



# Western Cave Conservancy

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*Minutes for the Winter Meeting of the Board of Directors  
on Saturday, January 25, 2014*

*Held at the Livermore Public Library, Livermore, CA*

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*Next Meeting: May 3, 2014*

*At the home of Mark Bowers, Director of Public Relations,*

*4116 Loch Lomand Way, Livermore CA*

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## **Call to Order: at 1:21 PM**

Attending were: Bruce Rogers (President), Marianne Russo (Secretary), Jerry Johnson (Director of Volunteer Resources), Mike Spiess (VP & Treasurer), Kelley Prebil (Stewardship Director), Pat Helton (Recording Secretary); Advisors: Martin Haye, David Weaver, Gail McCoy, Bill Frantz, Mark Bowers, Chuck Chavdarian, Jim Lakner, Barb Ruble, Steve Ruble, Ray Beach, Gale Beach, Sharon Jobrock-Bowers, Dan Snyder, Nick Schmalenberger, Heather McDonald, Matt Leissring

## **Approval of the Agenda**

By acclamation; no discussion, no dissention.

## **Approval of Minutes of October 26, 2013, Meeting in Scaramento**

*(a few small corrctions, already announced, were made)*

Mike moved, Marianne seconded; all in favor.

## **Officer Reports Discussion**

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

### ***President's Report: Bruce Rogers***

Bruce recapped his report (some advisors had not received his emailed report). Bruce signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) & Sempervirens regarding the Davenport CEMEX tract (San Vicente Redwoods), agreeing that the WCC will assist with management and research of the caves on that property.

Bruce will be giving a presentation & field trip with the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History next weekend.

### ***Vice-President's Report: Mike Spiess***

Nothing to report.

### ***Treasurer's Report: Mike Spiess***

We need an action item to adopt the proposed budget. Mike explained the budget for the year, which may seem confusing because of Neil's project and how it's listed.

***Secretary's Report: Marianne Russo***

All the thank-you's have been processed for last year's donations. There was a problem with PayPal not notifying Marianne of all the donations; when the problem was noted, appropriate thank-you's were sent out and all is up to date now. The WCC took in \$2600 since October 2013, and we appreciate all those donations, including a few rather substantial ones.

Membership is holding steady, and we'd like it to increase.

Mike Spiess set up the membership database, and it's working well; Marianne has some suggestions for modifications—they'll get together and work on that.

Marianne is going to try asking for renewals about Feb, and then stop renewal reminders about Oct., so that the year-end appeal can be distinctly separate from the annual membership reminders. She's keeping a paper database right now so she knows when memberships are due for each member. Mike Spiess mentioned that it's sometimes difficult to separate the annual membership amount from a gift/donation. We'll work harder on that.

One of the advisors said that the year-end appeal letter is very helpful! She also suggested that it should be received \*before\* the NSS year-end appeal letter. Marianne will try to get it out early enough next year.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

***Public Relations Committee Report: Vacant Position***

No Director; no report.

***Acquisitions Committee Report: Bruce Rogers***

Recapped his report. Discussed his geologic findings at Weller Preserve. Hopes to work soon on the Rippled map. Continued mapping the preserve. Assisted POST, Jessica Oster, and hopes to start a committee to work with POST at the CEMEX property caves, relocating caves there, etc.

Marianne asked about volunteers assisting with the work there. Bruce Rogers explained that in his discussions with POST etc, he has talked about doing research and also setting up a trustee program to take caver visits, as we've done at other locations. So yes, that's a definite possibility in the future. There was some discussion about POST inviting their donors to go into the caves and the liability of that. Bruce said that the donor visitors he's led have been very excited, amazed at the caves, and very grateful for the opportunity to visit the underground. There are Townsend's western big-eared bats in some areas, and Bruce is concerned about avoiding those areas. Martin Hays said that he has experience setting up trustee programs and would be happy to work with Bruce on setting up the program there.

