

## **Virginia Cave Board**

### **May 31, 2003**

The Virginia Cave Board met in a regular business session on May 31, 2003 at the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Natural Heritage Conference Room in Richmond, Virginia. Vice Chairman Dr. Kurt Buhlmann called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

#### **1. Roll Call**

##### **Members Present**

Mr. Bob Barns  
Dr. Kurt Buhlmann  
Dr. David Culver  
Mr. Joe Davis  
Dr. John Holsinger  
Ms. Katherine Harbury  
Ms. Carol Zokaite

##### **Members Absent**

Ms. Karen M. Kastning  
Mr. Bill Keith  
Ms. Barbara L. Moss  
Mr. Roy Powers

##### **Non-members Present**

Mr. Joey Fagan (Secretary of the Virginia Cave Board)  
Mr. Chris Hobson  
Mr. Tom Lera  
Mr. Joe Maroon  
Ms. Judy Molnar  
Mr. Larry Smith

#### **2. Introduction and Announcements**

Vice Chairman, Dr. Kurt Buhlmann welcomed members of the Virginia Cave Board and guests. All in attendance introduced themselves.

Tom Lera, Administrative Vice President of the National Speleological Society, distributed copies of a new brochure about bats.

Larry Smith announced that Joe Maroon, Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation would be attending the Virginia Cave Board Meeting later in the afternoon.

### 3. Minutes

Ms. Carol Zokaites moved for the Virginia Cave Board to accept the minutes of the February 26, 2003 meeting with the following change:

- Page 1 – “Judy Molnar” is the correct spelling.

Mr. Bob Barns seconded.

VOTE: Passed unanimously

### 4. Treasurers Report

Karen Kastning was absent, recovering from surgery. No treasurers report was submitted.

### Old Business

### 5. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee – no report.

B. Environmental Response Committee

- The concept of holding a coordinated Virginia Cave Board field day program for educational outreach for various interested organizations including VDOT was discussed. Dr. John Holsinger asked for help from Dr. David Culver, Mr. Roy Powers, and Mr. Phil Lucas in formulating plans for a possible field day event.

C. Sinkhole Protection Committee

- Mr. Joey Fagan discussed the potential for using VDOT mitigation funds for sinkhole protection projects. Mr. Fagan’s comments were based on a prior conversation with Mr. Ed Wallingford of VDOT’s Environmental Division.
- Dr. David Culver noted the concept that caves and karst could reasonably be considered as wetlands and protected as wetlands.
- Mr. Joe Maroon suggested the Cave Board contact VDOT Assistant Commissioner Jeff Southard to discuss areas of common interest relating to the environmental protection of caves and karst in Virginia.

- Mr. Wil Orndorff, Mr. Joey Fagan, Ms. Carol Zokaites, Mr. Bob Barns, and Mr. Bill Keith will work to come up with a list of cave and karst protection interests and issues in common with the Virginia Department of Transportation and develop specific plans to be discussed with VDOT representatives. The list of common issues and plans are to be reported to DCR Director Joe Maroon.

## **6. Virginia Karst Program**

Mr. Joey Fagan reported on the recent activities of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Division of Natural Heritage Karst Program.

- Karst Program staff are working with DCR Urban Program staff to incorporate karst specific best management practices for stormwater management and erosion and sediment control into agency guidelines. This focus meshes nicely with results from the recent Governor's Environmental Summit, which specified stormwater management as a top environmental priority.
- The Dorton Property in Russell County, subject of the April 2002 letter from Stanley S. Campbell. The Dorton problem is closed as far as the karst program is concerned. The Campbell property flooded in late winter 2002, largely due to stormwater runoff exceeding the receiving capacity of several sinkholes on Mr. Campbell's property. The two properties share a large doline, separated by Route 71. Mr. Campbell believed that this problem was exacerbated by Mr. Dorton's grading of the property on the opposite side of Route 71. Inspections by Karst Program staff suggested this was true, but to only a minor degree. Concerns over the Dorton property were elevated when it was learned that an asphalt plant had been approved for the site by VA-DEQ, and that a permit had already been issued. Russell County Erosion and Sediment Control inspectors at one point issue a stop-work order to Mr. Dorton later in 2002. The degree to which he complied with the stop-work order is a matter of debate, and resulted in pending legal action between Russell County and Mr. Dorton. In February 2003, the cut and graded slope on Mr. Dorton's property adjacent to Route 71 collapsed, crossing RT 71 and destroying a house trailer. Fortunately, no one was injured. At the February 2003 Cave Board Meeting, the Environmental Response Committee discussed the issue and decided to investigate further. Contacts were made with DEQ, DCR, and Russell County. DEQ maintained that since the asphalt plant permit had been issued, their hands were tied. The only remaining recourse was for someone to file a formal complaint

