
WILLIAMS CANYON PROJECT, NSS

Annual Meeting

*Cave of the Winds,
October 29, 1994
9 a.m. -- 12 p.m.*

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Narrows Cave Dig: Walt Rubeck

Interest in Narrows Cave has increased in the last year following the discovery of the Deepwater Section of nearby Manitou Cave. With open passage known downstream from Narrows, it is possible the flood-deposited sand and cobbles that have choked Narrows for nearly 300 feet may eventually reach an end. Continued excavation in Narrows in recent years by Donald Davis and others has reached a possible junction that may finally provide the key to reach open passageways.

Walt Rubeck has proposed the installation of a debris chute built this last spring by the US Air Force Academy for disposal of sand from the cave. He proposes removal of all material dumped along the cave's walls since the last major excavation in the late 1980s and the continuation of excavation of the main passage further south. This metal chute can be safely installed with a minimum of expense and will allow debris to be dropped directly into a waiting dump truck. At the end of the season, Walt promises the chute will be removed.

Potential for the cave is great -- Narrows may be the key segment between Manitou Cave and the lower regions of the Cave of the Winds, ultimately allowing for an integration of the caves along the western rim of Williams Canyon. A resurvey of the overland survey between Manitou Cave and Narrows Cave indicates the Deepwater section of Manitou is significantly south and east of the Narrows passage joint. No immediate connection is foreseen, but an eventual connection to Manitou Cave's Deepwater section could provide an excellent opportunity for a wild commercial tour that enters through one entrance and exits via another.

Manitou Cave Digs: Jon Barker, Rick Rhinehart, Fred Luiszer

Manitou Cave is among the most promising of caves in the Williams Canyon area. Recent discoveries and connections have extended this cave from an ignored "sacrifice" cave of 750 feet to a major Williams Canyon cave with over 2500 feet of known passage. With three main sections -- Centipede, Pedro's and Deepwater, Manitou has the potential for major extensions to the east, south and west.

In the 1994-95 season, excavation efforts are expected to resume at several dig sites, including a possible rediscovery of the lost 1912 commercial tour route.

CENTIPEDE CAVE DIGS. The oldest known section of the cave, Centipede should eventually provide access to cave passageways extending east, southeast and possibly northeast. Fred Luiszer speculates the Williams Canyon stream flows southeast through unknown parallels to Centipede's Lower Stream Passage; if discovered, this passage could lead a considerable distance into the eastern rim of Williams Canyon. It is even possible the stream passageway may contain seasonal lakes, waterfalls and other exciting features. Another possibility is that the water table might eventually be reached -- but this is probably far east of the known cave.

Two main dig sites are currently of interest in the Centipede Section, these being the southern terminous of the Lower Stream Passage and the so-called "Mutant Dig," an ascending passage along the eastern boundary of the cave that could be excavated upward to theorized open passage leading north and east. The Lower Stream Passage took water during the spring 1994 flooding episode but unfortunately did not flush clean. Sediments in this passage suggest it might have been open for travel during the 1910s commercial period of the cave. What lies beyond the current sediment plug?

PEDRO'S CAVE DIGS. The prize of Manitou Cave is the now-lost commercial section. Articles and advertisements from the commercial era suggest of large rooms and corridors, a lake and a stream passageway -- all passages now seemingly missing. Though rumors said the passage lay to the north of the historic Pedro's segment, recent investigations suggest the lost passages are south or possibly southwest of the cave. If the lost section is south, a newly-discovered passage leading south under the eastern wall of Williams Canyon may provide access. Opened only in the spring of 1994, this passage took major amounts of water during the spring flooding episode. Additionally, a strange sound of howling wind issued from this passage while flooded. It is possible the reopening of the entrance to this buried passage allowed water to flush the southern terminous, maybe leading to the lost section. If the lost commercial passage is southwest, excavation of the floor of the Whirlpool Dome may be the key. Careful examination of the segment of tour route that is still accessible suggests a continuation southwest of this multi-level dome; preliminary digs in the spring of 1994 found much trash and debris choking a possible extension along a major joint. The major 1922 flood might have completely blocked this passage as debris rushed into the closed commercial cave from several entry points; following the flood, reports indicate the cave was never the same.

DEEPWATER CAVE DIGS. The newest discovery in Williams Canyon, this 1000-foot extension has numerous possibilities for extension. Jon Barker and Charles Lindsey have worked at several, including a northwest-leading blowing lead near the cave's discovery hole, the clay-filled "Men's Room" dig along the western boundary of the cave and the south-leading Sand Swim, the southernmost point in the cave system. Donald Davis has declared the Sand Swim to be the finest lead he has seen in the cave, believing it may lead to significant extensions. Jon Barker has suggested breakthrough might be relatively soon at the blowhole dig, while the Men's Room excavation is a classic Williams Canyon ascending dig through red clay and rock. Surveys indicate another parallel should lie in waiting somewhere above the end of the Men's Room dig. Other digs include a massive collapse area west of the Argument Room and the southern end of the C Survey, a low crawl that took water during this spring's floods. The C Survey dig might provide another connection to the Pedro's segment, possibly via the lost commercial section.