Everyone here was excited about this progress, and Bruce said that the folks at POST and Sempervirens were also very excited about working with the WCC.

***Property Stewardship Committee Report: Kelley Prebil***

***Weller Preserve Manager's Report: Marianne Russo***

She's contacted PG&E about running power to the field house at Weller, and she described the steps necessary to get this. Gale & Ray Beach, and Martin & Dan, have offered a donation to help fund this effort...thank you! We have some funds already designated to

finish the inside of the house, and we'll have a fundraiser later this year to assist with the effort. Steve Ruble asked if we need to have an electrician install the interior wiring, but we don't need to—we only need to meet the inspection after installation. Steve Ruble said that they will help with a donation after the meeting.

Jim Lakner asked about Mike Spiess's research into solar power for the field house. Mike explained about the panels & batteries needed, and said that it's best if we can be "on the grid" anyway. Mark Bowers asked what the baseline bill will be for us after installation...Marianne will have to ask PG&E about that. She added that putting solar panels there would attract vandalism, whereas a power line from the pole should not.

We also have a tree and some large limbs to remove before PG&E will install the wiring from the pole. Marianne Russo put a hold on brush clearing for now, since we can't burn it. Redwood Grotto has a couple of contractors who have volunteered some work. They'll talk about what can be done. Marianne encourages more trips/activities there.

Mike Spiess suggested we talk with PG&E about a donation to our nonprofit. Marianne said they've already made two visits to Weller and waived the usual fee for both. Mike said that corporate PG&E may be able to do something more.

Mike Spiess suggested that we might be able to make an example of Weller—the management plan, field house, etc.—that other organizations, or even we, could use as an example for other locations. Maybe we could focus on this on the Website?

Dan Snyder asked about bats at Rippled. Marianne said that there were four in the cave near the register on their Dec 21 trip. This was more than they've seen there before. Did the cave have a natural entrance before the quarry was established there? If so, then it may have been used traditionally by bats. Dan said he has an article about the 1856 discovery, which mentions the natural entrance (before the quarry opened up the area).

#### ***Windeler Cave Report: Kelley Prebil***

The 2014-15 trustees were elected. New trustee for out-of-area cavers: Ron Davis

SoCal wants to make a trip there. We're soon having our first annual Trustee Trip, with all 6 trustees required to attend. Community members will also be welcome on this trip. They will discuss areas to avoid/protect in the cave, items of interest, etc. Martin will do some work to repair the ladder, and Mark Bowers will do some NCRC pre-plan work. NCRC will be visiting the cave again, and Mark will lead that trip.

Martin Haye is working on a security system for Windeler.

Mark Bowers reported on the last trip there with NCRC representatives. They were looking for obstacles/issues in the cave. They decided they would be able to get someone through on a sked, without damage to the cave, except for the exit. They now have a plan for the exit as well and will address that on their next trip. They will have some minimal equipment that they'd like to leave in the cave for emergency use. They had two "practice" events on their previous trip:

one person actually had a minor panic attack and was escorted/assisted to a successful exit; another person dropped their camera down a pit and the group were able to retrieve all the pieces successfully, just as they would if it had been a person.

***Volunteer Resources Committee Report: Jerry Johnson***

We have 9 Director positions, and we still have 3 vacancies. We're still looking for someone to be involved with Public Relations, Science, and one other undefined position.

Bill Papke was going to be our newsletter editor but passed away this winter, so we're now looking for a newsletter editor.

Jerry compared the current list of advisors with the list on the Website and sees that it needs to be updated online. He's giving the current list to Kelley Prebil to update the Website. (At the end of today's meeting, Kelley announced that she has now updated the list of advisors on the Website. She's quick!)

Work on the tool shed [see Jerry's report] will begin this spring. That will help get items out of the field house to make more room there.

Jerry has gotten little input/response from people (e.g., advisors) by talking with them as a group or asking for email responses. He's going to start talking with individuals to see what skills/interests they have and what jobs they might be willing to do to assist the WCC. This may help get more people involved. Dan Snyder, for example, has done a lot of research into caves, property & owners, history, and it's very useful to us.

