau of Recreation at New Melones Reservoir area; cave resources at CEMEX Redwoods (San Vicente Redwoods); and continued work on the Rippled Cave map.

Human Resources Report: Jerry Johnson

See submitted report.

Public Relations Report: Marianne Russo

Mike Spiess created an easy-to-use membership database that's working well. It contains no personal info like credit cards, copies of checks, etc. Eileen Belan has helped enter the data, and they're working on entering "historic" info so that the database is complete. It's important for following when people renew memberships etc. More solicitations for membership will be done by email.

One newsletter went out just after the last meeting; another is in the works but has been delayed by other tasks. Kelley Prebil has been doing well keeping up with the Website.

Asked if anyone would like to help (lead?) with developing a display to take to Bend & other places.

Research Report: Rolf Aalbu

Rolf has been very busy with other tasks and has been less involved with the WCC than he'd like; therefore, he will be resigning the Board after this meeting. He's talked with Geo Graening who is interested in replacing Rolf—we'll have to continue discussions with Geo.

Stewardship Report: Martin Haye

Windeler Cave—recap for 2011: There were two committee work trips in the cave: 1) photoinventory & placing flagging or pebbles to mark sensitive or "off-limits" areas (Joel Despain determined some of these sensitive areas in 2009); and 2) more marking & orienting by Ron Davis who will replace Martin as the San Joaquin Valley Grotto trustee. Six grotto trips were made last year by Diablo Grotto, Mother Lode Grotto (MLG), Stanislaus Grotto, San Joaquin Valley Grotto, and two others; there were no San Francisco Bay Chapter or Independent trips. Kelley Prebil, due to hip surgery last year, will lead the SFBC 2011 trip in February and another one later for 2012.

The Windeler Cave Agreement with the Forest Service needed to be renewed, and the Forest Service decided that a "Challenge Cost Share" agreement will be more appropriate, so in the meantime they extended the current agreement. They can receive funds for hours worked under the agreement, but there will be no cost to us—we only need to keep track of our hours worked. (This is similar to the NPS's VIP [Volunteers in Parks] program.)

Is the lower culvert changing shape? No, it doesn't appear to be changing. We need to do some modifications to the location of the lock. There's evidence of some visitation to the cave entrance; we'll be more careful to cover it in the future trips. There was some discussion about "mining claim" vs the recent "placer claim" on the property. We've added a "lode claim" by WCC members (not by WCC). We're hoping the placer claimant will forget to renew and we'll pick it up. The WCC will keep the underground wilderness status. We'll remain vigilant watching for break-in attempts. We plan to replace the outer gate with a system that's more secure and still allows unlocking the gate from the inside if necessary; the ladder needs some repairs, hopefully without needing to remove it. Marianne said that a trip she was on did not require everyone to sign a release/liability waiver form; we need to remind trustees that it's important to get those signed.

Weller Perserve/Rippled Cave: There's not been a lot of visitation lately; there were three work trips in the last quarter and no organized caving trips. It's been very dry this winter. Someone recently (not on an official trip) found an Easter egg & left it there for Marianne Russo without identifying themselves. Jerry Johnson has done well killing off the poison oak around the building & cave, and the Scotch broom is under control. Boundary markers should be finished in the next few weeks. It appears we will have several smaller trips during 2012 rather than mob trips. Bruce Rogers wants to do a trip sometime to fieldcheck the cave map he's working on.

Volunteers: Jerry Johnson

We have about the same number of people on the Advisory Board. We need to complete our Board Manual—it's now a 16-page document with all the info he's been able to pull from various documents & from knowledge. When Marianne Russo & Martin Hays get together to work on membership issues, Jerry will try to meet with Dan to cover more of the manual. He brought paper copies of job descriptions for the positions that we need to fill now.

Committee of the Whole – Part 1

CEMEX project in depth; review situation and actions, discuss the future (Bruce Rogers)

