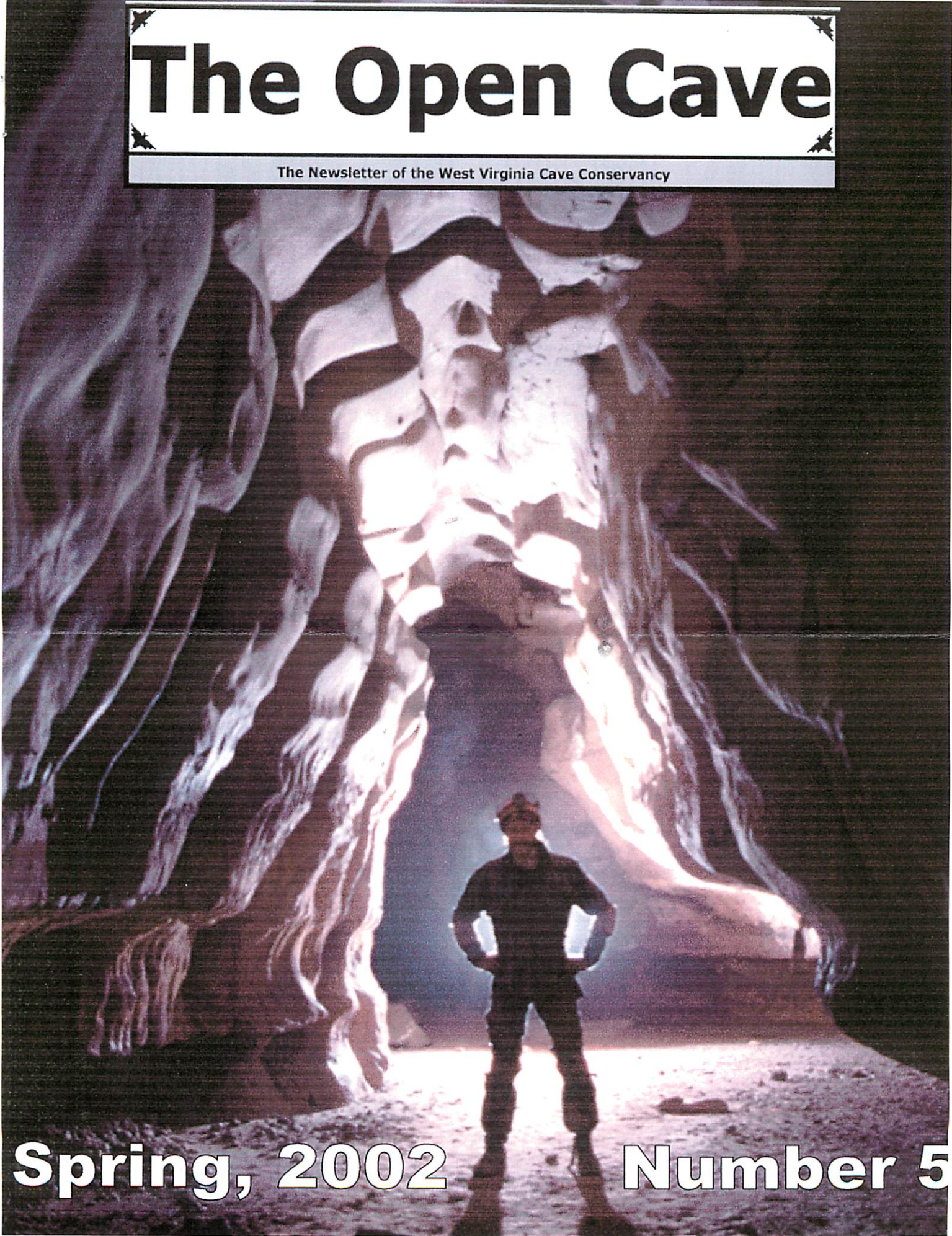


The Open Cave

The Newsletter of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy

Spring, 2002

Number 5



THE WEST VIRGINIA CAVE CONSERVANCY

**"Preserving the cave and karst resources of West Virginia for future generations"
Number 5 Spring, 2002**

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. All contributions to the Conservancy are tax-deductible. Please send all contributions and dues to: WVCC, Inc., PO Box 243, Frankford, WV, 24938. For more information on membership, visit our website at www.wvcc.net. Please send all contributions to the newsletter to the newsletter editor. Any internal organization of the N.S.S. has permission to reprint materials in this newsletter with proper recognition given to the author and *The Open Cave*. Special thanks to Yvonne Droms for proof-reading.

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This month's cover is a photo taken in Rapps Cave in Greenbrier County, WV. This cave was the subject of the keynote speakers at the last WVCC banquet. The WVCC has a lease on the cave. The photo was taken by Ed McCarthy.