Bruce commented that he's talked with Geo Graening (Editor of the Western Caver) and Geo is willing & eager to publish WCC news items in each issue of the WesternCaver. Nick Schmalenberger commented that he's never gotten a WCC Newsletter (they haven't been published for some time) and that it's only by being a WCC Advisor and talking with other WCC folks that he's heard anything about WCC activities. There was some discussion about how info is disseminated and whether "members" who are not advisors would even want to receive more detail about the WCC activities. This sparked much more discussion about getting WCC info shared with cavers & non-cavers. More discussion later.

***Special Projects Committee Report: Neil Marchington***

Neil: Do we (WCC) want to approve purchase of the trailer? Board: No, we've already approved the project. Mike: Will this asset be a part of the WCC? Will we incur an annual license fee? Will we be responsible for insurance? Neil said that it will be property of the Oregon High Desert Grotto & it's small enough that it's "licensed" under the towing vehicle. Great. Dan: Could we borrow it? ;-) Neil: part of the original intent was that it could be used in other areas, so yes.

Working on the CND – slow progress. We will keep pressure on the Forest Service folks gently. Still up in the air, though.

Will continue with the sand blasting project & continue trying to raise money.

Dan asked more about who's asking that the shaft be closed—Neil said it's a USFS district ranger. Mike had more info about the leadership structure of the Forest Service etc. there. Neil said there have been several changeovers of personnel in the past few years. Mike said this is why we need to have MOU's in place so that agreements will survive the typical frequent personnel changes.

***Science Committee Report: Vacant Position***

No director; no report.

*[Board Recess –15 minutes; Re-convene at 3:22 PM as Committee of the Whole for general discussion of issues.]*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

### ***General Issues and Potential Projects:***

1) Lehman Caves Lint Camp: Bruce Rogers and Gretchen Baker have selected March 22-23, 2014, as the dates for the weekend-long Lehman Caves, Great Basin National Park, Lint Camp. The date was selected as late as possible to minimize weather issues and to make the seasonal NPS employee barracks available. Meals will be the responsibility of the participants. Do we have someone willing to step forward and possibly provide a food service for a Saturday dinner at the Lint Camp? Details will be quickly forthcoming from Gretchen.

Bruce explained about his discussions with Gretchen Baker to arrange for the March 22-23 lint camp event at Lehman Caves. We'll be co-hosting this with the NPS. There are no close to stores/restaurants/etc, so we'll likely do a potluck Saturday night and we'll all be on our own for other meals. Bruce invited all to let him know if anyone's interested in putting together a WCC meal. We will have indoor housing available. Last year they had 12 people, from local grottos. This will be open to anyone who wants to join in.

2) Scheduled Work Meetings: After the success of several small working group meetings, we should schedule more work meetings to continue working on the Board Manual, Job Descriptions, etc. **BRING YOUR CALENDARS!!** There are several items that need working on in the extremely near future, including re-writing the VP position.

Usually it's Marianne, Jerry, Bruce, and Pat—anyone else want to join us?

3) Clarification of how Advisors are added and removed from the WCC: Do we actually have a protocol for doing this? Who is ultimately responsible for the action, including adding/removing them from the mailing/emailing lists?

Marianne clarified that we should be removing from the list those who have not paid dues, but we haven't been doing that lately. Martin questioned whether we should be removing them—they are adding to the organization by being an advisor, rather than it being a perk of paying dues. If someone has financial issues, we can waive their required dues. If someone is giving time/materials, then this could be in lieu of monetary dues. Martin said that in the absence of receiving a newsletter, it feels strange to require dues for advisors. We need to clarify our policy on this. (Action Item)

In the past it's been a problem with our process, getting people on or off the advisory email list—we need to develop a better process.

### 4) **Director's Positions:**

**Public Relations Director.** Who can we find to fill this position? This Position Description still needs to be written—and soon. Mark Bowers has expressed an interest in taking on this position.

