
WILLIAMS CANYON PROJECT

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Spring Meeting

Cave of the Winds

April 29, 2000 — 9:30 a.m.

A G E N D A

WELCOME

? Any general announcements or news.

CONSERVATION

Cave of the Winds Restoration: Rick Rhinehart, Jeremy Stiles

The Cave of the Winds has begun to replace lighting along the Discovery Tour route. To date, lights in the Temple of Silence, the Valley of Dreams, Oriental Garden and the Adventure Room have been rebuilt. The new scheme is similar to the lighting in Glenwood Caverns – more darkness, spotlights on major features. This lighting project will continue in the 2000-2001 winter season as other sections of the tour route are redesigned and relit. The current lighting system was installed in 1974. As a part of this ongoing process, cavers of the WCP might participate in restoration during the fall of 2000. Many rooms, such as the Temple of Silence, have flowstone that can be manually cleaned with brushes to present a more favorable appearance. Old lighting fixtures can be dismantled and removed (i.e., at the Temple of Silence and at the Painted Curtain). A major restoration project could be to remove the stone wall along the commercial trail opposite Cokebottle Crawl – for many years, it has been assumed these rocks from the 1935 commercialization have blocked a possible passage and potential dig to the north (relighting of this section could be put to good advantage here, once the wall is removed).

? *Discussion:* Any interest in such a project this upcoming fall? Who is able to coordinate this project?

Formation Repair and Restoration: Al Collier

Al Collier has coordinated conservation and restoration efforts in the caves of the canyon this year, including repairing of many broken formations. During the spring, Al and Pat Malone removed the plastic from the abandoned D Survey Dome near Crystal River in Breezeway. Additional work is necessary to restore the area to its pre-climb pristine appearance.

? *Discussion:* Who can coordinate such a project? Should the individuals involved in the initial climbing project have responsibility?

Breezeway Ladder: Tom Dotter

Investigation of the route through Hallowed Ground in Breezeway indicates significant degradation by cavers. Should a steel rebar ladder be installed to replace the “upside down staircase” route?

? *Discussion:* Who can coordinate such a project? Will Cave of the Winds cover steel costs? If a ladder is installed, do we lose a bit of the wilderness feeling of Breezeway? Should ladders be installed in other locations (i.e., at the Hangman’s Hole handline climb)?

Silent Splendor Gate Repair Project: Dan Sullivan

This spring, efforts were underway by project cavers to replace the rusted Four Fingers Junction barrel gate with a new plastic barrel. During this upcoming fall, cavers will need to replace the rotting wooden shoring for the gate to the Whale’s Belly, as well as install a new environmental gate to protect the humidity of the area.

? *Discussion:* project logistics, gate design.

Snider Quarry Reactivation: Rick Rhinehart

Through various sources, the project has learned Castle Concrete has been preparing for a reactivation of their Snider limestone quarry on the eastern wall of upper Williams Canyon. Last actively worked in 1993, the quarry has largely been abandoned since, with only occasional activity to maintain mining permits. Castle Concrete apparently intends to quarry east of the main pit; in April, they removed old tailings piles from the hillside adjacent to the Cedar Heights subdivision and dumped the debris into the deepest portions of the quarry. It is possible that quarrying may begin as early as mid May, though Castle Concrete has denied any intention in actively working the quarry.

The reactivation of the quarry raises concerns about potential damage to the world-class delicate beaded helictites of Breezeway Cave, about one thousand feet away at its closest point. Previous blasting in the quarry is believed to have already damaged many of the helictite groups (substantial numbers of broken helictites are found in every room); cavers in the cave during a 1993 blast noticeably heard and felt the explosion. There is also concern about pollution of the water in the cave: significant pools are found in the Stone River area and below Rattlesnake Canyon, both downstream of the quarry in the rock strata. These pools may harbor unknown microscopic life that can be threatened by diesel fuel and oil as well as blasting materials. Indeed, fluids from the quarry might even pollute the mineral springs at Manitou.

The reactivation may be difficult for Castle Concrete, as the growing Cedar Heights subdivision probably does not appreciate an industrial zone in their back yards (the subdivision has tripled in the number of homes since the quarrying stopped in 1993). This subdivision's homeowners association, along with the city of Manitou Springs, are potential allies in any coordinated effort to cease or drastically limit quarrying efforts of the remaining limestone.

