



Western Cave Conservancy

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Minutes for the Annual Public Meeting of the Board of Directors on Saturday, May 17, 2015

*Held at the Western Cave Conservancy's Weller Preserve,
Sutter Creek, CA*

*Next Meeting August 22, 2015, at 1pm
At Mark Bowers' home,
4116 Loch Lomond Way, Livermore, CA*

Call to Order: at 1:10pm

Attending were: Bruce Rogers (President), Mike Spiess (Vice President), Marianne Russo (Secretary), Jerry Johnson, Chuck Chavdarian (Director of Land Research), Mark Bowers (Director of Public Relations), Martin Haye (Treasurer), Pat Helton (Recording Secretary); Advisors: Dale Hartwig

Attending by Skype/phone: No phone service was available.

Approval of the Agenda

Added items: None

Approval was moved by Mike; seconded by Jerry; all in favor.

Approval of Minutes of the January 25, 2015, Public Meeting at the offices of Peninsula Open Space Trust, Palo Alto CA.

Correction: On page 6, 3rd paragraph: the word "money" is misspelled.

Approval, with correction, was moved by Jerry; seconded by Mike; all in favor.

Officer Reports Discussion

The reports were recently emailed to Directors and Advisors. Officers and Directors briefly recapped their emailed reports and discussed any questions.

President's Report: Bruce Rogers

Assisted w/signing of the CotC lease with Bob Hong. Assisted David Weaver and Chuck Chavdarian with setting up negotiations with Sink Cave owner, Mark Strehle, for possibly leasing/purchasing, or getting a conservation easement there. Met w/JPMorgan representative re possibly investing WCC money there. Completed the map and profile of Saclan Cave, East Bay Regional Parks, and passed it on to Chuck Chavdarian. Has gone through previous Minutes to remove identifying info about caves so that the minutes can be posted online.

Vice-President's Report: Mike Spiess

Mike reviewed the financial reports that Martin submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Martin Hays

Will be depreciating all the improvements to the Weller Preserve over time. Did the Federal and State income tax filings—a very big job this year. Met w/Peri Frantz re investments and also talked w/Merrill Lynch. Multiple emails to various people with National Speleological Foundation have not been returned. (There will be further discussion about investments later in this meeting.) Martin has made changes to the email lists (that would normally have been handled by Kelley, but she wasn't able to do them) as requested by Marianne. Worked out a secure way to send check scans to Marianne. Submitting expense reports for Windeler security. The coming quarter Martin will produce our final financial statement because he changed some categories to more detailed categories. He also needs to work on a budget. In the long-term, we plan to act on whatever investment decision is made.

Mike moved and Mark seconded to accept the Treasurer's report; all in favor. (Good job, Martin!)

Secretary's Report: Marianne Russo

Caught up to date processing donations/thank-you's. Worked w/Martin on check scan issue. The database is now up to date. \$762 received this quarter. We now have 76 member households. She has taken over monitoring the Advisors list (which Jerry was handling before he resigned). There was a problem with people being dropped from the Advisors email list, so Marianne worked with Martin to update the email list; work will continue on going through the Advisors list and update everything.

There was some discussion here about changing the mailing lists: should we include all members in the Advisors/Board list? It's important to be careful & not send "confidential" info to the Advisors/Board list rather than the more restricted Directors list. Marianne will work further on this also as she's recovering from upcoming surgery.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The reports were recently emailed to Directors and Advisors. Committee Chairs briefly recapped their emailed reports and discussed any questions.

Acquisitions Committee Report: Chuck Chavdarian

[merged with Land Research Committee Report: Chuck Chavdarian]

Chuck said that he's concerned about using the title "Acquisitions Director" when he's approaching a landowner; they can feel resentful and defensive if he's trying to "acquire" their property. He sometimes uses the title "Land Research Director" to introduce himself. We had some discussion about how to truly explain what he does while not sounding intimidating to others. We will have the full

description of his duties on the Website, but we also want to find another accurate title for him. Jerry added that there are some other terms that don't sit well with landowners, like the term "conservation".