We're in discussion about it.

A. **Science Director.** *Chuck Chavdarian, Gary “Geo” Graening and Shelly Arregui are interested.*

a. ***Chuck Chavdarian*** *is a retired organic/pharmaceutical chemist and does part-time consulting and is based in the SF Bay Area.*

b. ***Geo Graening*** *is a biologist who has his own biology remediation/study company, teaches at Sacramento State University, and is based in Sacramento.*

c. ***Shelly Arregui*** *has a broad science background of both natural science and engineering, is currently involved with outreach activities, and is based at the Univ. of Washington.*

At the break, Neil sent a message to Shelly. He will try to meet or email with her & invite her to join the work at Sandy Glacier or other work, and get an idea of her level of capabilities, knowledge, interest, etc., and how she might best fit into the WCC.

Is there any further information as to other possible selectees? If not, then we need to move on these appointments.

5. **Land Research Director.** *This person (and any committee formed by that Director) would scour the Western States for possible caves to buy, lease, or become involved with in some manner. Do we have any candidates for this position as one of the new Directors or do we need to advertise this position in the WCC, NSS Western Region, or elsewhere? David Smith of SAG was mentioned; has he been contacted?*

Chuck Chavdarian is interested in this position.

6. **Speleo-Ed Seminar:** *Who might be going to the next Western Regional reportedly to be held in the greater San Diego, CA area? We need an up-to-date report to give to the assembled masses at the Western Region meeting that Saturday evening.*

Bill & Peri Frantz, Kelley Prebil, Nick Schmalenberger, and Gail McCoy are all planning to attend. Someone also said that Ron Davis will attend.

“We” (= Bruce Rogers) will write a blurb that one of these people can read to the assembled masses.

7. **WCC Wish List:** *We have a suggestion for some time to compile a WCC Wish List. Who will generate this and where should this be posted/published? Should this be advertised in the WCC Newsletter and/or in the Western Region Newsletter, The Cal/Western Caver? In the NSS News along with a WCC-touting PR article? Each Director has been tasked with generating a Wish List for their activities and/or committees so please bring this to the meeting. There were many good suggestions at the last Board Meeting. Has anyone taken it upon themselves to write up these and pursue this idea further?*

Has anyone written up a list? Gale and Ray Beach, Barb Maeso-Ruible, Steve Ruble, Martin Haye, Dan Snyder, Mark Bowers, and several others have pledged funds to help cover the cost of

bringing electricity at the Weller field house. No one's yet written up a list of needed items/projects. (still an Action Item)

8. **WCC Newsletter:** We need an editor for this now! Bill Frantz and Gretchen Baker were suggested as possible candidates for the Editor. Both appear to be unable to take on this position. I have suggested we assign people to write articles and publish them in the next Western Caver (nee: Cal Caver). Bruce contacted Western Caver Editor Geo Graening and asked when his deadline is for the next issue. His response was a hearty yes for publishing any articles for the WCC until we can get our own Newsletter back on track. Thus Bruce \*will\* be asking assorted WCC Directors and Advisors for articles to be incorporated into the next Western Caver. He can be a Nag in the finest former Valley Caver style. You have been warned.

As mentioned, Geo Graening is quite willing to print articles we write about the WCC. Dan Snyder just offered to be Editor of a WCC Newsletter ...IF Mark Bowers will accept the position as WCC PR Director. Bruce will be encouraging people to write articles for publication.

9. **Commercial Cave Public Information Field Seminar:** Matt Bowers suggested arranging a weekend/day effort with commercial caves to both expose the public to the WCC (and possibly solicit donations) and enhance their favorable feelings towards cave conservation. Has anyone undertaken contacting any of the commercial caves about this?

Bruce Rogers did contact Mercer Caverns and because he was responsible for producing their cave map for free, they are open to further discussions.

10. Open discussion about WCC activities/direction/volunteer participation: Questions, comments, and suggestions from meeting attendees. This is a chance to exchange ideas.