A year and a half ago word came out that CEMEX, in Davenport, was considering selling part of their property. Bruce talked with Sempervirens Fund (SVF) who was rumored to be working on a deal w/CEMEX. This year the purchase was completed: 8,532 acres for \$30 million. He called back to SVF & talked with them. He then met with representatives from SVF and Peninsula Open-Space Trust (POST), as well as Richard Minert and Regan Barry (former SFBC members) on January 6, 2012, for 2.5 hours. SF/POST have contracted with another scientific outfit to inventory the property, which will probably take 6 months. Bruce told them that the WCC can help with inventory & locating caves as well as Trustee programs that are currently being used effectively elsewhere. They were most eager to go underground to see the cave(s) so Bruce is currently scheduling a trip with them at their convenience. They are looking at how the WCC can dovetail with the other groups who are working on conserving the property. Bill Frantz asked about other caving areas (e.g., Bonnie Boondoggle Cave) in the region—were they purchased or are they still held by CEMEX? CEMEX kept all the water rights, and the properties sold are not contiguous—it's complicated. So to answer Bill, possibly/probably not. We are trying to build a trust relationship with them now. Richard Minert added that SF/POST were appreciative that Bruce mentioned to them that the WCC could help bring in scientists to help evaluate the property. Bruce emphasized that he is the point-of-contact for the caving community about the property and the caves there. If anyone is contacted by the media etc. asking anything about the property or the caves, please direct them to Bruce. What about old info (photos, maps, etc)? The legal status of POST is that they are a non-profit. Bruce mentioned that Big Creek Lumber is doing the security for the property for SF/POST; it's possible that some of the conservation easements may be transferred to other groups. It's understood that any logging will be done (and has historically been done) very selectively. Peri Frantz: perhaps the WCC could hold an easement for the cave areas in the future. Richard Minert felt it's quite possible because SF/POST seem to view that the WCC is a good/ideal organization to work with on this. Again: If anyone is contacted by media etc asking anything about the property/caves, please direct them to Bruce.

2012 Budget discussion: increase income? (Mike Spiess)

The 2012 budget projection is: income \$13,800, expenses \$9,010.

We plan to raise more money, and we plan to spend more partly to raise that money. The Windeler Cave gate will be expensive (we have \$1400 for that). We'll have two WCC fundraising dinners this year which will help. We had low numbers at last year's one dinner (and we only had one—none at the Regional). Kaedean Doppelmeyr pointed out that the WCC dinners, in addition to fundraising, also bring in more membership money & new members.

Membership database update; policy on data release? (Mike Spiess)

What do we do with the member data? We don't publish it & haven't been asked for it at this point—it was decided that we'll discuss & deal with it if we're asked.

Announcement about Matt/Heather award given at MLG Christmas party (Marianne Russo)

Marianne Russo read the inscription on the plaque that was presented to Heather McDonald and Matt Leissing in thanks for all the work they've done at the Weller Preserve, on the WCC Newsletter, and in other service to the WCC.

New officers and directors. Some people have stepped up. More nominations? (Martin Haye)

Martin Haye's stepping down as President, and Rolf Aalbu & Eileen Belan are stepping down as Directors, which puts us at the minimum for a Board. We're asking for nominations & volunteers who are interested in participating. To fill: Secretary (minutes, renewal reminders, thank-you's, maintain member database); Director of Cooperative Projects (e.g., Clough Cave restoration, which wore Marianne Russo out); plus two more Director positions to be defined. We have a lot of great projects coming up that need to have people involved. If anyone is interested, please talk with a Board member at the break—nominations will be made & approved at the end of the meeting. Marianne also added a request for more Advisory Board members. Kelley Prebil has volunteered to join the Board—she's gone from the periphery to being very involved with Windeler Cave, the Website, and other work.

Photo sharing discussion: access control; GPS embedded in files (Martin Haye/Marianne Russo/Matt Bowers)

Some new cameras and phones with cameras also have a built-in GPS. When photos are taken, a location is stored with the photo. When these photos are uploaded to a Website, often it's possible to view the detail info about the photo, which includes the GPS location. Most of the people uploading these photos are unaware that they are also providing location data to anyone who looks at their photos and knows how to view the location info. This can be a significant problem when we try not to disclose cave locations.

How about adding a paragraph to the release form about not posting photos with GPS info etc. (we will probably need another signature or initials there—we'll need to ask a lawyer). If someone then does post photos with GPS info, they would be banned from further trips to that cave (Windeler, etc.). Perhaps there should be training sessions (at Speleo-Ed or grotto meetings) so people will be aware of the problem & learn how to remove GPS info from their photos. Bill Frantz commented that Europe has had GPS locations for well-known caves for a long time; how do they deal with that? He feels the US is heading that way and should figure out how to handle it.

Someone suggested that one of the new Directorships should be Director of Education. Another suggestion from Kaedean Doppelmeyr : She talked with Matt Bowers about this at Clough Cave, where they had to repeatedly explain to participants what the various formations are. So how about a boot camp for this? Peri explained about an educational presentation in Pacific Grove. Should we be taking presentations into schools?

This could have a more long-term benefit towards cave conservation and respect/appreciation. Arizona Desert Museum has a crawl-through cave & display. It was agreed that we need to do more education.