A year ago, they started focusing on the two caves: CotC and Sink. The agreed-upon lease was signed with Bob Hong, owner of CotC, in January, after postponing the signing for a month or more due to his serious accident with a spinal injury. The \$1.00 fee for the first year lease has been sent to them and the check has been cashed. ☺ Mr Hong would like to be able to continue to access his cave, and we will do whatever we can to assist him. Mr Hong also has given us permission to use his property to park our vehicles and to use his rather rustic cabin and outhouse. David Weaver is working on a management plan for the cave, and has been named as the manager of the project. The next step is gating the cave, and Tom Gilleland has been contact & agrees to do the gating. David & Chuck have done extensive photographs of the entrance and sent them to Tom.

Sink Cave is very close to CotC. Bruce explained about the bones & teeth found in the lower portion of Sink Cave; a selection of them were sent to Don McFarland (Claremont College). The drop-in entrance could be used for rappel practice; when the cave is gated, the gate on the drop-in entrance could be made strong & secure enough to provide support for that. The bones room could be taped off & entrance barred while the entrance room is in use.

Chuck spoke with the resident, Hugh Strehle, who provided the contact info for his son, who is the landowner. Chuck has written & spoken with him and they do plan to get together soon to discuss this. Unfortunately, Hugh very recently passed away; he & his wife have always been friendly and welcoming hosts to the cavers who visit their cave and he will be missed.

Another cave he's working on is in the Las Trampas area. Bruce accompanied them last year to map the tafoni cave (the map is attached to Chuck's report). Chuck had originally called it Diablo Cave, but Bruce & Pat did some research with Native American tribes in that area and came up with an alternative name to honor a native group there: Saclan. It is now called Saclan Cave. The cave is technically on Water District land, not in the Las Trampas Park, but the park allows access to the cave via the park trails. Ken Laidlaw has worked in Law Enforcement with the East Bay Regional Parks for many years and is willing to assist us with introductions to the appropriate personnel in the park.

Chuck asked that if anyone is working on landowner relations or has leads to caves that we might purchase or lease, please let him know so that we can coordinate all of these under the same WCC subgroup.

Public Relations Committee Report: Mark Bowers

a) General Report on Activities: Mark Bowers

Mark proceeded to get the brochures printed after several people gave him feedback & critiques. He's comfortable with the printing work and will be happy to get more printing done. Suggestions were made about placing some at various places like Mercer Caverns and Black Chasm Cave. The QR scan code on the new brochure works well. The cost was ~\$20 for 500 brochures.

On a trip to Windeler Cave recently, Mark made an hour-long video; he will continue to make YouTube videos that WCC members can view & critique, and when they're acceptable he will be able to send them out to organizations. They could be used as grotto presentations, for example.

Would like to use a Web committee (only meeting at homes when necessary) to assist with PR and would like to set up an email list (Martin said OK) to help this effort. Martin suggested some video of Crystal Palace, comparing intact cave features & damaged “after visitation” images. Mark also plans to video Marianne in Rippled/Weller on May 24. He’d like another person or two for this video...perhaps Jerry or Dale? Perhaps a cave survey that David Weaver will be doing in CotC? Bruce suggested that the cave gating might be good to film. Marianne added that some films could be good grotto training programs. Mike suggested that if we put up YouTube videos as a nonprofit, he thinks we may not have to get ads with the videos.

Mark has not made progress with a WCC blog, but does plan to pursue it.

Matt Bowers will be contacting Mark re doing a PBS video near Reno (for the 2016 Convention); Bruce said it may be ~October 2015.

b) WCC Newsletter: Vacant Position

Mark has the software to produce a newsletter, and he’s willing to do that. It was agreed that the difficult part will be getting content written.

Science Committee Report: Vacant Position

No director; no report.

Special Projects Committee Report: Neil Marchington

With his report, Neil sent a copy of a thank-you letter from Carol Benkosky, District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, for the cleanup/restoration work OHDG recently did at the Redmond Caves site. Update on CND near Oregon Caves: the work is on hold. Bruce will mail some of the new brochures to Neil.