? *Discussion:* What can the Williams Canyon Project do to protect Breezeway from potential catastrophic damage?

WCP 1981-1999 PROJECT REPORT

Discussion: Mark Maslyn

Continuing efforts for a Williams Canyon Project book of history and project accomplishments since 1981. New material has recently been submitted to editor Rob Kolstad and photographs finalized. Paul Burger and the cartography section have submitted many maps of canyon caves for the book. It is possible design will begin in May with potential project completion in June – provided funding for publication is obtained.

? *Discussion:* Latest developments, updated project timeline.

CAVE PROJECTS

Longview Cave: Daniel Laos, Mike Frazier

Previously thought to be Centennial Cave, Longview Cave is a new cave north of the Cave of the Winds along the western wall. Digging began in the cave in early 2000, opening nearly 100 feet of passage leading south. The cave clearly has potential, and may prove key to any new northern extension of the Cave of the Winds.

? *Discussion:* Dig logistics.

Millenium Project: Rick Rhinehart

Donald Davis led Grant Carey into the re-opened Cliffhanger section of the Cave of the Winds during the winter. Since it is still uncertain that Cliffhanger would be commercialized anytime soon, cavers instead used the opportunity to consider northern extensions of the Cave of the Winds. An overland survey from the Grand Caverns entrance indicated that the Cliffhanger Basin was not as deep as originally suspected. In February, cavers discovered an interesting dig possibility at the northern end of Majestic Hall. Peggy Sue from the Northern Colorado Grotto managed to squeeze through this exceptionally tight hole in early March; she reported a sizable continuing passage. During the Mammoth Cave 125th Anniversary Day, Nancy Holler Allenbach from Georgia also squeezed through the hole and discovered about 300 feet of new canyon passage leading north. She also discovered an alternate, easier route into the new extension that was enlarged to allow most cavers. The following weekend, Hazel Barton, Fred Luiszer and Donald Davis surveyed the new area, which ends in a promising blowing dig at its northern end. Other surveys this spring tied in Sipapu Cave to the Cave of the Winds survey, establishing a clear relationship between it and the northern extension of Majestic Hall, and tied in the "Big Alcove" of Cliffhanger Basin to the master survey. This Alcove has an interesting dig possibility along the major Small Change Passage joint.

? *Discussion:* project logistics.

Other Canyon Dig Projects

Cavers have worked elsewhere in Williams Canyon caves this spring. In April, cavers returned to Isis to begin work on a dig abandoned in 1993 following the discovery of Breezeway Cave. Isis has excellent potential for a new major cave system; the surface dig follows a cave-walled gully not unlike the gully at Huccacove. Other cavers discovered that long-ignored Octagon Cave in upper Williams Canyon has potential. A survey team in mid April found the cave's upper chamber has an ascending lead with airflow.

? *Discussion:* Dig logistics.

WILLIAMS CANYON PROJECT SURVEY SECTION

Update: Paul Burger, Tom Dotter

Continuing surveys of minor canyon caves (completed: Octagon and Longview Caves); Cave of the Winds additional surveying (i.e., Cross'es Well); laser theodolite survey.

? *Discussion:* Current projects; available maps.

HUCCACOVE CAVE 125TH ANNIVERSARY

Discussion: Rick Rhinehart

The Huccacove Cave 125th Anniversary Celebration was successful, with more than 40 cavers participating. Several NSS Directors came to the cave for trips following the previous day's BOG meeting. A champagne toast ended the day's activities. The canyon's next significant anniversary is this June's 120th anniversary of the Pickett boys' discovery of inner Cave of the Winds.

NEW TRUSTEES FOR 2000-2001 SEASON

? All Trustees must submit paperwork at September meeting for approval by the project and the Cave. Several cavers failed to submit paperwork by last September's meeting as required by project rules.

? Paperwork will be available by mid August.

? *Discussion:* Should the number of trip leaders be expanded from the current 26 to 30 or 35? Should the number of Breezeway Cave trip leaders be expanded from 15?

CAVE OF THE WINDS TOPICS

Discussion: Jeremy Stiles, Grant Carey

Cave of the Winds staff may have some topics for review and consideration by the Board and Project Trustees.

OTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

? Topics from the Floor

? Upcoming Meeting – late September?