

DRAFT MINUTES

**Virginia Cave Board
Saturday, January 31, 2004
The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Program Office
Charlottesville, Virginia**

Virginia Cave Board Members Present

Ms. Barbara Moss, Chairman
Mr. Bob Barns
Dr. David Culver
Ms. Ethel R. Eaton

Ms. Andrea Futrell
Dr. John Holsinger
Ms. Karen M. Kastning

Virginia Cave Board Members Not Present

Dr. Kurt Buhlmann
Mr. Joe Davis

Mr. Bill Keith
Ms. Claire Ward

Staff Present

Mr. Joey Fagan
Mr. Larry Smith

Mr. Wil Orndorff

Others Present

Ms. Patti Barns
Dr. Ernst Kastning
Mr. Gary Moss

Ms. Gwynn Crichton
Ms. Judy Molnar

Call to Order

Ms. Moss called the meeting to order at 1:25 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

Introduction and Announcements

Ms. Moss welcomed members, staff, and guests. All in attendance introduced themselves.

Chairman Moss welcomed Ms. Ethel Eaton, the Virginia Department of Historical Resources representative to the Virginia Cave Board.

Ms. Karen Kastning announced that the next meeting of the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society, the Spring VAR, would be held April 23-25, 2004 at Grand Caverns.

Approval of Minutes from November 22, 2003

- MOTION: Ms. Kastning moved that the minutes of the November 22, 2003 meeting of the Virginia Cave Board be approved as corrected.
- SECOND: Dr. Holsinger
- DISCUSSION: None.
- VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurers Report

Ms. Kastning submitted the Treasurer's report to the Board.

Old Business

Education Committee Report

Ms. Moss discussed current contents of the Virginia Cave Board website and presented draft version of some new pages. The Board made suggestions and corrections to the draft.

Mr. Smith suggested the legal permit requirements and restrictions regarding collecting or removing any materials or organisms from Virginia caves be explained on the website. Legal protections for caves and karst should likewise be presented.

Plans for the 2004 Virginia Cave Week were discussed.

Environmental Response Committee Report

Dr. Holsinger reported on a planned project to develop a facility for the underground storage of natural gas near Saltville, Virginia. Ms. Eaton noted that information on the project could be found on a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) website.

Impacts to Interstate 81 Cave due to the eventual widening on Interstate 81 were discussed. Mr. Barns reported that Mr. Chris Collins of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is in charge of the environmental review of the Interstate 81 widening project. A need was expressed for VDOT to stabilize the entrance of Interstate 81 Cave in order to accommodate survey and inventory work in the cave. Members of the Cave Board and DCR Karst Program Staff will contact the Abingdon Resident Engineer in reference to the stabilization work.

Mr. Orndorff noted that two significant caves are known to be in the proposed right-of-way for the Interstate 81 widening project, Interstate 81 Cave in Smyth County and Billy Williams Cave in Rockbridge County.

Mr. Orndorff reported on a meeting between Division of Natural Heritage personnel and with American Electric Power (AEP) representatives and some of AEP's environmental consultants regarding plans for the Jackson Ferry 765 kV power line. AEP has agreed to implement a program to monitor streams near the project, to setbacks for herbicide applications, and to consider stopping the use of herbicides for maintenance of a smaller nearby power line in Bland County.

Sinkhole Protection Committee Report

Ms. Futrell reported on a recent telephone contact with Mr. Leo Snead of VDOT. VDOT is continuing to work to develop proposed guidelines for administration of mitigation funds that could allow sinkhole protection projects to be included as part of the Statewide Stream Compensation Plan.

Sacrifice Cave Committee Report

Dr. Culver discussed issues related to the educational use of caves receiving a large number of visitors. Caves that are managed to allow for a large volume of visitors should ideally be caves that do not contain any biologically sensitive features. Such high-traffic caves should be easily accessible and have adequate and safe parking nearby.