Stewardship Committee Report: Kelley Prebil

Presented by Martin: Kelley filed our annual report with the Forest Service. She has tried several times to organize a weed-cutting trip to the Windeler area but it hasn’t yet produced enough participants. In the past it has always been Dan, Mark, and Martin but they will be going up in June to install the new security system, and more people are needed to do the weed abatement before the fire season comes, as the weeds are high now. The gate seems to be working better now. Mark mentioned that the area around the entrance is becoming trampled; i.e., looks used & attracts attention. So he wants to do some restoration work there. Martin also said that the mining claim on the property there has lapsed (costs \$500/yr). After some discussion, Mark offered to submit a new claim for now (within the next 2 wk) and we can all chip in to help defray that cost each year.

a) Cave of the Catacombs Project: David Weaver

No report submitted.

b) Weller Preserve Manager’s Report: Marianne Russo

Marianne has done work on the interior of the building, and Jerry has done work on the Stool & Tool Sheds. Marianne will re-roof & paint the floor of the Stool Shed. The inspector came out

& inspected the sheetrocking in the main building; we passed the inspection. Screens are being installed in the building. Fire permits are renewed. She talked with the county about compostable toilets again...and, while it wasn't allowed in the past, that would be permitted now, so she's looking into the options. Most of her expenses were for the burn permit & the screen door. She will be requesting a raise in the budget. Mark suggested that the location is great for having a class/event, and people could be charged, e.g., \$2 each to cover the cost of a porta-potty. Marianne can call to request a rental porta-potty for an event.

Plans for the next quarter: Finish the interior of the building; Terry Silva will come to help. Jerry will finish the Stool Shed. They will bring up leaf blower for use around the building for fire safety. A retaining wall will eventually be built & they will install the pavers donated by the Lakners. They plan to finish getting rid of the pile of dirt in back of the building. (See report for full list of plans.) Soon they'll be organizing weed abatement trips again.

c) *Windeler Cave Report: Kelley Prebil*

No report submitted. See earlier report given by Martin.

d) *San Vicente Redwoods Project Report: Bruce Rogers*

Did research at USGS & found that the Menlo Park office is being drastically cut & the library is mostly packed up & already shipped out. He did find some info about the underground workings as they were set up at San Vicente, the loading structure from 1928(?), etc. In March 2015 Bruce and several others visited the quarry. Jessica Oster and her team retrieved the "black box recorder" they installed there a year ago and found that it had recorded for three days before failing. They visited some other caves in the area and collected some soil samples. There's a lot to continue surveying this summer. Bruce will be leading a trip on July 23 for POST for some of their big donors, and Dr. Jessica Oster and her team will revisit the area later this summer to re-place the Black Box. Bruce also has some photos from when the quarry was operating.

Volunteer Resources Committee Report: Vacant Position (Brevet Marianne Russo)

Already covered re Advisors list.

Board recess (10 min) at 3:35pm – Reconvened at 3:50pm as Committee of the Whole for general discussion of issues.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

General Issues and Potential Projects:

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 near future, including re-writing the VP position and looking for new Volunteer Resources and Science Directors.

Any interest? Martin: has no extra time right now.

Discussion about the database & how to extract lists of people from it. Mike can Skype into this. Work meeting to work on the manual?

Work meeting to work on newsletter articles? Mark will set one up. Sat June 20 – 12noon.

Investment Strategies (Martin Haye):

Martin met w/Peri. Find an investment person you are comfortable with & trust. Do they get a commission on everything they sell you? There may be quite a difference in fees. Another option is the National Speleological Foundation (fees are 0.75%, not the usual 1.0%.) Mike says that the money is “given to them” (it belongs to them) and they invest it. It is a volunteer organization, so they do have a fair amount of turnover. Mark spoke about Fidelity, where he has some money: They will recommend what you could do with you money, not just do it for you. They will sit down with you & discuss it for free. They have good advisors and there are no charges to your account.