Break

Committee of the Whole – Part 2

Possible involvement with Cave Next Door (Martin Hays/Steve Knutson/Dave Hodges)

Steve Knudson: Dave Hodges did some digging (an 80-ft tunnel through fill at the resurgence) in the late '90's to get into this cave, which is near Cave Junction, Oregon. He did some mapping; then the big tunnel collapsed. He then did some digging at a sinkhole nearby (where water poured in and disappeared). He found a resurgence on Lake Creek.... Dave's now into a narrow band of marble again. Steve gave a very nice overview of Dave's history with digging there, and the problems working under KMCTF. He suggested that the WCC should file for the permit they need so that their work will proceed under WCC rather than KMCTF. New Website: <http://cavenextdoor.org/> He continued to relate the excitement of going through clay-filled passage into virgin cave; they have seen ~1200 feet of the cave following that narrow band of marble.

Martin Hays: So it sounds like he's asking for the WCC to be involved as an administrative body. Martin commented that it sounds like a super-cool project and I want to go dig there, and I think it would be great for the WCC to get involved; it could be an opportunity to get good media attention without threatening caves.

Steve Knutson added regarding the Use Permits: an MOU is one way of allowing work in the forest; a Use Permit is another. He suggested we look into that and get more understanding about Use Permits.

Mike Spiess: thinks a Use Permit is just permission to use land for their own work, with their own liability; an MOU is for mutual benefit work & the liability may be different.

Marianne Russo: what's being done about security of the dig? Steve said that Dave has a couple of gates within the entrance tunnel. He also has a way to collapse the whole thing if the Forest Service decided to open it up to public tours (does not want!).

Martin Hays: Proposes that he (Martin) go up & work with Dave at the dig for a few hours, opening the opportunity to see the work/situation and to talk with Dave. There should be someone on the Board who is Dave's liaison to the WCC. Many people expressed positive encouragement that the WCC look into getting involved—look into the Use Permit—look into liability/insurance, etc.

Dave said the attitude from the Forest Service seems good & agreeable. He's continued to dig & they haven't gotten upset. The idea is that this spring it should be done, referring to the permit.

Richard Minert asked what kind of narrative is expected on the Use Permit—not much.

How far from the resurgence to the dig/cave? Max flow of the resurgence? Probably ~1/2cfs per Steve—actually a tiny flow, and less than what comes out.

Mike Spiess: Is the MOU off the table with the Forest Service? Dave has dealt with a new ranger who suggested the Use Permit, but Steve feels that they may agree to a different agreement (like an MOU) if the WCC starts talking with them about it.

Martin Haye: The consensus seems to be that we're interested & need to look into it. We need to get together a trip for some WCC people to meet with Dave, and to have a sit-down with the ranger.

Steve Knutson: If the project gets going & Dave breaks into the cave, there will be room for other people to work with Dave because there's a lot of work to be done.

Possible involvement with Cave of the Winding Stair (Matt Bowers)

Matt Bowers: Sent an email recently to NSSwest list about the status of the park/cave. The Providence Mountains State Recreation Area is "closed" due to lack of funds and as a result there have been recent vandalism problems. Cavers recently held a rescue training there with permission of the SRA, and it was a success and it seems to have favorably impressed them that we're a responsible group. Bernie Szukalski has a good relationship with the Mojave National Natural Preserve and has talked with Matt about possibilities here. Again, there are liability issues: the cave is quite vertical & requires very experienced cavers. Possibility: lease the area for \$1 and run it as a commercial operation. There are other caves on the property as well. The NSS has an MOU with a number of agencies; would the WCC be interested in joining the Western Region in an agreement with the State? Jennifer Hopper (SoCal & San Joaquin Valley Grottos) is the point person for the program. Martin Haye said yes, he'd prefer she report to WCC rather than WR. Should we request a key? Issues of liability again... there was some discussion & consideration. Barb: The San Francisco Bar Association will provide a 1/2-hour appointment with a lawyer for \$25. Sounds good! Matt wants to use wording that the WCC has already used at Windeler.

Peri Frantz: The NSS pays ~\$20,000/yr for liability insurance that covers nationwide. If we need to purchase additional insurance, Matt said that the Western Region may be able to help pay for it.

Possible project at Mountain Quarry (Matt Bowers)

Near Auburn/Auburn Recreation Area—an active marble quarry which was supposed to have been flooded with the construction of the dam & filling the reservoir. Nearby is one of the most significant Pleistocene fossil sites. There's also a lake in the underground quarry that people raft on. Martin Haye: Involvement of the WCC will probably depend on who takes on the position as Director of Special Projects & whether they want to push this project.