alleging impact to state waters. Russell County indicated to the Cave Board that it was involved in negotiations and legal proceedings with Mr. Dorton, and could not comment further at this time. In early May, Wil Orndorff drove by the site and observed the asphalt plant was completed, on an upland site well above the area flooded in 2002. Though this case highlighted many important issues in karst, it is probably too far along to mitigate this particular impact.

- Karst Program Staff represented DCR at the EPA Region III/IV "Drinking Water Protection in Karst Terrain" conference on May 21-22 in Abingdon. Mr. Wil Orndorff led a field trip to Lee County, exploring the complementary objectives of habitat conservation and water quality protection. Mr. Joey Fagan and Mr. Wil Orndorff served on the Storm Water Management Panel. Ms. Carol Zokaites co-led the Groundwater Guardian Workshop and Project Underground Session. A co-sponsor of the conference, DCR also hosted the website for the event.
- Progress continues on the development of conservation site boundaries for Virginia's significant caves. Unfortunately, anticipated funding from Virginia DOT fell through. The Karst Program was able to contract limited services through Virginia Tech, and has Benjamin Schwartz working on the project this summer. By August 15, 2003 conservation sites incorporating another 30 significant caves should be designed, and polygonal representations of the "footprints" of all designated significant caves will be incorporated into the internal Natural Heritage GIS system. In addition, significant cave conservation sites will be prioritized by biodiversity ranking (B-rank) for targeting acquisitions for the Natural Area Preserve System.

Dr. David Culver discussed conservation site methodology.

Dr. John Holsinger moved: The Virginia Cave Board fully supports the development of conservation site boundaries as a critical tool for planning and protection of cave and karst resources in Virginia.

Chairman Barbara Moss will write a letter to the DCR Director explaining the Virginia Cave Board's position on Conservation Sites.

Dr. David Culver seconded.

VOTE: Passed unanimously

- DCR Director Joe Maroon explained the current state funding problems. He asked the Virginia Cave Board to suggest possible new sources of funding for development of conservation site boundaries.

## 7. **Karst Education Program Update and Project Underground**

- The Karst Education program has been very busy this spring, having already led four workshops, talked to several classes at one high school, and led an education session at the karst conference in Abingdon. Arrangements were made with county school board science supervisors for two of these workshops to be presented during teacher in-service days. Materials from Project Underground were combined with meaningful watershed experience field trips. The teachers can use these materials in the classroom and take their classes on the same field trips. One workshop was a two-day facilitator training for teachers in southwest Virginia. These new facilitators are already planning a Project Underground teacher workshop and a student field day on karst for September. The last workshop was for the State Park Interpreters.
- Karst education coordinator Carol Zokaites is a member of the DCR Conservation Education Committee. The goal for this committee is to help coordinate Environmental Education programs across DCR divisions. The karst education coordinator also helped the DCR Staunton Office with the DCR Watershed Management workshop in Harrisonburg.
- There are five more workshops, a field trip and the Farm and Family Showcase at Va. Tech planned for this summer.
- The 2002 released SOL questions for earth science had two great karst questions, along with a karst diagram.
- The karst education coordinator Carol Zokaites has had great success procuring additional funding for these workshops. Funding sources include other state agencies and programs, as well as local school systems.

### **National Project Underground Update**

The Project Underground lesson, "Sinkholes in a Cup", is being included in the American Geologic Institutes Earth Science Week Materials, with 10,000 copies being distributed nationwide.

