



ACTIVITIES NEWSLETTER

Solutions To Cave Related Problems

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- Bruce Anderson.....Treasurer
- Lee Jay Graves.....Director
- Jay Jordan.....Director
- Ron Ralph.....Director
- Mike Walsh.....Director
- Mike Warton.....Director

NEXT MEETING

Please watch your mail for a postcard containing notice of the next Texas Cave Management Association meeting to be scheduled.

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The Environmental Karst Movement of Central Texas; A Summary Report

by Mike Warton

The decade of the 1980s has marked the beginning points of distinct and meaningful changes of environmental views and concerns for Texas caves and karstland areas. The prime areas in which most significant changes have occurred are described as the "crisis" areas, or areas subject to rapid oncoming construction and development. Prior to 1986, environmental concerns for the protection and preservation of numerous karstland features in these areas were shared on an active basis primarily by cavers, a handful of cave biologists and environmentalist types who recognized early on that many sensitive sites would become lost and/or destroyed in the rapid growth process. A massive wave of growth and development in the Austin and San Antonio areas from 1981 to 1985 heightened environmental awareness and concern as numerous caves and sinkholes were being either filled in or destroyed in the path of new land developments. Local groups of cave explorers and field related individuals began efforts to inform various public officials of the devastation, but soon became overwhelmed by the frustrations and slow reacting responses. Initial responses to the problems were weak and indirect without any specific environmental regulations in effect. Most were simply unaware of the presence of the features aside from any comprehensions of what lay beneath the surface of the ground. This was the "climate of the times" in which the Texas Cave Management Association was born in early 1986. This year was particularly marked by an upswing of environmental consciousness across the country for air and water quality controls. At about that time ... as continues to the present day ...

"Environmental Karst" has been described by many newspapers and magazines as ... "a science coming of age" in this country.

Among the first agencies to express environmental concerns was the Edwards Un-

derground Aquifer Research Center. The time had come in which the scientific recognitions of the role of caves and sinkholes as insurgent recharge paths into the aquifer needed to be launched forth into some form of public education effort. The subject matter had risen to a level of both controversy and concern in the Austin area. That same year, TCMA members served in an advisory capacity to the city of Austin's formation committee to address the importance of karst terrains features. The product of that committee's efforts became known as the Comprehensive Watershed Ordinance of 1986. This ordinance was the first in the area with provision for the **protection/preservation** of karst features as "recharge features". It was also one of the first silent felt victories for the TCMA. A short time later, an Austin- and San Antonio-led effort by concerned cavers attempted to introduce new cave law legislation at the State Capitol.

At about the same time, and unbeknownst to many, noted speleobiologists were making a submission of rare and unique karst invertebrates for potential listings for the Federal Register of Endangered Species (Endangered Species Act of 1973). This effort was led by James Reddell and William Elliott, and much to their surprise, five invertebrates were in the

register in late 1987 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). At the same time, no one would have imagined the degrees of changes to our lives this, and other, environmental regulations would effect.

In 1988, the Texas Water Commission made its move with regulations on karst features, with provision of protection for all karst features to be evaluated or identified as "pointrecharge" features. This provision was incorporated into the reporting processes of all "water pollution abatement" plans for new development in the Austin area jurisdiction. The environ-

mental "gaps" were now filled. Regulation was restricted to the Austin

metropolitan area (and still is for the most part), but perhaps one of the most meaningful aspects realized is that regulation exists for all governing levels: city, state and federal.

Everything must start somewhere, and the Austin regional area has been the "proving grounds" for environmental karst in Texas. The process of "finetuning" has been and continues to be under way, however painfully slow and intermittently "politically infested". To the general public, karst issues as well as "bird" issues have been shrouded in a heavy mist of confusion and severe misconceptions. Actually, the "bird" species issues -- arriving at the same time as karst invertebrates -- have done their share in giving overall karst issues a "bad name" in some quarters via misconceptions and associations. Never has the need been greater for effective public education programs. Presently, I think that even most cavers are disillusioned about these issues, particularly when blended into the mechanics of the professional business world. I would say that it's definitely not a perfected system, and the "finetuning" efforts are still less than 50 percent complete. Salvation of concern, however, comes in knowing that there are numerous "key" individuals involved in the pioneering ways and methods of "how" things are done in "official" karst studies under the governing regulations. As with any form of business, environmental karst work has already seen its share of "fastbuck" operations, "client-influenced" assessments and other "creative" inaccuracies. The overall feeling has been an experience of education "Renaissance" style! Personally, any of the above three categories has more than turned my stomach. When it comes to karst, if it's not done right, it's better left undone.