Cave of the Winds Resurvey Project: Paul Burger

Paul Burger and Steve Reames have proposed a resurvey of the 11,500-foot-long Cave of the Winds system to NSS survey standards of the 1990s. Paul has made tentative arrangements for a theodolite baseline survey of the main cave from the cave's tunnel entrance on the east to the Grand Concert Hall on the west. This highly accurate baseline with permanent stations will allow other surveys to be tied onto the backbone of the cave, whether the survey is done this year or 20 years in the future.

It is expected a resurvey might take up to an entire season of work, with experienced teams resurveying all the known passageways. The survey will be included in the new quadrangle system of the caves of the canyon that has been proposed in past years. In addition, maps of the cave will be made available for sale to the general public.

Conservation: Marc Hament

Marc Hament, the Front Range Grotto's Conservation Chairman, proposes a continuation of his 1993-94 projects. Specifically, restoration of the Pedro's section of Manitou Cave and re-seeding of the various debris piles in the canyon.

Restoration of Manitou is key in any plans to open the cave for wild commercial tours. Projects include the removal of the remaining piles of trash, such as cans, bottles, wood and other debris, and the removal of all non-historic graffiti on the Pedro's walls and ceilings. The experimental technique of "painting" the walls with mud will be continued; trial efforts in the spring of 1994 indicates some success. Some graffiti will be left as an example to future wild tours of the stupidity of man.

In 1994, seeding with natural grasses was done at the Snider tailings pile in Cavern Gulch. Additional seeding is foreseen for 1994-95 at the Snider pile, as well as other recent debris piles such as the Carey entrance to the Cave of the Winds.

Other conservation projects may include the continued cleaning and restoration of the historic section of Huccacove Cave, including graffiti removal, and removal of the debris piles in the Grand Cavern's Grand Concert Hall, if and when the old entrance is reopened.

Caver Access & Policy

For the 1994-95 caving season, it is recommended there be no major policy changes in regard to caver access to the caves of the canyon. The trip leader forms should be reviewed by the Williams Canyon Project Directors and any inactive cavers placed in a separate file. The Liability Waiver file should also be updated, with the many loose forms filed. New trip leaders should be welcomed, provided the caver is willing to contribute to the project and the well-being of the caves of the canyon.

Cave passages to be considered as "off-limits" to normal caver traffic for 1994-95 include Snider Hall in the Grand Caverns, Spider Web Valley in the Cave of the Winds, the Cave Pearl passage in the Cave of the Winds, the Cliffhanger section of the Cave of the Winds, Natural Bridges Hall of the Cave of the Winds and the Twins Passage in Huccacove. Access to Silent Splendor should remain identical to policies in the 1993-94 season.

All other access and trip leader policies as established in previous years should be continued upon mutual consent by the Williams Canyon Project and the management of the Cave of the Winds.

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Breezeway Cave Addendum

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Exploration

In the 1994-95 season, exploration will continue in Breezeway Cave. Several projects immediately present themselves.

LAKE OF THE INVERTED QUESTION MARK CLIMB. Don Doucette believes this climb, along the east wall of High Plains, could lead to the next great extension of the cave. Located along a major southwest/northeast joint, this short climb could drop into the next parallel or series of parallels east. A nearby dig at the southern terminous of High Plains may also lead to additional passage. A high priority for the beginning of the 1994-95 season.

REBOOT ROOM. Donald Davis believes the continuation of this major lower-level passage has been missed. A blind dome climbed in the spring proved not to be the continuation; will a dig prove to be the key? A continuation of this passage could lead to extension regions south of the known system, paralleling Huccacove and ultimately leading south, east and west.

RATTLESNAKE CANYON. A large, obvious passage awaits visitation but can be reached only by a difficult, exposed climb. Will cavers have the ability or will the cave keep this lead its own?

LOWER LEVEL. Several lower level leads can be pushed and/or excavated through sediment and breakdown. Al Hinman knows of at least one decent dig that hasn't been worked in a subsurvey off the Velvet Underground. The aptly named This Way, Madness Lies, may eventually lead through determined pushing to a welcome bypass of not only the Sidewinder Squeeze and Rattlesnake Canyon drop, but also much of the trade route including the Coronary Bypass.

SAN ANDREAS ROOM. The passages leading south from the San Andreas Room need additional investigation and digging, particularly the complex GD breakdown regions. There's undoubtedly much additional cave to be found, if only the right passage can be pushed.

