Texas Cave Management Association

PASSAGES

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President's Corner

by Allan Cobb

Last January I was elected by the board to be the President of TCMA. My vision for TCMA is similar to that of past Presidents: I want to see TCMA grow and prosper. TCMA, like many organizations, is facing financial challenges due to the economy. The caving community has always been a strong supporter of TCMA, and I really want that to continue. However, I also want TCMA to look beyond the caving community for support. TCMA will never forget its members and supporters in the caving community. Part of the mission of TCMA is to acquire caves and provide recreational access. We strive to fulfill that part of the mission.

As always, we are on the lookout for caves to acquire. We are in a position to purchase property as well as being willing to accept donations of property in exchange for protecting caves. If you hear of any caves available, let us know. We are actively searching for new acquisitions but welcome help from our members and supporters.

This year TCMA is turning 25. We have come a long way since we were born. TCMA now owns 7 cave preserves and manages caves for the UT Land System. TCMA provides caving opportunities for every level of caver—from beginners to experienced cavers. Look for a big celebration of our 25 years of success at the Texas Cavers Reunion in October.

The TCMA Board runs TCMA but it is our members who make us special. I want to assure you that your vision for the organization is important. We are constantly in need of volunteers. We need volunteers to help maintain our properties, serve on committees, plan events, and work with the public. TCMA is your organization and we want you to be involved.

This year, I hope to make TCMA move into its next quarter century of success. Without you, our members, we could not have survived this long. I hope the next 25 years are even more successful.

Vote on TCMA's Revised By-Laws at the TSA Members Meeting!

The Board is proposing significant changes to the by-laws. See the article on page 2 and pick up a copy of the proposed revision at the TCMA table.

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By-Laws Update

by Joe Mitchell

At the TCMA Members Meeting that was held last fall at TCR, the Board presented a proposal to revise the organization's by-laws. The existing by-laws have a number of problems and do not entirely reflect the way the organization needs to operate. The goal of this revision was to update and simplify the language, improve upon the way the organization functions, and to write them such that they have broad applicability into the future. However, at the TCR members meeting, a portion of the membership expressed serious concerns with the proposal as presented and wished to provide input into the process. Rather than push through a document that lacked broad membership support, the proposal was tabled and the By-laws Committee undertook to produce a better version.

The first step of this process was to solicit membership input and a month long member comment period was opened. The input was compiled and in January, the By-laws Committee, composed of Allan Cobb, Joe Mitchell, Joe Ranzau, William Russell, Matt Turner, and Saj Zappitello, worked to integrate this into a new document. Other sections were found in need of improvement also and large sections of the previous proposal were re-written. The revised document was recently passed by the Board and is now ready for membership review and approval at the TSA Spring Convention Members Meeting. Many of the changes are grammatical in nature or involved reordering or combining sections that had duplication. All the significant changes over the existing by-laws, including those in the previous proposal and the revisions since last fall are described below.

> *"The Board chose language that is broad and without specific details so that elections can be carried out in the best way possible."*

The most difficult section to complete was the Election of Directors. There were many suggestions as to how to carry out elections, but the main thrust of the comments was that they be as inclusive as possible. To this end, the Board chose language that is broad without specific details so that elections can be carried out in the best way possible. It is written in a manner similar to how other organizations such as the NSS or SCCI describe elections in their by-laws. The details of how it is carried out will be described in a Policies and Procedures document. The intention is to move away from elections at the members meetings and to have mailed out, or electronically distributed ballots that will go to all members. The only requirement to run is to submit a written request in advance of the distribution of the ballot. The new approach eliminates issues with floor nominations and proxy votes since anyone can run and everyone has the opportunity to vote, not just those that can make it to the Member's Meeting.

Another major change over the existing by-laws is to define and clarify who qualifies as a members, and to simplify the membership categories. The new categories are: regular, associate, institutional, life, and honorary life. The Regular membership category remains the same, being a 1-year membership with the following benefits: ability to vote at Members Meetings, visit O-9 Well and Amazing Maze (required

By-Laws Continued

by TCMA's insurance on the UT Lands), be a trip leader at our other preserves, and be an Officer or Director of TCMA. TCMA does not require membership in order to visit any of the caves that we own, so long as at least one person on the trip is a member. The next membership category is Associate, which are people under the age of 18 whose parent or guardian is a Regular member. Associate members do not get to vote at Membership meetings. Institutional membership category has been added since last fall's proposed revision to provide for organizations or companies to join TCMA. This is a non-voting membership category with Regular member benefits. Honorary Life members are composed of all previous Life members and any additional people deemed by the Board to have a significant contribution to TCMA and Texas Caving. The Life member category allows a person to get a non-expiring Regular membership for a one-time fee. Both Honorary Life and Life members have all the rights and privileges of Regular Members.