Amidst the general confusion of where things are going, there are a few important things that Texas caving communities should know about the environmental movement: Acceptance that Austin is the nucleus and "proving grounds" for the real and official regulatory movement. As it becomes truly fine tuned, it will

spread into other areas. The endangered species program, as applied to Texas karst, was initially designed to eventually address 41 Texas counties. I believe that hard-nosed political factions will fall and/or bend far enough to incorporate "environmental stabilities" where needed. Yes, it may indeed be too late in some prime areas ... but at least the "train is coming!" Water quality programs are also being designed to eventually address the "wholeness" of the Edwards Aquifer, which is one-quarter the size of the state and also the single largest expanse of karst aquifer in the country. Each city's growth situation is more likely than not to eventually develop its own watershed ordinances or adopt another city's for karst that has been proven to work.

The first official study site processed for environmental evaluation under the regulation for "endangered invertebrate species habitat" was the old Kretschmarr Ranch (the "Parke" residential subdivision site area) in 1988. The site included Tooth Cave from which the original invertebrates were found and studied since the early 1960s. This site study project was contracted to George Veni & Associates. Together, George and I wrote our evaluations and interpretations of the site. The first cave gates were built and installed under this regulatory process.

Looking back after five years, I can still vividly recall our first meetings in the field with U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel. It was early on a foggy morning atop the Jollyville Plateau karst. We somehow expected, or at least anticipated, that these representatives would be able to tell us exactly what and how to do things under this study process. Some magically produced set of guidelines would surely be followed. We would now become the students under a federally taught process. Well ... this didn't happen. Instead, we were to become servant to filling the "teacher" role positions of the karst study processes, the finders and evaluators of invertebrate habitats, the databank gatherers of scientific facts and true diligent students of delineated karstlands. Some of us would go on to lead the way and refine many site study

processes. A tremendous load of data has been generated since then -- under review has been the difference between usable and non-usable land areas for development (protected preserve lands/sites). As for myself, I was in the right place at the right time, and I had been thrown a ball. I said goodbye to the oilfield and to "soilsmechanics" and ran with **it** all the way to the karstlands goal post. What else can I say? I love karst, and I love my job ... but the paperwork and red tape is killing me! I became an environmental contractor in 1989 and formed a company which has pioneered a fine-tuned method for evaluating and documenting karst features. This has been highly successful due to a strong commitment to do things the right way, because in

this business there can be no shortchanging of quality for quantity in order to develop the above "F.C.R." We are proud of and enjoy an excellent reputation for our work performance. Yes, we have been trying to set an example for the methods in which legal karst work of this nature is done, since there still is no standard or format that's mandatory. We've been told many times locally that we are making other companies look bad. Well, things happen mostly for a reason. I will stick to what I said in the beginning. "I don't worry about the competition." In fact, ■ really don't care how many people do karst work, as long as they do **it** right!

Since 1988, my company's records have shown this data of new caves produced: Travis County, 66 new caves; Burnet County, 19; Hays, 3; Williamson, 140; Bexar, 4; Coryell, 14. Most (95 percent) of these new caves carries an official 'protected assignment classification' status. Many of these sites are ripe for cave management-stewardship programs.]

A total of 43 caves have been gated in Travis, Williamson, Bexar, San Saba, Crockett and Pecos counties. The largest Texas bat cave gate -- 800 feet in and 110 feet below ground -- was produced at Gorman Cave in 1992 with assistance from the Texas Speleological Association, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and TCMA volunteers.

