

**Virginia Cave Board  
Saturday, June 14, 2008  
Crystal Caverns at Strasburg, Virginia**

**MINUTES**

**Virginia Cave Board Members Present**

Mr. Tom Lera, Chairman  
Dr. David C. Culver  
Dr. Daniel H. Doctor  
Ms. Babs Funkhouser  
Mr. Andrew Harrison, PG  
Dr. John R. Holsinger  
Ms. Meredith Johnson  
Ms. Judy Molnar  
Ms. Barbara L. Moss  
Mr. Jesse J. Richardson  
Mr. David Socky  
Mr. Roger Kirchen, Virginia Department of Historical Resources representative

**DCR Staff Present**

Mr. Joey Fagan  
Mr. Larry Smith  
Mr. Wil Orndorff

**Others Present**

Mr. Gary Moss

**Call to Order**

Mr. Tom Lera called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

**Introduction and Announcements**

Mr. Lera welcomed members of the Cave Board, DCR staff, and guests.

**Approval of Minutes from November 3, 2007**

MOTION: Mr. David Socky moved that the minutes of the November 3, 2007 meeting of the Virginia Cave Board be approved as corrected.

SECOND: Mr. Andrew Harrison seconded.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from March 15, 2008**

MOTION: Mr. David Socky moved that the minutes of the March 15, 2008 meeting of the Virginia Cave Board be approved as corrected.

SECOND: Ms. Barbara Moss seconded

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

**Treasury Report**

Mr. Larry Smith presented the treasury report to the Board; he reported that at the time of the meeting, there are no funds in the DCR Cave Board account. Mr. Smith noted the Cave Board has been awarded several grants that will be reported later in the meeting.

**Old Business**

**Education and Outreach Committee**

Ms. Barbara Moss reported the next issue of the Virginia Cave Owners' Newsletter will be published in September or October 2008; articles should be submitted by August 1. Efforts are being made to update the mailing list for the newsletter.

Ms. Moss reported that the 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan recommends development of a Virginia Karst Trail. The Outdoors Plan acknowledges that a karst thematic trail will serve to educate the public about karst resources as well as promote resource management goals and best management practices to help landowners protect sensitive features such as caves, springs, and sinkholes. The document recognizes the endorsement of the project by the Virginia Cave Board as well as by the Virginia Region (VAR) of the National Speleological Society (NSS). Mr. Smith noted resources and funding might be available through the DCR Division of Recreation Planning for planning a karst trail. The role of the Cave Board and the caving community in the Virginia Karst Trail Project were discussed. Mr. Andy Reeder, the chair of the VAR Conservation Committee and originator of the Virginia Karst Trail concept, has been contacted and will be invited to the next Cave Board meeting.

Virginia Cave Week 2009 will be observed the week of Earth Day (April 22). Ms. Moss discussed Cave Board plans to produce an educational poster for the occasion.

**Joint Technical Committee**

Mr. Andrew Harrison noted that plans for the Rocky Hollow Cave clean-up have been changed. Mr. Wil Orndorff reported that due to concerns about possible impacts to archaeological resources in Rocky Hollow Cave, the trip to clean up Rocky Hollow cave and remove markings associated with the recent vandalism incident has been postponed. The clean-up will be rescheduled following an assessment of historical and archaeological resources in Rocky Hollow Cave and pending approval by the Virginia Department of Historical Resources. A clean-up trip to Gilley Cave is being planned to enable the required community service/mitigation work to be performed as stipulated by the courts for the offender charged in the Rocky Hollow Cave vandalism incident.

Mr. Harrison and Mr. Roger Kirchen discussed plans by the Virginia Department of Historical Resources and the Virginia Speleological Survey to share information on historical and archaeologically significant cave resources.

Mr. Harrison noted the benefit to both agencies for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and DCR Karst Program to establish the practice of sharing data from karst dye trace studies performed by either organization or their contractors.

Mr. Harrison reports the statement on White Nose in bat populations as posted on the Cave Board website is well accepted.

Mr. Harrison reported on efforts by VDOT to protect the entrance to Honaker Roadside Cave. Mr. Orndorff made a slide presentation about the cave and noted ongoing efforts by the Virginia Speleological Survey to map the cave. VDOT has requested guidance on how it should proceed to protect the cave.

