

**Virginia Cave Board  
September 17, 2016  
Catawba, Virginia**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**PLACE AND TIME**

The meeting of the Virginia Cave Board was held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 17, 2016 at the Catawba Center, in Catawba, Virginia.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

David Ek, Chairman  
Dr. Daniel H. Doctor  
John T. Haynes

Rick Lambert  
Marian McConnell

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Michelle Baird  
Robert K. Denton, Jr.  
John H.H. Graves  
Steve Lindeman, Vice Chairman

Roger W. Kirchen, Department of Historic Resources  
Janet Tinkham  
Meredith Hall Weberg

**DCR STAFF PRESENT**

Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance  
Tom Smith, Deputy Director of Operations  
Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage  
Rob Evans, Natural Areas Manager  
Lisa McGee, Director of Policy and Planning  
Wil Orndorff, Karst Protection Coordinator

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Anthony Carnike, Butler Cave Conservation Society  
Karen M. Kastning, New River Valley Grotto  
Mary Sue Socky, Blue Ridge Grotto

**ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM**

With five (5) members of the Board present a quorum was not established.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Ek called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

**TREASURER'S REPORT** – *Jason Bulluck, DCR*

The treasurer's report was tabled until the next meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 11, 2016**

As there was no quorum, approval of the minutes was deferred until the next meeting.

**DCR KARST PROGRAM UPDATE** – *Wil Orndorff, DCR*

Mr. Orndorff presented the following report [text inserted as presented].

#### *Personnel*

- Tom Malabad started as the new karst protection specialist on June 27, 2016. Tom comes to DCR from Thompson and Litton, Associates, and has a long history of cave conservation, bat biology, and natural resource work experience, combined with an in depth familiarity of issues associated with development projects in karst. In addition, he is a strong caver with a demonstrated commitment to cave and karst conservation.

#### *Projects*

- Staff completed the final report for the 1-year long *Madison Cave Isopod Habitat Monitoring Study*, which deployed temperature, electrical conductivity, and water level loggers at 10 locations throughout the Shenandoah Valley. The project also included periodic sampling for the isopod and associated stygobitic fauna. Copies of the report are available upon request.
- Staff completed a *Status Update for the Rye Cove Cave Isopod*. Species appears to be secure across its range.
- A partnership between DCR, Lewis Bioconsulting, American University, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service is working to sort out the taxonomic relationships between surface and subsurface populations of the freshwater isopod genus *Lirceus* in Southwestern Virginia, which include the federally endangered Lee County cave isopod.
- Staff is working collaboratively with Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to install a bat-friendly gate on *Peery Saltpeter Cave* in Botetourt County. Peery is home to at least 5 species of bat, including the federally listed Indiana bat, and is currently one of the three largest known remaining Virginia hibernacula for little brown bats, a species decimated by White Nose Syndrome. Projected project date is between October 15 and December 1, 2016.

#### *Beetle Project*

- Staff continues to work under a cooperative agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to perform a status update on 17 rare cave beetle species known only from a total of 31 Virginia caves. To date, about 2/3 of the caves have been visited, with species verifications, at least to genus level, at most locations.

#### *Conservation planning*

- Natural Heritage Protection staff is working to integrate cave and karst resources into the updated Natural Heritage Plan (VA), now under development. Part of this ongoing project will be the development of a conservation status assessment of all designated significant caves, as well as other caves with documented occurrences of rare cave fauna or protected species. Currently, 6 cave conservation sties have been identified as first order priority for state protection.

Mr. Orndorff presented a status update on the Dominion Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP).

- Forthcoming documents that should appear on Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) website soon:
  - Karst Mitigation Plan, revised based on comments from Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and others.
  - Karst Survey.
- Virginia Cave Board member Bob Denton is once again working as senior karst specialist on the project for Geoconcepts Engineering. Because of his professional role, Bob is continuing to recuse himself from all Cave Board Discussion on ACP due to conflict of interest.
- Virginia Cave Board member Rick Lambert submitted comments to FERC on behalf of the Highland County Cave Survey regarding karst features along the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline Route. Mr. Lambert's comments were presented on behalf of Highland County and not intended to represent the Virginia Cave Board.  
[http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file\\_list.asp?accession\\_num=20160602-5266](http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20160602-5266)
- FERC National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) Timeline, ACP
  - Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) – December, 2016
  - Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – June, 2017
  - 90-day Federal Authorization Deadline – September, 2017
- In service target is fourth quarter 2018.
- ACT's representatives have been discussing avoidance and mitigation measures with VA DCR Natural Heritage Karst staff (Orndorff) regarding the Cochran's Conservation Site.

Mr. Orndorff presented the status update on the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) Project.

- On July 3, 2015 "AN EXPERT REPORT ON GEOLOGIC HAZARDS IN THE KARST REGIONS OF VIRGINIA AND WEST VIRGINIA: Investigations and Analysis Concerning the Proposed Mountain Valley Gas Pipeline" was submitted by Dr. Ernst Kastning to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on behalf of the Protect our Water, Heritage, Rights (The POWHR Coalition – [www.powhr.org](http://www.powhr.org).)
- VA DCR Natural Heritage has submitted to FERC and MVP a conceptual avoidance for the Slussers Chapel Conservation site. This avoidance will require rerouting through the Jefferson National Forest (United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service), but not through a designated wilderness area.
- FERC National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Timeline, MVP
  - Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) – September 16, 2016
  - Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – March 10, 2017
  - 90-day Federal Authorization Deadline – June 8, 2017
- Target construction date is mid-2017; in-service target is fourth quarter 2018.
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement by FERC on 16 September, 2016. Addresses karst issues and includes references to MVP's Karst Mitigation Plan and Karst-specific Erosion and Sediment Control Plan.
- MVP is actively exploring avoidance, minimization, and mitigation strategies relevant to the Canoe, Slussers Chapel, and Old Mill conservation sites, as recommended by FERC in the DEIS.