New sign and trail guide at Calaveras Natural Bridges – WCC interest? (Matt Bowers)

Interpretive signs are missing/damaged and Matt suggested that this would be an excellent opportunity for an organized caving organization to put together a booklet that could be handed out to visitors explaining why it's a Bad Thing to break off formations, etc. It's promoted for educational activities, and lots of people go there to visit. This would be a great opportunity to get our name out there & work toward the educational side of our mission. There's also a need for a couple of trail signs. Mike Spiess suggested metal, cut into the shape of a cave (he has connections with someone who can do this). Bruce Rogers said that if Matt will continue to be the point person for the project, he will help with content for the booklet, and Bill Frantz said he would help as well. Therefore, a subcommittee just formed.

Matt Bowers tried to rent the quarry on Camp Nine Road for the Regional, and they said that quarry reclamation should be starting soon, so the answer was "No." Is there a possibility of purchasing that land from them? There are several nice caves on the property. Matt will spend 1.5 hour to move boxes from the courthouse to retrieve the reclamation plan—then we'll know what the plan is. Matt will keep pushing on this possibility. Is

there a Foothills Conservancy? We don't know...

Board retreat: it is high time for another 2-3 days together to focus and set goals (Mike Spiess/Marianne Russo)

Break to craft motions:

Motion: that we appoint Matt Bowers, Zack Westlake, and Richard Minert to the Advisory Board.

Marianne moved, Mike seconded, all in favor. Motion passed.

Motion: that we appoint Marianne Russo as President

Motion: that we appoint Mike Spiess as Vice President

Motion: that we appoint Martin Haye as Secretary

Motion: that we appoint Kelley Prebil as Director of Special Projects

Bruce moved the above four positions, Mike seconded, all in favor. Motions passed.

Motion: that we appoint Kaedean Doppelmayer as Director of Special Events for term of one year

Bruce moved, Jerry seconded, all in favor. Motion passed.

Adjournment: 5:00 pm

There was a follow-up phone meeting on 02/02/2012 at 7:30pm to finish several items.

Present were: Rolf Aalbu, Martin Haye, Marianne Russo, Eileen Belan, Bruce Rogers, and Pat Helton.

Motions:

- Marianne Russo is hereby nominated and elected to a three-year term as Director, with the title "Public Relations Director".

motioned, seconded, all in favor, motion passed

- Jerry Johnson is hereby nominated and elected to a three-year term as Director, with the title "Volunteer Resources Director".

motioned, seconded, all in favor, motion passed

- Kelley Prebil is hereby nominated and elected to a one-year term as Director, with the title "Cooperative Projects Director".

motioned, seconded, all in favor, motion passed

- Kaedean Doppelmayer is hereby nominated and elected to a one-year term as Director, with the title "Special Events Director".

motioned, seconded, all in favor, motion passed (Rolf abstained)

- The tentative budget presented by the Treasurer on January 28 is hereby approved as the official WCC working budget for 2012.

motioned, seconded, all in favor, motion passed

- The draft minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of August 2, 2011, are hereby approved.

motioned, seconded, all in favor, motion passed

- The draft minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of November 12, 2011, are hereby approved.

[There were comments about making future minutes more complete.]

motioned, seconded, all in favor, motion passed

- Whereas visitors to Conservancy caves often post photos of their trips to various Internet sites, but be unaware that those photos may include GPS coordinates, Resolved that visitors to Conservancy Caves shall be informed prior to their trip that they should turn off the GPS recording feature of their devices (cell phone, camera, etc.), or else strip the information from resulting photos before posting them. Further resolved that Stewardship Director shall add a clause to the WCC liability releases explaining the issue and why it is a danger to cave conservation, and requesting a signature indicating that they understand the policy and will comply.

There was discussion about rewording this, and the following was approved:

“Please be aware that certain cameras and telephone cameras record GPS locations.”

Marianne moved as Martin wrote the motion above, Rolf seconded, all in favor, motion passed

There was discussion about when & where to hold the next meeting.

3 months from now...beginning of May/last of April

Martin Haye thanked the outgoing directors (Rolf Aalbu & Eileen Belan) for their work & service to the WCC.

Marianne Russo asked about the Advisory Board email group...is Jerry Johnson on it now? Eileen Belan didn't respond to the email invitation [to join the group] that she received because she didn't think she'd be on it for long as an outgoing Director...but this is for the Advisory Board group. She'll respond to the email & get on the list. Martin Haye will re-send the invitation email to her & to some of the others.

Telecon meeting adjourned at 8:06pm.