## 8. **Grand Caverns**

Mr. Joe Maroon expressed thanks for the work by the Members of the Virginia Cave Board in providing information to the public on the Parks and Natural Areas Bond that was approved by Virginia voters in last November's General Election.

Mr. Maroon explained that park acquisitions are being studied in three different geographic areas in the state. One of the areas being studied is the Central Valley where Grand Caverns and Natural Chimneys are located. Mr. Maroon reported that he and his wife visited Grand Caverns and Natural Chimneys during October 2002. A study is currently being conducted to explore options for Grand Caverns and Natural Chimneys to become part of the Virginia State Park; the report from the study is due in October 2003.

Mr. Larry Smith asked Mr. Maroon if the Virginia Cave Board should have a role in the possible transition of the Grand Caverns property to state ownership. Mr. Maroon asked the Board members to suggest additional lands surrounding Grand Caverns that might eventually become part of any resulting state park involving Grand Caverns.

#### **9. U. S. Forest Service Significant Cave Listing**

Mr. Joey Fagan reported on the status of the five caves nominated by the Virginia Cave Board for protection under the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988. As previously reported, these five caves have been determined by the Federal Regional Interagency Review Team to qualify as significant caves. Planners from the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest are currently reviewing four of the five caves as part of the revised Land and Resource Management Planning process for the Jefferson National Forest. One of the nominated caves is located in the George Washington National Forest.

It was the consensus of the Board that a representative from the US Forest Service should be invited to attend the next meeting of the Virginia Cave Board. It was further agreed to talk with forest service planners and managers to coordinate future significant nominations by the Virginia Cave Board.

#### **New Business**

#### **10. Governor's Natural Resource Summit**

Mr. Joe Maroon, Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation spoke to the Cave Board about the Governor's Natural Resource Summit held April 10 and 11, 2003 at Williamsburg, Virginia. About 130 participants from key agencies and organizations met to exchange ideas and to develop a proactive agenda dealing with Virginia's environmental and resource issues. There was a high level of interest and participation. Mr. Maroon asked the Virginia Cave Board to participate in this partnership between the government and private sector. He expressed a desire to involve as many people as possible in the work of the Governor's Natural Resource Summit.

More information on the Governor's Natural Resource Summit may be found at the following Internet link:

[www.naturalresources.state.va.us/Initiatives/PartnershipSummit/PartnershipAgenda.cfm](http://www.naturalresources.state.va.us/Initiatives/PartnershipSummit/PartnershipAgenda.cfm)

## **11. Jefferson National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan**

Larry Smith presented Virginia Cave Board members with copies of a document containing selected excerpts from the Jefferson National Forest Land and Resource Management Planning Documents dealing with cave and karst resources. Members of the Board were asked to submit suggestions and comments to the Forest Service by July 3, 2003. Comments on the cave and karst related management prescriptions are particularly encouraged.

The Jefferson National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan documents may be found at the following Internet link:

<http://www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/gwj/forestplan/>

## **12. Public Comments**

- Dr. David Culver Reported that Rust Cave in Louden County is for sale.
- Ms. Carol Zokaites reported that Bertha Cave in New River Trail State Park is being gated.
- Maple Flats is an area of sinkhole ponds located in Jefferson National Forest. Maple Flats is located near Waynesboro, Virginia. More awareness and protection is sought for these sinkhole wetlands.
- Dr. John Holsinger noted the recorded localities for the Madison Cave Isopod and the Lee County Cave Isopod.

- Judy Molnar reported the Virginia Living Museum in Newport News, Virginia is seeking cave animals that have been rescued or bred in captivity for exhibition in the museum.

**13. Times and Places for Future Meetings of the Virginia Cave Board**

- September 13, 2003                      Radford, Virginia
- November 22, 2003                      Staunton, Virginia

**14. Adjournment**

Ms. Carol Zokaites moved the meeting to be adjourned.

Mr. Joe Davis seconded.

After members of the Virginia Cave board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting, Vice Chairman Dr. Kurt Buhlman adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Joey Fagan  
Virginia Cave Board Secretary