> *"Under the proposed by-laws, only current Directors may serve as Officers. This is partly for liability reasons."*

The next major change is in the size of the Board and the terms of Directors. The size of the Board could previously be changed within a certain range by a simple vote of the Board. The size will now be fixed at 13 Directors. Term limits on Directors are also being implemented with each Director only being allowed to serve two consecutive 3-year terms. However, after a one-year break, that person can run for Director again. This is to encourage more turn-over in the Board for involving new people.

Another major change is in the eligibility to be an Officer. Under the proposed by-laws, only current Directors may serve as Officers. This is partly for liability reasons and to recognize that since Officers have many responsibilities for the organization, they should also be fully able to participate on the Board.

Additional changes include adding the ability for the Board to remove Directors (in addition to the membership), although a ¾ majority of the Board is required to prevent abuse. A membership meeting quorum was redefined as needing a minimum of 20 persons to ensure enough people are present to truly speak for the membership. Language was added to allow for electronic voting, such as through email or other future technologies. Finally, a section was added to establish effective dates for the by-laws that specify how Director term limits, Board size, and new Officer requirements are phased in.

The By-laws Committee and the Board have worked hard to listen to the membership and produce the best by-laws documents we can that tries to meet a wide range of needs while hopefully meeting the wishes of the membership. If you want to vote on these proposed by-laws changes, please attend the TCMA Members Meeting to be held Sunday morning April 3 at TSA Spring Convention. To get a copy of the proposed new by-laws and the current by-laws for comparison, visit www.tcmacaves.org/by-laws or stop by the TCMA booth at the Convention.

By-Laws Revisions Summary

- New membership category - Institutional Membership
- Request to run for office must be submitted in advance
- Board size now fixed at 13 Directors
- Director term limits of 2 consecutive 3-year terms
- Officers must be Directors

Ezell's Cave Cleanup

by Jon Cradit, Preserve Manager

On Saturday, 19 February, the TCMA conducted a cleanup of the property around Ezell's Cave Preserve. There was some concern about the possibility of rain in the morning but it turned out to only be overcast; this kept the day cool and pleasant for the most part. Volunteers started arriving at 9:30 and continued to trickle in until around 12:00. The majority of the volunteers stayed until around 3:00, accomplishing a large amount of work.

Twenty-four folks from across Texas came to lend a hand at the preserve, three being board members, Saj, Don, and Ron. Folks traveled from as far as Houston and the DFW area as well as a large group from Central Texas. They undertook landscaping challenges such as cutting down several trees that died from the recent drought, removing prickly pear, pruning, and weed whacking tall grass. Another big task was to cleanup some old trash and furniture which had been dumped on the property. Vivian commandeered a trailer from Peter Sprouse and donated the use of her pickup so we could haul a large load of this trash to the dump. The third task was to remove a lot of the invasive exotic vegetation from the property, mostly ligustrum and chinaberry.

> *"Twenty-four folks from across Texas came to lend a hand at the preserve."*

We had a crew of mad cutters that were getting medieval on the exotics. They dropped large numbers of ligustrum as they moved through the preserve.

They would then cut them into shorter lengths and leave them to decompose on the property. Vivian also donated some of her landscape knowledge and chemicals. Al was the chemical man applying the chemicals directly onto the stumps as soon as they were cut so that they would not grow back as a bush this summer. We did not haul any of the cut vegetation to a landfill just to pay and bury them there; instead, we left it on the ground to slowdown any surface runoff while it is decomposing.

We took a late lunch and the local Papa John's restaurant manager Danny cut us a great discount for pizzas so everyone got their fill of pizza and drinks for all of their hard work. Later there was a quick trip down the climb into the first room of the cave. Because of a recent sighting of bats in the second room further into the cave the visit was limited to the first room.

As the manager of Ezell's Cave Preserve and on behalf of the TCMA board, I would like to thank everyone who came out to help. It was one of the largest turnouts we have had. The maintenance and upkeep of TCMA properties would be cost prohibitive if it were not for the volunteers and their skills and willingness to do the hard work.

Lost Oasis -Thanks For Your Support!

by Ron Ralph, Cave Preserve Manager

Lost Oasis cave preserve conducted general grounds clean up and brush trimming on Sunday, March 6, on the main fenced area across from Bailey Middle School in South Austin. The Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) sponsored the work day to prune limbs, cut weeds, bag trash, and just generally make the property more attractive. Our neighbor to the south, Mr. and Mrs. Sears, came by and asked that we cut a 25-foot fire guard between their wooden property fence and our 3-acre tract.

