

**Virginia Cave Board
Saturday, July 29, 2017
Staunton Public Library, Staunton, Virginia**

PLACE AND TIME

The meeting of the Virginia Cave Board convened at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, July 29, 2017, at the Staunton Public Library in Staunton, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Steve Lindeman, Chairman	Marian McConnell, Recording Secretary
Daniel H. Doctor, Vice Chairman	Janet Tinkham
Robert K. Denton	Meredith Weberg
John T. Haynes	

MEMBERS ABSENT

Michelle Baird	Roger W. Kirchen, DHR
David Ek	Rick Lambert
John H.H. Graves	

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Rochelle Altholz, Director of Administration and Finance
Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage
Rob Evans, Natural Areas Protection Manager
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Melissa Jackson, Budget Manager
Wil Orndorff, Karst Protection Coordinator

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With seven (7) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Lindeman asked members and staff to introduce themselves and called for announcements.

Mr. Denton reported that he would be presenting regarding the Madison Cave Isopod at the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium. The Symposium will be held in Eureka Springs, Arkansas in October.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Bulluck gave the following treasurer's report. He noted that the funds in the account had been depleted with the publication of the last newsletter.

DCR – NATURAL HERITAGE/CAVE BOARD
Fund Statement
As of June 30, 2017

FY 14 FUND BALANCE	\$1,447
REVENUE	
FY15 Revenue	\$1,600
FY16 Revenue	\$0
FY17 Revenue	\$250
TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,850
DISBURSEMENTS	
FY15 Disbursements – Newsletter	\$1,350
FY16 Disbursements – Newsletter	\$990
FY17 Disbursements – Newsletter	\$957
TOTAL DISBURSEMENT	\$3,297
FUND BALANCE – June 30, 2017	\$0

Mr. Bulluck reviewed a decision brief from the Governor’s Office regarding the authority for the Cave Board to solicit funds. While the Board is authorized in the Code to collect funds, approval must come from the Governor on an annual basis. This approval authorizes the Board to solicit and collect funds through June 30, 2018. DCR staff will facilitate the process for future approvals.

The Board discussed possible sources of funding and activities that might be funded through donations. Previous funding for the newsletter has come from the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 27, 2017

Mr. Denton moved the approval of the Virginia Cave Board minutes from February 27, 2017. Ms. Tinkham seconded and the motion carried.

DCR KARST PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Orndorff presented the following prepared remarks:

Staff is completing a status update on 17 rare cave beetle species in Virginia. Dr. Karen Ober of Holy Cross University is serving as the taxonomic expert on this project. Most species appear to be secure at most locations visited. A final report will be submitted this fall, with a copies provided to board members upon request.

Staff is working in collaboration with Dr. Julian Lewis to resolve taxonomic discrepancies involving the isopod genus *Lirceus*, which includes the troglomorphic Lee County cave isopod (*Lirceus usdagalun*.) Preliminary results suggest that the troglomorphic populations in Virginia may be subspecies of a more widespread species called *Lirceus hargerii*. However, any change in taxonomic status must be accomplished in the scientific literature through the peer review process.

Former cave board member David Hubbard and Dr. Alex Hastings of the Virginia Museum of Natural History visited Starr Chapel Cave in Bath County with staff in April to collect bone fragments first documented by Hubbard and Fred Grady of the Smithsonian Institute nearly 20 years ago. Fragments were located, collected under permit and will be curated at the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville.

Staff worked with Virginia DEQ to develop dye tracing requirements pursuant to the issuance of permits for the Dominion Atlantic Coast and EQT Mountain Valley natural gas pipelines. Traces will be performed for the purpose of emergency response planning along portions of the transmission line where sensitive karst features exist and for which existing data is insufficient for emergency response planning. DCR will be working under contract to assist with dye tracing efforts on each of the pipeline project.