LITTLE MOUNTAIN ROOM. An unsurveyed crawl leads south around the large debris cone in this mid-cave room. A simple dig that may lead to a continuation of the passage south if the debris can be bypassed. Curiously, this debris cone with Fountain formation sandstone blocks lies several hundreds of feet below the surface -- is this a sinkhole from an earlier era?

NEVER ENDING CRAWL. An excellent, blowing lead awaits at the passageway's southern terminous. Currently blocked by a small column, this very tight squeeze apparently opens into a large, echoing room as reported by Jim Erickson, who has had the best view of the continuation.

SOUTH END, COWBOY HEAVEN. This blowing lead saw some work in 1993-94 but remains uncompleted. An ideal location for an extension; the passage may lead south above Huccacove, northeast or both. Perhaps the most traditional Williams Canyon dig in the cave. A south-leading extension off of adjacent Paul's Dome may also hold some promise, but may be too close to the surface to safely dig.

HUCCACOVE CONNECTION. Often attempted, but still elusive, the connection to Huccacove's Twins Passage is probably at hand. It is expected that before the end of 1994, a team of cavers will climb to Twins Passage while cavers are working in the AA Bypass of Breezeway. With probable voice contact, it should be a simple matter to make the connection -- and see the combined Breezeway/Huccacove system jump to the third longest in the state at 12,000 feet of surveyed passage (passing Cave of the Winds). A possible connection -- a recently excavated pit in the floor of the AA Bypass that according to the computer plot directly overlies the end of Twins Passage.

OTHER LEADS. Throughout Breezeway, there are numerous digs and domes that need closer examination. Many of these passageways probably lead to new rooms and passages.

Conservation

The most important conservation project for 1994 is the excavation of a bypass to the delicate Holy Waters pool area, now on the main trade route. A likely bypass has been noted and excavation should begin in the fall of 1994. Once a bypass is established, the pool area will be restored as much as possible to its original pristine state and blocked by flagging tape to normal, routine traffic. Other conservation projects include the building and installation of a locking environmental gate to the theorized connection to Huccacove's Twins Passage and taping of trails where needed in delicate regions of the cave. If determined by the project participants, fixed ropes in some areas of the cave, notably leading to the High Plains region, may be removed to discourage casual traffic, provided a permanent anchor and line for future access are installed. In delicate regions of the cave, low-impact caving will be practiced, including special precautions for digging, exploration and climbing. Cavers will be discouraged from casually visiting pristine passages such as the north end of the Stone River in eastern Breezeway. Particular care will be taken in all formation regions. Traffic to Vanity Fair will be discouraged.

Surveying

Paul Burger will continue his duties as Director of Surveying. When new passageways are discovered, they will be surveyed to the high standards established by the project and the surveying director and added to the master map. This season, it is expected that the first edition quadrangles of the cave will be available for project participants. Computer plots via Larry Fish's Compass program will also be available for any participants who have an IBM-format computer and a copy of the survey program. Unless otherwise authorized by the Project and the management of the Cave of the Winds, survey maps and data should not be distributed outside the participants of the project.

Science

Fred Luiszer, Mark Maslyn and Harvey DuChene are expected to coordinate science studies within this unique cave. Harvey has offered to begin an inventory program of the cave's features, using methods currently used at Wind Cave in South Dakota, and Lechuguilla and Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. Data from this inventory will be able to be plotted through Larry Fish's Compass computer program. Fred and Mark will continue coordination of science studies begun in 1994. Speleologists and other interested geologists should be referred to the project for access to this cave and studies of its features. Copies of the data from cave studies should be provided to the management of the Cave of the Winds for its files.

Administration

Trip leaders for 1994-95 should be increased from 15 to 20 as the cave has significantly grown in the year since the initial designation. Inactive trip leaders should be removed and new, qualified leaders should be named. Policies from 1993-94 should be continued, including the multiple trip policy and the checkout by mail option. Should camping be allowed within the cave this season? Should an emergency medical kit be placed within the cave at its entrance or deeper?

PUBLICITY. Breezeway is currently one of the most well-known secrets in Colorado caving. Currently, many cavers know that the project has a cave on the east rim but do not know the extent or the specifics of the cave. Fortunately, most cavers have not pushed the issue to date. The question is, should Breezeway be publically acknowledged and, if so, to what extent? Only to the grottos? Slide presentations? Articles in *Rocky Mountain Caving*? Project member recruitment? Do we wait until cavers demand additional information or be proactive, releasing information on our terms? What about the upcoming NSS Convention in August 1996? Provided the cave is known at least within the caving community, it will undoubtedly be prominently featured in the guidebook and at sessions. Or, do we keep quiet and hold the particulars of the cave and its features among us for as long as possible? These are questions the project and the management of the Cave of the Winds should address, keeping in mind the protection of the cave and the real possibility that it extends beyond the current boundaries of the Cave of the Winds property. Where do we go from here?