TCMA provided bottled water, some loppers and saws and personal protection items such as gloves and protective eye glasses. TCMA also had a supply of batteries for caving lights should those participating need replacements. Work began around 9:00 a.m. and ended about noon when the cave was open for visitation. All visitors to the Preserve are asked to sign a liability waiver.

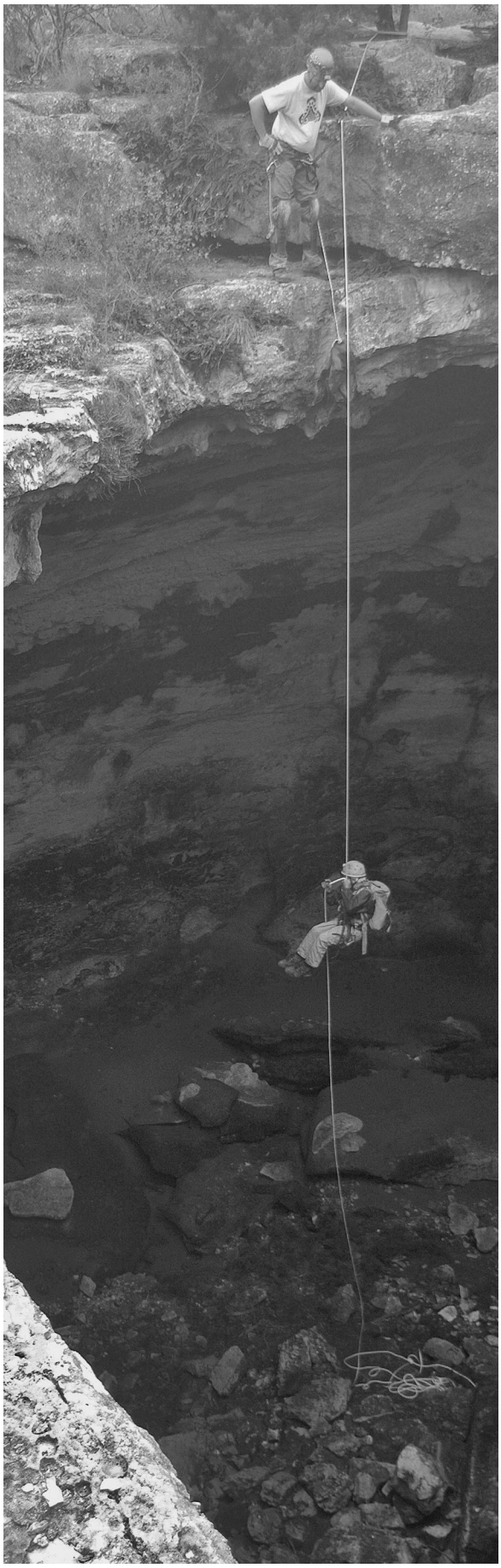
Trees were removed, lower limbs removed and greenbrier cut to the ground. A perimeter on each side of the chain-link fence was mowed with a weed-eater and all brush within this zone removed. An overhanging oak branch was also removed to make trespass more difficult. All waste was removed from inside the fence and stacked on the adjacent lands to provide habitat for critters and shade for native grasses.

> *"A good start was made and we will continue this project at a later date."*

Although the fire-break was not completed, many of the small trees were removed and some of the larger trees limbed-up to protect from fire. A good start was made, and we will continue this project at a later date.

The preserve manager, Ron Ralph would like to thank the following cavers for their assistance and hard labor. You are invited back at a later date to resume the fire-break clearing.

Don Arburn, Allan Cobb, James Edwards, Jack and Jake English, Galen Falgout, Gary Franklin, Aubri Jenson, Becky Jones, Linda Palit, Jon Snow, John Tirums and Matt Turner. We could not have done it without each and every one of you. You are invited back at a later date to resume the fire-break clearing.



Deep ‘n Punkin - The Big Freeze

By Don Arburn

In February of this year, Texas experienced several days in a row of below freezing temperatures, including the field house at Deep & Punkin Nature Preserve, resulting in the ruin of the entire plumbing system. All pipes, with the exception of the connecting pipe for the two rainwater collection tanks, froze and ruptured. The shower feed pipe ruptured, the pump ruptured, all faucet feeds ruptured and two large brass valves on one rainwater collection tank ruptured resulting in the loss of several hundred gallons of collected water. Unfortunately the Aggie Speleological Society did not know this before their visit, however; they informed the TCMA of the problem upon their arrival at the facility. They were great sports and made due and had a good time caving despite using a homemade bucket shower.