MOTION: Mr. David Socky moved that the Virginia Cave Board write a letter to VDOT in support of efforts to protect Honaker Roadside Cave and to preserve the entrance in such a way as to ensure safety for highway maintenance and provide access for cave exploration as outlined in the June 6, 2008 VDOT letter from Mr. H.S Graybeal to Mr. Ralph Davis.

SECOND: Mr. Jesse Richardson

DISCUSSION: It will further be suggested that VDOT register the feature as a Class 5 Injection Well, perform a dye trace investigation to determine where stormwater entering the cave flows, and perform a biological inventory and develop a list of species found in the cave.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

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### **Virginia DCR Natural Heritage Karst Program**

Mr. Wil Orndorff presented the following report:

#### **Education and Outreach**

Multiple Project Underground Workshops are to be held around the state by both Carol Zokaite and members of the PU facilitator network this fall. Approximately 7 are already in the planning stages.

The Chesapeake Bay Mountain Academy will be held June 16-20 at Douthat State Park. It is a summer continuing education program for teachers, and includes a heavy dose of Project Underground and a karst field trip.

Staff led a trip to Unthanks Cave as part of the 2008 joint SERA-VAR meeting June 5-8 in Bristol. In addition, staff authored an article in the guidebook on the biodiversity significance of southwestern Virginia's caves.

#### **Technical Assistance**

Staff provided emergency assistance to the Virginia Department of Emergency Services in response to a fire in a sinkhole in the Seminary area of Lee County. Staff performed dye trace investigations to determine transport direction and rate of contaminated discharge to sinkhole.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Appalachian Karst Symposium was held May 7-10 in Johnson City, TN. Numerous academic scientists, agency staff, NGO representatives, citizen stakeholders, and other members of the caving community attended the Symposium. In total, attendance was over sixty individuals. Tom Lera of the Cave Board delivered a well-received presentation on the efficacy of the Virginia Cave Board and Cave Protection Act. Karst Program staff delivered five presentations – three on karst hydrology and two on biology – and co-authored an additional two presentations. Highlights of the symposium included presentations on the use of caves as paleoclimatological laboratories via stable isotope and sediment studies, discussions of the implications of the Pleistocene fossil record in caves, and lively discussions on the interface between the cave exploration and scientific communities. The Saturday field trip showcased the karst of southwestern Virginia, especially Natural Tunnel State Park and the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias Powell Mountain Karst Preserve.

Staff continues to work in several TMDL implementation areas to promote the use of karst specific Best Management Practices to improve water quality. Current emphasis is in the Beaver Creek area of Washington County, where staff has helped lead outreach events promoting karst awareness and protection.

Staff continues to be engaged in the Stormwater Regulation and Stormwater Management Handbook revision process. DCR withdrew its initial Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA), and issued a revised version this spring. The new draft regulations address karst much more explicitly than before. Much of the success of the new regulations will hinge on the quality of the new Stormwater Management Handbook, and the comprehensiveness of the Best Management Handbook clearinghouse under development at Virginia Tech.

Environmental Project Review for potential impacts to karst continues at a steady pace. The most significant recent project is a proposal for wind power development along the crest of Walker Mountain in Bland County, upslope from the Skydusky Hollow Cave System and other significant caves that host Virginia's largest concentration of cave bats, including the federally protected Indiana and Virginia Big-eared bats. Comments were submitted expressing serious concerns about this project and recommending coordination with appropriate regulatory authorities (US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries). To date, no response has been received from the applicant.

Staff has worked internally with Natural Heritage zoologists to develop a list of priority species for potential recommendation for listing under the US Endangered Species Act. Several cave species are on this list.

#### Data development

Staff is working under contract with the Nature Conservancy to perform biological and karst inventories of several significant karst areas that are enrolled in the TNC Forestry Conservation Program. These areas are located in Tazewell and Russell counties, and include portions of the Maiden Spring karst area.

Draft versions of all conservation sites for Virginia's significant caves are complete, but not yet entered into the system or final report. This report is now overdue, and staff hopes to complete it before the next Cave Board meeting.

Staff will be performing additional inventory work for the Madison Cave Isopod under small contracts to the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Staff is working in partnership with the Virginia Speleological Survey, the Virginia DEQ, and the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias to develop spring database and monitoring programs. This work is expected to intensify in late 2008, with spring monitoring to commence in the first half of 2009. The identity and number of springs, as well as parameters to be monitored are still under discussion.