Because environmental regulation exists now, whereas **it** was absent in the past, **it** has been possible for the TCMA to accomplish many good things. As we stand back and look at this organization's position in the universe, we can see achievements, shortcomings, accomplishments, failures, strong and weak points. But in our total assessment, we must not forget that no successful organization is built and survives without commitment and the pains of growth and personal sacrifice

This organization recently reached a major milestone marker by suddenly finding **it**-self in the position of a real business organization with assets exceeding \$25,000 (ownership of two cave preserves). Yes, we must account for all our ducks The training wheels have come off!!!

Additionally, the TCMA has recently contracted for the management of three environmentally sensitive sites at the Buttercup Creek properties in Williamson County. Technically, the TCMA is the first organization to effectively provide and execute an active, on-site management/monitoring plan for an 'endangered invertebrate species' and 'major point recharge' site (state and federally protected). The caves are: Marigold, Pebblebrook and Forest Trail. Marigold Cave is the largest with over 400 feet of passage surveyed and more than 1,000 feet of passage explored. This cave also contains the only known perennial (always flowing) cave stream in the entire northern Edwards Plateau.

The TCMA has also recently shifted and extended new site personnel management positions to West Texas TCMA members of the Permian Basin Speleological Society for management of Amazing Maze Cave and 0-9 Well. These members are doing a good job!

Like any organization, this one needs funds and fund-raising events for general operations and to pay bills. More importantly, **it** needs to communicate well with its members. I strongly believe in the TCMA and the purposes and goals for which **it** was created. A few cannot carry

TCMA and ensure that **it** will last. Its future is up to those that truly care, and **it** is an organization where what an individual does can make a significant difference. The more we can put into **it**, the more we will get from **it**.

The city of Austin has finally recognized (after much negotiation) that **it** needs TCMA's assistance to help identify and inventory the caves and karstlands that **it** owns. Bill Russell is leading that effort currently, and much progress is being made.

The city of San Antonio desperately needs to develop an environmental ordinance that would begin to provide some protection for the karst features **it** has left! State and federal regulations for karst need to expand into this area. Massive karst education programs need to be implemented there for the general public, and for many public officials. The political walls must bend at some point to provide environmental protection for karst **if** that city is to survive off the aquifer. The TCMA should do **everything** that **it** can to assist in these processes and support the efforts of the many fine and concerned citizens who live there. San Antonio and Austin are the two "crisis zone" cities of the Texas karstlands. Personally, I would like to see a branch operation of TCMA formed in San Antonio to help owners more effectively direct their efforts for karst feature protection. After all, San Antonio's environmental scene is altogether a different creature and the protective process will be slow at best. Cavers and friends of karst will surely have to weather a lengthy storm of uncertainty on the road to progress.

Several "range and distribution" projects for karst invertebrates have been undertaken to gather scientific data. These studies are being performed for many reasons. Among them is the potential for the expanded protection of species. An invertebrate species study is currently underway in Bexar County. We remain hopeful that environmental regulation will migrate to Bexar County on the state and federal levels in the near future.

All Texas **cavers**, wherever you are, need

to fully recognize -- or be reminded of from time to time -- exactly what the TCMA is and why **it** was founded. This organization is to be managed on an equal basis representation by its duly elected Board of Directors. **It** cannot be effectively carried by only one, or two, or even a few. This organization is heavily dependent upon support of its members (as **it** should be) and must at all costs communicate with them -- along with actively cultivating their involvement, support and concern. Its effectiveness is based upon commitments to get involved and/or to be involved. Most everyone has a productive talent or ability that can be benefited from and utilized for betterment of karst, its management and future.

In spite of troubled areas, the future for the TCMA to do what **it** was designed to

do has never been brighter. You and what you do can make the difference. The difference will be ultimately reflected in the caves that we know and love, and our share for preservation in the world's environment in which we must live, and hopefully survive!

Texas Cave Management Association Meeting Notes, 27 April 1993

by Ron **Ralph**

The Board of Directors' meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. on April 27, 1993 at the **Jack-in-the-Box** restaurant in Austin.