Chuck Chavdarian: re Cave of the Catacombs & Sink Cave. Met with Mr. ---- (owner of CoC, lives in Stockton) some time back, and took him into the cave. On that day the cave, which usually has water, was bone dry. On that visit they found some more artifacts & talked with the owner. They then went to Sink Cave.

A couple of years ago, Diablo members went back and visited CoC and Sink. They met again with the owners of Sink Cave. CoC was wet on this trip. CoC may be a situation where we might be able to work with the owner to either buy or manage the cave. Sink Cave is also a possibility to purchase or manage for the owners. Dan added that the Sink property is owned by the (Owner's) son ----. It may be possible to purchase the portion containing Sink Cave while still allowing surface use by the owners. CoC is a real possibility for the WCC as well. Bruce said that he talked with son M--- S----- in 2007, who was very stressed and said he didn't want to talk about the cave—he was going through a divorce right then. It may be better to go to Sink Cave and talk with the M----- there and talk about how to contact the son now. There was more discussion about how to approach the opwner of CofC also. Jerry said that the coroner's office called him in the recent past because someone had gone into CoC and had started digging up human bones. They were going to talk with the local Native American group and see what they'd like to do with the bones. If this is a frequent occurrence (people digging there to try to find artifacts) the owner may be very amenable to talking about selling the cave property. Dan mentioned an old newspaper article which had turned out to be a made-up story about the history

of that cave.

Jerry said that Paul Greaves had told him about a burial cave a few years ago, but Jerry doesn't know the name of the cave. It's on private property and the owner may be willing to talk about a sale or management of the cave.

Chuck will continue to look into the details about these caves and the possibilities of the WCC becoming involved in them.

Other items presented at the meeting:

Bill Frantz brought up a question regarding Land Trusts; Mike Spiess addressed the issue. Marianne was familiar with the LT. Dan Snyder said that it's now named the MotherLode Land Trust, and there may be some issues with that particular organization. Mike can ask the N. Cal \_\_\_\_ [another trust] about it. There's an issue about an easement.

Jim Lakner asked Neil Marchington about the Lewis Farm property. Neil feels it would not be a good idea to become involved with them at this time since the house on the property is in marginal condition and there are some potential problems with multiple owners of the cave's entrances.

(Neil Marchington signed off from the telephone connection.)

***[Board Recess: 15-30 minute break to craft motions arising from discussions and reports as needed]***

Jim Lakner suggested that the draft minutes should be distributed as soon as possible after the meeting rather than closer to the next meeting. He also suggested that the meeting dates & locations should be announced earlier, about two months in advance, so that grottos can include it in their newsletters & schedules. We agreed that we will strive to do both of these things.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None at this time.

## **MOTIONS:**

That we nominate and appoint Chuck Chavdarian for a term of two years, starting immediately, to the WCC Board of Directors as Director of Land Research.

Passed by acclamation

That we nominate and appoint Mark Bowers for a term of two years, starting immediately, to the WCC Board of Directors as Public Relations Director.

Passed by acclamation

That we nominate and appoint Dan Snyder as WCC Newsletter Editor.

Passed by acclamation

That the tentative budget presented by the Treasurer on October 26, 2013, is hereby approved as

the official WCC working budget for 2014.

Marianne moved, Jerry Johnson and Mike Spiess seconded, all in favor

That the WCC President may appoint two advisory committees, to be headed by WCC board members: one for financial audit review and another to oversee actions at the CEMEX Redwoods Tract under the MOU with POST and Sempervirens Fund.

Approved unanimously.

**NEXT MEETING:**

New WCC Director Mark Bowers offered that the next meeting may be held at his house. Bring your own chair please. The date selected is May 3. The address is 4116 Loch Lomand Way, Livermore. Sharon Jobrock-Bowers's cell: 925-339-4467.

Meeting adjourned at 4:57 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

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Pat Helton, WCC Recording Secretary

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Marianne Russo, WCC Secretary