#### **Other Old Business**

#### **Update on Proposed Stormwater Regulations**

Mr. Wil Orndorff gave a slide presentation on current and proposed new stormwater regulations being developed by DCR. Mr. Orndorff outlined how the new regulations will address stormwater management on karst terranes.

Among the proposed changes in the new regulations will be a requirement for stormwater run-off discharging to a karst feature to meet defined water quality criteria. Permanent stormwater management impoundment structures or facilities may only be constructed in karst features after completion of a geotechnical investigation that identifies any necessary modifications to the BMP to ensure its structural integrity and to maintain its water quality and quantity efficiencies. The person responsible for the land disturbing activity is encouraged to screen for known existence of natural heritage resources in the karst features. Any Class V Underground Injection Control Well registration statements for stormwater discharges to improved sinkholes will be included in the Stormwater Pollution Protection Plan (SWPPP).

MOTION: Ms. Meredith Johnson moved that the Virginia Cave Board write a letter to DCR expressing the Board's continuing interest in the proposed new stormwater regulations and the ways in which the new regulations might be written to better protect caves and other karst resources.

SECOND: Ms. Barbara Moss

DISCUSSION: Mr. Lera will compose the letter for the Board.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

### **New Business**

#### **Cave Board Grants**

Mr. Lera announced the Virginia Cave Board has recently been awarded the following four grants:

- \$500 from the National Speleological Society Save the Caves Fund (for cave signs)
- \$500 from the Virginia Region of National Speleological Society (for cave signs)
- \$1000 from the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias (for cave signs)
- \$4000 from the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias (for the Cave Owners' Newsletter)

#### **Cave Protection Signs**

Mr. Joey Fagan reported on quotes received from vendors to produce cave protection signs for Virginia's Significant Caves. It is hoped that signs can be ordered quickly so they can be ready for distribution to caver volunteers at the upcoming Fall VAR Meeting in September 2008. The signs will be installed by caver volunteers from several NSS

grottos (caving organizations) from the Virginia Region under the supervision of the Virginia Speleological Survey.

MOTION: Ms. Barbara Moss moved that the Virginia Cave Board authorize the expenditure of up to \$2000 for the procurement of cave protection signs. It is further authorized to seek additional grant funding for the project as necessary.

SECOND: Mr. Socky

DISCUSSION: It is hoped that the signs will be ready by early September 2008.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

### **Grand Caverns**

Ms. Judy Molnar reported that all the 6<sup>th</sup> graders from Augusta and Rockingham Counties attended an event designed to provide the students with a meaningful watershed experience. The students participated in the Living Cave and the Living River Programs located at Grand Caverns.

Mr. Larry Smith reported on contacts with landowners in the vicinity of Cave Hill and ongoing efforts to protect lands surrounding Grand Caverns while protecting the type locality of the Madison Cave Isopod.

Ms. Molnar reported on an article on Grand Caverns appearing in the June 2008 issue of Virginia Wildlife Magazine.

### **Announcements**

Ms. Johnson reported that the Cave Board Statement on White Nose in Bats was published in the Mid Atlantic Karst Conservancy

### **American Planning Association – 2008 Conference**

Mr. Jesse Richardson reported on his participation at the 2008 National Planning Conference held in April in Las Vegas, Nevada. Mr. Richardson, George Veni, National Cave and Karst Research Institute Director, and Merideth Hildreth of the NSS Partnership Building Forum made a presentation on karst at the APA Conference to about 60 people. The NSS had an informational booth at the conference offering planning advisory services.

Mr. Richardson announced the next Growing Communities on Karst Workshop will be held at the National Conservation Training Center at Shepherdstown, West Virginia on September 17-18 2008. For more information on the workshops visit the website: <http://www.uap.vt.edu/karst>

It is anticipated that a Growing Communities on Karst Workshop will be held in or around Blacksburg in March 2009

**Dates for Future Cave Board Activities**

- Meeting: October 4, 2008 at the Grottoes Town Hall at Grottoes, Virginia
- Meeting: January 10, 2008 at Grand Caverns at Grottoes, Virginia.

**Thanks to Crystal Caverns for Hosting Meeting**

Mr. Lera expressed thanks on behalf of the Cave Board to Babs Funkhouser and the staff of Crystal Caverns for hosting the meeting. Ms. Funkhouser invited members of the Board and guests to a tour of Crystal Caverns following the meeting.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Lera adjourned the meeting at 2:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Thomas Lera  
Board Chairman

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Joseph H. Fagan  
Secretary