Present: Carl Ponebshek, president; Mike Walsh and Mike **Warton**, members; and Ron Ralph, member and recording secretary

Item 1: Ralph moved to adopt as follows (amended):

- a. Expenditures from committee budgets must be approved by the officers prior to payment by the treasurer.
- b. Certain routine bills such as post office box, insurance, newsletter expenses and property taxes, when designated by the board, will be paid automatically by the

treasurer.

c. All other expenditures must be authorized by vote of the board prior to payment by the treasurer.

d. Both routine and authorized expenses will be reported monthly by the treasurer showing beginning and ending balances.

e. The treasurer's monthly report will be reported to and approved by the board at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

f. The signature card will be changed to require only one signature; the treasurer and one or two board members will be authorized to sign checks.

g. The board instructs the previous executive director to furnish all missing checks (about 44) to the treasurer for reconciliation.

h. The executive director will initiate a new election procedure to include ballot mail back to a ballot committee composed of non-contestants.

Warton seconds; passed unanimously

Item 2: Ponebshek moved to recruit Bruce Anderson to assume duties as TCMA treasurer. Ralph seconds.

Discussion: Board requests treasurer to set up subdivisions of the account to differentiate receipts and expenditures in various categories. Passed unanimously.

Item 3: Warton moved to adopt seven recommendations as amended as TCMA policy:

a) List sales inventory currently in the possession of TCMA, including items held by Mike Walsh, Donna Anderson, Pat Copeland and Lee Jay Graves.

TEXAS CAVE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Recommended new money handling method to satisfy and protect our nonprofit status:

1. List sales inventory currently in the possession of TCMA, including items held by Mike Walsh, Donna Anderson, Pat Copeland and Lee Jay Graves.

2. Supply treasurer a list of inventoried items along with the purchase price or acquisition cost of each item.

3. Supply treasurer with list of current TCMA properties, including current market value of each (approximate if unsure.)

4. Supply treasurer with list of all current TCMA equipment with current market value (approximate if unsure.)

5. When a bank deposit is made, copies of all checks and deposit receipts will be sent to the treasurer.

6. TCMA dues paid by check will be accounted for in item No. 5. Double receipts will be issued for dues received in cash: one for the member and one for the treasurer. Cash will then be deposited in the bank.

7. All future purchases must have an offsetting receipt.

The treasurer, Bruce Anderson, and I feel that these new methods are necessary to bring our bookkeeping system into compliance with standard accounting procedures.

Respectfully submitted,
Ron Ralph

An Open Letter to the TCMA Membership

June 27, 1993

Dear TCMA Member:

No doubt, you are wondering about this month's mailing to you as a Texas Cave Management Association member detailing efforts to reconstruct some financial records. What led to these efforts will help you get a perspective on the organization to which you've paid dues. As TCMA directors, we are

pleased to report to you that a financial affairs committee of the board met on Sunday, June 27, in Austin and reconciled records for the last two fiscal years. Committee members also clarified some bookkeeping questions that had come up during the normal course of the organization's business.

We, the undersigned directors, want to let you as a TCMA member know that the committee has begun fulfilling the board's request to reconcile the books and that a financial statement for the past fiscal year will be forthcoming to the membership. Directors and committee members also have given a vote of confidence in the TCMA treasurer, Bruce Anderson, for the work he has done the past several months in this regard. We would like to make it clear that Bruce, in reviewing past financial data, did so at the board's direction and not because of any inquiry involving anyone.

The review of TCMA's current status, however, was necessary for its cave management and acquisition efforts to move forward. Also, the TCMA officers and directors have determined collectively that it is in the organization's best interests to put any personal differences aside.

We regret any confusion that may have arisen, and would ask you for your continued support of TCMA's efforts. We pledge to keep the membership better informed of activities in the future through our TCMA Activities Newsletter.

Sincerely,

John M. Walsh
Jay R. Jordan
Ron Ralph

Lee Jay Graves
Mike Warton
Carl Ponebshek

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