## **LAND CONSERVATION UPDATE**

### *The Nature Conservancy*

Mr. Lindeman was unable to attend the meeting. Dr. Ek read the following report.

TNC: we have been making progress on our Cedars Conservation Area land acquisitions in Lee County, Virginia. We have come to terms with two landowners in The Cedars to acquire approximately 150 acres in total surrounding the Lee County Country Club. These lands overlay a significant cave system that provides habitat for the Lee County cave isopod. We are completing due diligence including boundary surveys, title searches, and Phase I environmental assessments and we hope to close on these tracts by the end of calendar year 2016. A third property, approximately 73 acres in total, is still being negotiated. If we are successful in coming to terms we would anticipate closing on this tract in the spring of 2017. All of these properties will be protected by Deeds of Dedication and Open Space Easements and are destined to be transferred to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage, as part of The Cedars Natural Area Preserve.

We are also working in partnership with The United States Forest Service – Clinch Ranger District on a funding proposal to the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to purchase a suite of tracts in the High Knob conservation area in Scott and Wise Counties. A number of these properties overlay biologically significant cave and karst resources. We solicited and received letters of support for this proposal from both Virginia DCR and the Virginia Cave Board which we greatly appreciate.

### *Department of Conservation and Recreation – Rob Evans*

Mr. Evans reported that DCR continues to work on acquisitions connected to the Lee County caves and the Cedars Natural Area Preserve. The agency hopes to soon close on two parcels and is in negotiations for a third. In addition to state funding, DCR received a matching donation of \$20,000 from the Virginia Native Plant Society. While matching funds are not required they are helpful in showing the importance of the property and the associated resources. It was suggested that the Board send a letter of thanks to the Virginia Native Plant Society and that the donation be acknowledged in the next newsletter.

DCR had been working on the Cave Hill site but matching funds were returned as the project is not currently able to proceed.

Mr. Evans noted that DCR is not just attempting to protect caves and karst but is also working on seven other properties across the Commonwealth with biologically significant resources.

Mr. Orndorff added that DCR is looking at land that can be protected to protect cave resources as well as the surrounding watershed and footprint.

## **BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Process for responding to sensitive information requests via social media (Facebook, etc.) – Chairman Ek*

The Board discussed the appropriate means of responding to social media concerns. Consensus was to develop a generic response that thanks the person for their inquiry and notes that the question or concern will be brought to the full Board for discussion and response if necessary. The response will include the Virginia Cave Board email ([vcb@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:vcb@dcr.virginia.gov)) which is monitored by Mr. Fletcher. Mr. Fletcher will then forward relevant emails to the Board as appropriate.

*Board Member Travel Reimbursement – Lisa McGee, DCR*

Ms. McGee reviewed the process for Board member travel reimbursement.

**NEW BUSINESS**

*Strategic Goals for the Cave Board – Chairman Ek*

Chairman Ek asked that Board members continue to consider the development of strategic goals that fall within the authority of the Board.

*Proposed Bylaws for the Virginia Cave Board – Chairman Ek*

Chairman Ek led a discussion of the proposed Cave Board Bylaws as presented by staff at the February, 2016 meeting. Board members made the following comments:

- The mission statement needs to be reworded.
- Under “Board Nomination” the specialty areas (archaeology, geology, etc.) should be removed.
- Under “Officers” Chairman Ek suggested the use of Chairman instead of “he.” He also suggested that the Chair have the authority to dissolve committees.
- Recording Secretary – suggested that Director be changed to Chairman with regard to absences.
- A section regarding the establishment of the agenda should be included.
- Under “Amendment of Bylaws” it was suggested to change the word “and” to “or” after the word “state” in the last sentence.
- The Board requested a breakdown of each power and duty as outlined in the Code.

Staff agreed to make the recommended edits and to present a revised version at the next Board meeting. As there was no quorum no action was taken.

*Virginia Cave Owners’ Newsletter – Rob Evans, DCR*

Mr. Evans presented two sample templates for the redesign of the *Virginia Cave Owners’ Newsletter*. Board members present showed a preference for the version with the graphic of the caver in the state outline. Board members also asked about the possibility of adding a survey for public feedback. Templates will be provided to Ms. Weberg for consideration and follow up for the next newsletter.

*Virginia Cave Week – Janet Tinkham*

Ms. Tinkham was not present and the discussion was tabled to the next meeting.

*Appalachian Karst Symposium 3 – Dan Doctor*

Dr. Doctor reported that promotional circulars would be developed through the DCR Office of Public Communications (PCO). The logo will be the DCR logo with the words “Virginia Cave Board” beneath. Board members were encouraged to solicit sponsorships for the symposium.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

Board members requested that they be informed of other DCR related meetings, to include the Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Board of Conservation and Recreation. It was also suggested that notices be sent to local governments. Dr. Doctor will provide a suggested list to the Board Liaison.

**DATE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Staff will poll the Board regarding the next meeting date. Suggested dates were December 3, and December 10, 2016, and January 7, 21, or 28, 2017.

**ADJOURN**

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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David Ek, Chairman

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Marian McConnell, Recording Secretary