The Bernstein Factor: Scott Bernstein is a lawyer with MLG. He thinks that Merrill Lynch and BofA may not be the best places to invest. Don’t trust any investment advisor. Decide your risk tolerance, and put x% in bonds, y% in investments, etc. He recommended TRowePrice (they don’t make the decisions for you).

1) How much responsibility do we want to keep & do things ourselves? Or 2) Do we want to hire an advisor to do this for us? How much risk are we willing to take? Peri’s recommendation was to go for growth; to do this we would need to tolerate a fair amount of risk.

Lots of discussion about balancing portfolios, growth, risk, etc.

Bruce handed over the papers he got from consulting with JPMorgan.

It was agreed that we need a Finance Committee to handle this.

They’ll look at 1/3 of the funds invested into very safe investments, and the remainder invested to earn more interest. If any funds are needed immediately (to purchase a cave, for example) a loan could be taken out with the investment as collateral, rather than using the funds themselves.

Mark: If we move the money into Fidelity now, we could move it into a small-growth, low-risk fund so that when we make the policy for investment it can be moved as decided then.

Do we also want to move our checking account from BofA to another bank? That was also agreed.

Martin Haye, with Mark Bowers and Mike Spiess, will continue to look into the options.

Other Items Presented at the Meeting:

Chuck: Any interest in purchasing caps? He recently had caps made for Diablo Grotto (cost ~\$11.50 each). The company did a very nice, quality job. Mark suggested that we could sell the caps for \$15. Mike wants caps with no button on top. Mark wants a red one, or a blue. We proceeded to discuss getting more polo shirts and possibly also t-shirts, fleece jackets, sweatshirts, etc.

Jim Lakner expressed some concerns:

1) It sounded to him as if the San Vicente Redwoods tract was to be included in the new Coast Redwoods National Monument proposal. Bruce assured him that this will not happen, as POST & SVF will not sell or transfer the property to the NPS.

2) He'd heard that there was a suggestion to make a fish trough/ladder through the San Vicente Quarry to allow salmon to resume their normal life cycles. Again, based on Bruce's discussions with at least three fish experts, Bruce replied that this would be possible engineering-wise, but the cost would be extremely high and not a feasible undertaking. Even if this were to happen, it would not impact our WCC work in the quarry area.

Brief (1/4 to 1/2 hour) board recess to craft motions arising from discussions and reports as needed.

NEW BUSINESS (Board reconvenes):

MOTIONS:

That the Weller budget be amended to add \$500 for finishing the Weller Field House.

Marianne moved, Martin seconded; all in favor

That we purchase a new Polycom microphone and extensions for telecoms; and that Martin will purchase them for up to \$500.

Mark moved; Marianne seconded; all in favor

That we designate a Finance Committee to oversee our financial and investment activity; and that the initial members of that committee are Martin Haye, Mike Spiess, and Mark Bowers.

Marianne moved; Mike seconded; all in favor

The WCC Finance Committee is authorized to open an account with Fidelity Investments; and that we move the proceeds from the Papke Estate from the Bank of America account into Fidelity right away into a low-risk fund; and that the WCC Finance Committee work together to propose to the Board the best investment strategy for that money.

Mark Moved; Mike seconded; all in favor

That we move our checking account from Bank of America to another bank; and that the WCC Finance Committee investigate the options and report back to the Directors before making that changeover.

Marianne moved; Chuck seconded; all in favor

That Chuck Chavdarian is authorized to order 50 caps in black and tan with the WCC logo stitched onto the front, and that he investigate other items that we might be interested in (polo shirts, t-shirts, sweatshirts, fleece vests or jackets, etc.), at a maximum expense of \$600.

Martin moved; Marianne seconded; all in favor

APPOINTMENTS OF NEW DIRECTORS (if applicable):

None

POLICY DECISIONS COMING OUT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE:

None

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will take place at Mark Bowers' home, Livermore, CA, on August 22, 2015, at 1pm.

Meeting adjourned at 5:29 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Pat Helton, WCC Recording Secretary