DCR staff is leading a collaborative interagency effort involving Virginia DGIF, Virginia Tech, and Radford University to deploy acoustic monitoring equipment across the upper Tennessee River basin in Virginia in order to determine seasonal patterns of use of caves, other roost sites, and waterways by the federally endangered Gray bat. Virginia is on the eastern edge of the Gray bats range, and these studies will not only assist in management of the species, but also serve as a baseline against which the potential extension of the range to the North and East as a result of climate change and/or declines in competitor species due to White Nose Syndrome may be measured.

Staff continues to work with the state office of environmental project review to screen a wide range of development projects for potential impacts to cave and karst resources. Staff has complete year 1 of a habitat monitoring project for the Madison Cave isopod, involving continuous monitoring of water levels, temperature, and electrical conductivity at 14 sites across the species range. In addition, quarterly biological sampling is establishing site occupancy patterns of the isopod as well as associated subterranean aquatic fauna. Results so far indicate an unanticipated complexity to the habitat, particularly in terms of response to precipitation events. Some sites are strongly influenced by surface waters, while others, including the type locality at Madison Saltpetre Cave, only show low frequency, low amplitude seasonal patterns. Data is directly relevant to aquifer management in the Shenandoah Valley, and staff will present the preliminary results of this research at the 3rd Appalachian Karst Symposium/Sinkhole Conference in April, 2018 in Shepherdstown, WV.

LAND CONSERVATION UPDATE

The Nature Conservancy

Mr. Lindeman reported that acquisition of properties in Lee County connected to the Cedars Natural Area Preserve are moving forward. TNC closed on two tracts of land contiguous to property already owned by DCR for a total of about 155 acres. TNC has been working on this project for about five years. The projects were reviewed by a number of agencies, including DCR, DEQ, Mines, Minerals and Energy, Historic Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Cedars/Powell River partners group will not meet in 2017 but will likely resume meetings next year. This is an information gathering meeting to discuss what happens in Lee County and the areas surrounding The Cedars Natural Area Preserve.

Mr. Lindeman reported that Locke Ogens has replaced Michael Lipford as the Virginia Executive Director for The Nature Conservancy.

DCR

Mr. Evans noted that one of the core functions of DCR is to preserve the biological diversity of Virginia. This authority came from the passage of the Natural Preserves Act in 1989. Roughly 25% of the significant natural resources that DCR tracks in Virginia take place in Lee County.

There are three offers pending on significant projects in the Lee County/Powell River vicinity. These properties have cave, karst and rare plant resources. Additional details will be provided when the transactions are finalized.

DCR looks at a comprehensive approach to protect the diversity across Virginia. The main activity at this time is in the Lee County area. DCR manages a total of 63 Natural Area Preserves across the Commonwealth.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Haynes reviewed a draft petition regarding the listing of the Ellett Valley millipede as endangered under the 1973 Endangered Species Act. He noted that the distribution of the millipede is limited to four cave areas in Virginia.

Mr. Orndorff noted that the Board could serve as the petitioner in this regard. He advised that it would be helpful to have the petition endorsed by taxonomists.

Dr. Haynes will continue to work on the petition and bring it back to the Board for further consideration.

In other new business, Mr. Evans reported that his office had been contacted regarding the issuance of waivers for cave related accidents.

The Board discussed the concept of provide a draft waiver on the website, but chose not to pursue that with the concern that it might be seen as the Cave Board offering an endorsement of the waiver.

Mr. Denton noted that both the Recreational Use Act and the Virginia Cave Act dismiss the liability of a landowner unless there is a charge associated for visiting the resource.

The Board considered adding the Virginia Cave Act information regarding liability issue to the website as well as noting this information in the next issue of the *Virginia Cave Owners' Newsletter*.

Mr. Denton reported that the final environmental impact was issued on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Dye tracing has been approved in four localities in Virginia and one possible location in West Virginia. Permission must be obtained from the landowners for these tests.

