
WILLIAMS CANYON PROJECT

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Autumn Meeting

Cave of the Winds
September 28, 2002

EXECUTIVE RECAP

WCP TREASURY REPORT

Discussion: Bob Stucklen

Bob Stucklen reports that continued "Caves of Williams Canyon" book sales will help reach the goal of repaying the publishing loans by the end of the 2002/03 season. Tom Dotter has sold additional copies of the book, bringing the project closer to the final payment. The bank has increased the service charge for the checking account, which is shared with the Northern Colorado Grotto. Bob asks that the individuals with book depositories provide him with updated counts of the books they have in storage.

2002-2003 TRIP LEADERS APPROVAL

Discussion: Rick Rhinehart

Trip leader applications were reviewed by the board and the attending trip leaders. For the first time in project history, more applications were received than positions available – 32 trip leader forms were filed (34 including the two assistant trip leader applications).

The project discussed at length increasing the number of trip leaders from 28 to 35. For the first six years of the project, there was no limit to the number of trip leaders. As recently as early 1995, there were 33 active trip leaders. In the spring of 1995, the Cave of the Winds management suggested setting a limit of 25 trip leaders. That autumn, the number was raised to 28 trip leaders following discussion at the board meeting. The board also set a minimum of three trips per year for a trip leader to remain a trustee of the project.

In this year's discussion, some trip leaders argued that the 28 person limit had served the project for seven years and should not be arbitrarily increased to meet demand. Other trip leaders pointed out that the project has recently aggressively sought out additional participation and activity in the canyon – to not accept new trip leaders would be counterproductive to the goals of the project. Bob Cronk motioned to raise the limit to 35, effective this year. Jon Barker motioned that if the project increased the number of trip leaders, that the minimum also be increased from three trips annually to five. By a vote of the board and attending trip leaders, the increase from 28 trip leaders to 35 was approved by a majority (this allows growth in 2003/04) as was the proposal to also increase required trips from three to five. All trip leaders must now participate in three canyon trips during the seven month season – as a leader, co-leader or participant – to remain an active trip leader. Though the project is willing to revisit this topic at the September 2003 meeting, it also agreed that trip leaders should not increase above 35 for several years.

The 32 trip leaders for 2002/03 includes 16 trip leaders outside of the Colorado Springs area, not including the assistant trip leaders. Of the 16, one is from western Colorado and one is from New Mexico. The Southern Colorado Mountain Grotto has the majority of the current trip leaders.

For Breezeway Cave, 16 trip leaders were approved. This has been the standing limit since 1995.

ASSISTANT TRIP LEADERS PROPOSAL

Discussion: Rick Rhinehart

The board and participating trip leaders approved a proposal by the Cave of the Winds management to add a new trip leader category – assistant trip leader. This new category will primarily provide young cavers under the age of 18 to co-lead trips and gain experience as leaders. Eventually, all new trip leaders may be required to spend a year as an assistant trip leader before gaining full authority.

For now, there is a limit of five assistant trip leaders. Two young cavers were approved as assistant leaders, and will need to participate in at least five trips during the 2002/03 season. Breezeway Cave is not included in the assistant trip leader program. Cave of the Winds management will determine if this category will have a minimum age limit.

CONSERVATION

Cave Restoration: Al Collier, Tom Dotter

Al Collier and Tom Dotter discussed ongoing restoration and conservation projects in the caves of Williams Canyon, including the Cave of the Winds, Breezeway and Huccacove. Breezeway Cave restoration is nearly complete. In Huccacove, extensive graffiti removal in the Historic Section will be undertaken in 2002/03. For Cave of the Winds, continued restoration along the commercial tour route is planned, including some overnight stays.

Breezeway Cave Conservation Video Project: Rick Rhinehart

Gerry Estes, Mike Frazier and Tom Dotter volunteered to assist Jeremy Stiles with a video record of the cave. This video will document the current condition of the main route through Breezeway to Stone River. It will serve as a record of the cave and as a tool to determine any future damage or degradation to the route. Once the video taping is completed, the cave should be ready for reopening this autumn for exploration and science trips.

Dig Restoration Proposal: Rick Rhinehart

Consideration of clean-up activities following a dig in any cave or on the surface should always be included in dig proposals to the board. In recent years, too many dig projects have ignored clean-up following the conclusion of the digging activities. In some cases, project cavers have had to spend their time cleaning abandoned digs that the original diggers have not taken the time to restore.

Mike Frazier suggested that the board or a designated committee begin reviewing digs at the time of the proposal to recommend dig restoration measures. This same group can review a dig after the conclusion of the project to see if restoration has been met.

Some discussion followed about the penalties that might apply to cavers who do not clean up or restore an area following a dig. No decisions were made, however.

This topic will be revisited at the January 2003 meeting of the project, hopefully to determine some specific rules and regulations, as well as enforcement and penalties.

WILLIAMS CANYON PROJECT NEW PARTICIPANT BUCKSLIP

Discussion: Rick Rhinehart

The project agreed that copies of the new Williams Canyon Project participant buckslip should be mailed to other nearby grottos in New Mexico and the Rocky Mountain Region of the National Speleological Society. Not only might the project gain some participants (at least on an occasional basis), but additional copies of the project book might sell as a result.

Rick Rhinehart will coordinate the mailing of these packets in October.