Dr. Culver emphasized the important role landowners play in educating people who visit caves. In the interest of providing some relief from the pressures inherent to owning and managing a cave that receives large volumes of traffic, it was suggested that a set of guidelines be developed for landowners and for cave visitors including a section on common etiquette for cave visitors. An educational program is needed to address these issues.

Dr. Kastning reported on the history of caving activities at camps operated by Blue Ridge Mountains Boy Scout Council.

Dr. Culver is seeking the names of caves that are already receiving a large number of visitors

Cave Owners Newsletter Committee Report

Ms. Kastning reported that Issue Number 15 is being prepared. Additional articles are being sought. Approximately 1300 landowner names and addresses are confirmed for distribution of the newsletter. Possible articles and themes for future issues of the newsletter were discussed. Mr. Larry Smith suggested that an article be written for the Cave Owners Newsletter to make more landowners aware of the benefits of conservation easements.

Karst Program Report

Mr. Orndorff reported on the recent activities of the DCR Division of Natural Heritage Karst Program.

Mr. Orndorff discussed a meeting held in Richmond, Virginia on December 9, 2003 to discuss the construction of the American Electric Power transmission line passing through Bland County, Virginia.

A report was recently submitted to the Virginia's First Regional Industrial Facility Authority and the New River Valley Planning District Commission detailing the results of a dye trace investigation of stormwater drainage downstream from New River Valley Commerce Park in Pulaski County, Virginia.

Mr. Smith announced recent transfer of ownership of Unthanks Cave from The Nature Conservancy to the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Cave management guidelines will soon be developed for Unthanks Cave as well as for other caves on other Virginia Natural Area Preserves.

Work is continuing on the GIS-based karst hydrology atlas of Virginia.

A contract has been entered in with Virginia Tech to update the biological collection database for Virginia caves and to continue work to define conservation site boundaries for significant caves in Virginia.

Mr. Orndorff reported that work to establish significant cave designation for Lori Cori Canyon Cave under the Federal Cave Protection Act is progressing and awaits the approval of the United States Forest Service National Coordinator for Cave Resources. Ms. Andrea Futrell described steps being taken to assist the Forest Service in developing a management plan for Lori Cori Canyon Cave.

Karst Education and Project Underground Report

Mr. Orndorff submitted a report for Ms. Carol Zokaites. Ms. Zokaites plans to present numerous workshops in the coming months including one in Loudoun County, Virginia. She is working with the Virginia Resource Use Education Council to develop programs in support of the "No Child Left Behind" Initiative. Ms. Zokaites participated in the 2003 Chesapeake Bay Education Summit. Mr. Orndorff announced that Virginia Tech would not hold their Farm and Family Showcase in 2004 due to budget constraints.

Grand Cavern Update

The Cave Board has asked for a meeting on Grand Caverns with Mr. Joe Maroon, Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. A meeting will be

scheduled for sometime in March. Delegate Steven Landes has introduced a bill that calls for DCR to respond to the October 2003 report of the Upper Valley Regional Parks Authority's on inclusion of the Grand Caverns and Natural Chimneys Regional Parks into the state park system. DCR's report on the outstanding issues and procedural steps for a property and management transfer would be due on November 1, 2004.

Public Comment Period

Ms. Judy Molnar announced that March 28, 2004 is the Opening of the new Virginia Living Museum building, which includes a new exhibit on caves. Ms. Molnar expressed thanks to the Virginia Cave Board on behalf of the Virginia Living Museum for the Board's assistance with the new cave exhibit.

Mr. Bob Barns discussed the access and management status of Clarke's Cave and Paxton's Cave.

Chairman Barbara Moss and Mr. Larry Smith both expressed thanks on behalf of the Virginia Cave Board to The Nature Conservancy of Virginia and to Ms. Gwynn Crichton for hosting the day's meeting.

Set Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Virginia Cave Board will be Saturday, April 3, 2004. The meeting will be held at Grand Caverns at Grottoes, Virginia.

Adjournment

Ms. Kastning moved the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Futrell seconded. Ms Moss adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara L. Moss
Chair

Joseph H. Fagan
Secretary