OLD BUSINESS

Virginia Cave Owners' Newsletter

Ms. Weberg advised that she would like to produce a newsletter toward the end of the year with the focus being on the promotion of Virginia Cave Week in April. Board consensus was to produce one newsletter in February with the focus on Cave Week. This will allow the Board to solicit necessary funding support.

Mr. Bulluck agreed to work with the DCR Public Communication's Office to determine the time frame needed to publish in February. Generally, about six weeks are needed. The Board agreed to work toward a January 1 deadline for submission.

Ms. Tinkham suggested that it would be helpful to include information in the newsletter regarding volunteer resources available for sinkhole cleanup.

Ms. Weberg asked that Board members have articles and information to her by November 15, 2017. The targeted publication date is February 14, 2018.

Virginia Cave Week

Ms. Tinkham thanked members and staff who participated in the 2017 Virginia Cave Week.

The next Virginia Cave Week will be April 22-28, 2018. The tentative focus is on the Virginia Cave and Karst Trail. Field trips would be different stops along the trail.

Ms. Weberg asked about the possibility of getting permanent signs with the Cave and Karst Trail logo for the locations along the trail. The Board discussed funding concerns and agreed that funding for signs as well as a brochure could be added to fundraising appeals.

Mr. Bulluck advised that the DCR sign shop may be able to produce the signs for the location. Signs along roadways must be coordinated through the Department of Transportation.

The Board agreed that the goal for Virginia Cave Week should be to have an event at every stop on the Cave and Karst Trail.

Ms. Tinkham suggested that the Board recognize David Socky for his work on the website. Staff will work with the Chairman to produce a certificate of appreciation.

Appalachian Karst Symposium 3 & Sinkhole Conference

Dr. Doctor reminded the Board that conference information is at the following link:

<http://www.sinkholeconference.com/>

Those interested in presenting at the conference must submit an abstract. Presenters must also submit an up to ten-page paper regarding their topic that will be published as part of the proceedings for the Conference.

The Conference will be held in Shepardstown, West Virginia on April 2-6, 2018. Participants may come for all or part of the week.

Dr. Doctor asked for Board members to volunteer to help at the registration table. The Cave Board and DCR are listed as conference sponsors. There may also be an opportunity for the Cave Board to have a display booth.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline/Mountain Valley Pipeline

Mr. Denton recused himself from the pipeline discussion.

Dr. Doctor reported that in June, comments from Mr. Lambert were passed along to FERC regarding the Valley Center Karst Area. The comments were related to the Q11 alternative which FERC has not endorsed.

Comments on previous routes have had some impact, and the hope is that comments from the Board will continue to be taken into consideration.

Dr. Doctor advised of two upcoming hearings being held by the State Water Control Board regarding the pipelines.

Public Hearing - Atlantic Coast Pipeline - Additional Water Quality Conditions

Monday, August 7, 6:00 p.m.

James Madison University

<http://townhall.virginia.gov/L/ViewMeeting.cfm?MeetingID=26304>

Public Hearing - Mountain Valley Pipeline - Additional 401 Water Quality Conditions

Tuesday, August 7, 6:00 pm.

Radford University

<http://townhall.virginia.gov/L/ViewMeeting.cfm?MeetingID=26302>

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Orndorff reported that he had spoken with the public works director for the City of Staunton with regard to the Staunton Cave. The cave had been walled in at the recommendation of the State Police after dynamite and blasting caps were discovered.

The City of Staunton is not opposed to discussions regarding the cave. However, Mr. Orndorff noted that the cave is a small, urban cave and would have very little environmental impact as it has already been compromised. However, the cave is a state designated significant cave.

Chairman Lindeman suggested that the Board wait to get a further update from Mr. Lambert at the next meeting before deciding whether to pursue the matter.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

The Board agreed to look at the possibility of meeting at Natural Tunnel State Park on Friday, November 10 and Saturday, November 11 with side trips scheduled to the Cedars Natural Area Preserve and other significant areas. Staff will determine availability of the facilities at the park.

ADJOURN

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Lindeman, Chairman

Marian McConnell, Recording Secretary