PROJECT LEADERSHIP: SHOULD THE CHAIR BE AN ELECTED POSITION?

Discussion: Rick Rhinehart

When the Williams Canyon Project was originally chartered in 1989, the chair was an elected position. In 1990, following reorganization of the project, the chair was changed to an appointed position, with the Cave of the Winds management determining the chair.

It was moved that the project reinstate the policy of electing the chair on an annual basis. By a majority vote of the board and participating trip leaders, the project chair will be elected by a majority vote of the board of directors and will serve for the calendar year (January through December). The first election will be held at the January 2003 meeting.

By electing the chair, the project continues the groundwork to become a long-lasting project driven not by personalities, but by continuing cooperation with the management and owners of the private Cave of the Winds. An elected chair increases democracy in the project, as well as providing a means to bring in new ideas, enthusiasm and direction to the project.

The project understands the Cave of the Winds management can call for a new election if a current chair is not actively managing the project, is unavailable, unresponsive or unacceptable to the commercial cave managers.

INCREASED PROJECT SECURITY

Discussion: Rick Rhinehart

The project voiced increasing concern at the continuing lack of the rule of law in Williams Canyon. Given the continuing assault on the various caves, the board and project members encourage the Cave of the Winds management to take additional steps to assure the security of the caves. Such actions might be as follows:

- Cave keys must be signed in and out from the management. The keys are kept in a lockbox and are not out in the open. Jeremy Stiles, the manager, keeps the Breezeway key on his person. [This practice already is in effect.]
- The trip log should be moved from the ticket counter to the lower manager's office. Trip archive files currently kept in the open on shelves near the upstairs offices could be moved to a more secure location.
- Cave gate locks should be regularly rotated with spare locks.
- Cavers in the canyon should report any suspicious persons or activities to the Cave of the Winds management, either in person or by cell phone. [This practice already is in effect.]
- The Cave of the Winds should purchase additional portable radios that cavers can check out with keys and use on trips into the canyon. Not only could the radios be used to report to the management of trespassers or other trouble-makers, they could also provide immediate notification of a cave rescue.
- Cave of the Winds should restrict access and maps about canyon caves to only the most trusted employees. Caving trips by guides should be reconsidered.
- Additional alarm systems should be installed at Huccacove, Narrows and Manitou caves. A motion detector alarm system should be strongly considered in the Cave of the Winds (with units in several locations).
- A new night watchman for the property should be considered by the Cave of the Winds management. The watchman must be willing to actively patrol the canyon after hours and seek out trespassers.
- Project cavers might occasionally camp in areas known to have frequent visitation by vandals and trespassers. For example, camping at the Big Alcove, near Huccacove Cave and near the George White Tunnel might prove helpful.

CAVE PROJECTS

Dig projects in Huccacove, Breezeway, Longview and Sandite caves were discussed. The project is interested in locating all three USAFA aluminum digging carts so they can be actively used in current digs; one is reported to be in Huccacove at the Sand Castle Room dig, and another is reported to be in the possession of the Cave of the Winds management. One was last seen floating in flooded Manitou Cave; perhaps it can be found in the cave if not already removed.

For digging in Breezeway Cave, there are some special considerations, including dig preparation for both the Little Mountain Room dig and the Twin Tulip dig at the Celestial City.

Digging supplies (shovels, buckets, etc.) are reported in storage at Three Hole Cave. These may be Dan Sullivan's equipment.

WILLIAMS CANYON PROJECT SURVEY SECTION

Update: Paul Burger

Paul Burger and Tom Dotter discussed various survey and inventory projects for the new season. Scheduled for completion is the overland survey (locating all cave entrances using GPS units) and the Fluting Cave map. Another project to be

completed in the next few months is a CD-Rom containing electronic PDF versions of all cave maps for the canyon. Paul is currently converting Manitou, Huccacove and Cave of the Winds maps to electronic format.

Paul reminded everyone there are standards for surveying in the canyon, including running profiles and inventory at the time of survey. Over the summer, Paul managed several cave survey and inventory sessions. 30 cavers participated in the training sessions.

NEW CAVE OF THE WINDS VIDEO

Discussion: Gerry Estes

Gerry Estes reported the new video about the Cave of the Winds has been completed and will be available in October. A caver premiere party will be hosted by the Cave of the Winds on Saturday evening, October 12.

Gerry spent 240 hours editing the video since Labor Day. The video took 33 trips and the assistance of 56 cavers to complete.

The final version will be available in VHS and DVD formats (the DVD format will include a cavers-only version with outtakes, bloopers and other special features). The Cave of the Winds is considering selling the videos and DVDs at the gift shop, as well as using it for school groups.

OTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Netting at the entrance of Narrows Cave was questioned, as it restricts access by bats. No one knew why it was placed at the entrance, as the gate was built to be "bat friendly." It was suggested the netting be removed, unless someone knows why it was installed.

The recent stroke suffered by Steve Reames, a past participant of the project and director of the Colorado Cave Rescue Network, was reported by Paul Burger and other cavers. It was recommended that cavers take the time to visit Steve at his Black Forest home, to help him regain his communication skills.

The next Williams Canyon Project meeting will be held at the end of January 2003.

The September meeting concluded with a showing of Gerry Estes' new video. Trips to various Williams Canyon caves followed, as a part of the "open weekend" of caving scheduled for the 28 and 29 of September.