During the weekend of March 18-20, two volunteer members of the TCMA descended on the property with repairs on their minds. Gill Ediger and I assessed the situation, rolled up our sleeves and got straight to work. Our goal was to have the shower ready before that weekend’s survey of Punkin Cave crew arrived back at the field house. We removed all old plumbing including parts of the rainwater collection system. This required a trip under the building which resulted in the discovery that the bathroom sink actually drained directly

> *“The crawl space was inhabited by ticks. Lots of ticks, and one fearless young mockingbird eating them.”*

onto the ground and also that the crawl space was inhabited by ticks. Lots of ticks, and one fearless young mockingbird eating them. Measurements were taken and the rebuild began. We used 1/2” galvanized pipe throughout, including the shower pipe and the attic water heater feeds. By the end of the day Friday we had the bathroom complete and the kitchen as well.

Saturday I ran to Del Rio for a couple of unforeseen

plumbing parts, and by the time I returned Gill had finished the outside plumbing including the tank feed and outside faucets (cold AND hot) and the main low point drain. At this time we felt the pressure of the thought of returning, tired, dirty cavers from Punkin. We managed to route a water heater drain line back to the collection tanks. Previously that water, 40 gallons, was being drained out of the system. I beat the pump housing back into shape from being frozen and returned it to active duty and Gill reinstalled it. The rainwater collection hoses from the rain gutter downspouts were rerouted, one to each large tank, removing it from the wall on the south face of the cabin. There is no longer any plumbing on the outside of the facility with the exception of the water heater return drain line.

The cavers began trickling back to the cabin late in the afternoon eager for a good rinsing. However our efforts failed, but not though our own doing. About 3 p.m. that afternoon, Gill & I realized that the power was out - to all the regions of Rio Grande Electric Coop customers. But with a little ingenuity we connected the water pump to my welder and powered a cold water shower for the intrepid and brave and filthy cavers. At 8 pm the power came back on, and those cavers who returned after were rewarded with a hot shower and the discovery that Gill and I had, indeed, completed our mission and the plumbing was done and everything functioning.

The field house is in fine condition and was thoroughly enjoyed by all; however, there are still ongoing projects. The back porch roof is nearing completion, and the bare flooring is in need of painting. The kitchen cabinets still need doors and hardware. Also, there is still a need for the property boundary to be delineated and plenty of catclaw and cedar to be cut. One discussed future project may include a wood chipper and cedar clearing to make tent pads out of the cedar mulch. These work projects will be announced soon. THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

The big Freeze caused a big mess for clean up and repair.

Donation List

Thank you to all of our TCMA members for your support. Special thanks to our 2010 donors!

CARBIDE ($5-$24)

Aimee Beveridge
Robin Matthews
William Russell
Matt Turner
Jonathan Ruckheim

LANTERN ($25-$49)

Robert Bisset
Joe and Evelynn Mitchell
Jacque Thomas
Edward Arnett

GOOD N MUDDY ($50-$99)

Bodeau and Riggio
Bob Cowell
Don/Sid Formanek
Ted Lee
Ann Scott
Kevin Stafford
Shannon Cameron
Joellen Feind
Montemayor Family
Yvonne Vargas

BLOWING LEAD ($100-$249)

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R. and S. Burnett
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Logan McNatt
David Ochel
Joe Ranzau
Bev Shade
Grover Shade
Bill Stephens
Heather Tucek
Arron Wertheim
BCI
Joe Pizzo
Sarah Triem
Trinity Outdoor Recreation

CAVERN DWELLER ($250-$499)

Linda Palit

GONE BATTY ($500-$999)

Tom Brown

OZTOTL ($1000+)

We can dream!!!

Board Members

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Allan Cobb (President)
Don Arburn
Gerald Atkinson
Jon Cradit
Jim Kennedy
Joe Ranzau (Co-Treasurer)
John Brooks
Linda Palit
Matt Turner
Michelle Bryant (Co-Treasurer)
Ron Ralph (Vice President)
Saj Zappitello
Ann Scott (Secretary)

Committee Chairs

Acquisitions Committee - Gerald Atkinson
Archives Committee - Linda Palit
Budget Committee - Ron Ralph
Bylaws Committee - Joe Mitchell
Communications Committee - Kevin McGowan
Database Committee - Ron Ralph
Finance Committee - Arron Wertheim
Fundraising Committee - Saj Zappitello
Insurance Committee - Arron Wertheim
Membership Committee - Don Arburn
Preserves Committee - Jim Kennedy

Preserve Managers

Whirlpool Cave (Matt Turner)
Robber Baron Cave (Joe Mitchell)
Godwin Ranch Preserve (Matt Turner)
Lost Oasis Cave (Ron Ralph)
Rolling Oaks Preserve (Evelynn Mitchell)
Ezells Cave (Jon Cradit)
Deep and Punkin Caves (Don Arburn)
UT Lands (David Ochel)

Layout and Editing

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