ISLAND FORD CAVE PRESERVE COMMITTEE HOLDS FIRST MEETING

Tim Brown, Committee member and WVCC Director

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy's Island Ford Cave Preserve management committee held its first meeting on January 3rd at the Cave entrance at 10 am. Those committee members in attendance were Chairman Andrew Reeder (Andrew is the Parks Manager and Chief Naturalist for the City of Lynchburg, Va.), Eric Armer, Tim Brown, J.C. Fisher, Fred Grady, and Bob Thren.

David A. Hubbard, the Geologist Specialist for Karst and Applied Geology for the State of Virginia, was the special guest. David informed the committee of some of the special geological features of the cave and later agreed to assist the committee.

Fred Grady discussed some of the biological and paleontology features of the cave. A discussion of the drainage area at the entrance was followed by a walk-through survey and trash cleanup in the entrance and the adjoining roadway area.

The group inspected the proposed

parking area, access trail and site for the informational kiosk. Tim Brown informed the committee that the Kiosk had been completed and is ready to be put in place. Tim further agrees to submit an estimated cost for the parking area. J.C. Fisher agreed to contact the State Highway Department to discuss the requirements for applying for a permit to put in an access road into the parking area.

Andrew Reeder discussed some of his updates and additions to the current management plan and indicated that a copy would be sent to all committee members and confirmed that a final draft should be completed before the next WVCC directors meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12 pm.

A two-hour trip into the cave was done by David Hubbard, Bob Thren, and WVCC members John Cadle and Mike Phelps.

WVCC Heritage Society

Tim Brown, WVCC Director

The WVCC Endowment Trust Fund Committee is pleased to announce the creation of the Heritage Society. Membership in the Society is available to any person or family who has included the Endowment Trust Fund in their long-range plans. This inclusion can be in a will, insurance program, charitable trust or an outright gift of cash, stocks, bonds or property to the Endowment Trust Fund.

Your Support and Membership in the Heritage Society will enable the WVCC Endowment Trust Fund to attain its goals. One goal is to provide the funding for the perpetual

care of the Caves and Properties entrusted to the WVCC's care and protection.

If you wish to become a member of the Heritage Society, to learn more about its membership benefits, or to simply support the Endowment Trust Fund with a donation please feel free to contact us at endowment@wvcc.net and we will have our Endowment Chairperson contact you to explain our tax-deductible programs.

**LIGHTNERS ENTRANCE TO McCLUNGS CAVE PRESERVE
OPEN-CAVE EVENT**

Tim Brown, WVCC Director

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy Board of Directors wishes to invite all cavers to our special open-cave event for the Lightners Entrance to McClungs Cave Preserve.

This event is being held on Saturday, June 1, 2002 from 12 noon until 5 pm at the Lightners Entrance Preserve property located just off of Vago Road, 2 miles east of S.R.219 in Greenbrier County, West Virginia.

If traveling on Interstate 64 exit at the 219/Lewisburg exit and turn north on 219, go approximately 3 miles and turn right onto Vago Road, go approximately 1.5 miles and we will have a sign posted at the left-hand turn into the Cave Preserve road.

The Open Cave Event will start at 12 noon and will consist of tours of the property as

well as views of the Cave entrance. Persons wishing to access the cave's vertical entrance should contact the WVCC before the event to be placed on the schedule. No ropes will be provided or rigged by the WVCC. Food and caver beverages will be provided by the Board of Directors at the WVCC information booth that will be set up at the parking lot.

We look forward to seeing all of you at this event. Please let us know if you are planning to attend. To obtain additional information about the Lightners Entrance Cave Preserve, McClungs Cave or the West Virginia Cave Conservancy please visit our web site www.wvcc.net.

Volunteers Needed!!

The WVCC booth will be attending a number of events this coming summer. One of those events will of course be OTR, and we need volunteers. If you have any interest in helping run the booth during OTR, please contact Jeff Bray (contact information is in the front of the newsletter). Also, please contact Jeff if you have

interest in being on a committee that will deal with fundraising at events on a more long-term basis. For more information about which events the WVCC booth will be attending, please visit the website.

WVCC at the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium

Jeff Bray

The following are two papers presented at the past two National Cave and Karst Management Symposiums. The first was held in Chattanooga, TN in 1999, and the second was held in Tuscon, Arizona in October of 2001. The symposium takes place every other year and is a platform for discussion on a variety of issues concerning cave and karst protection.

**Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?
Initiating Steps for Preserving West
Virginia's Cave and Karst Terrain**

*Jeff Bray, West Virginia Cave
Conservancy*

Abstract

Nationwide, caves and karst terrains face serious threats from a multitude of social and economic forces such as construction activities. At the same time, there has been felt a strong

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need for greater education and outreach efforts regarding karst regions for protecting these rare and fragile environments from being obliterated. In a manner similar to other cave and karst bearing regions, West Virginia continues to recognize challenges and evolve feasible solutions for protecting its caves and karst resources. Moreover, any such forward-looking strategies must involve a proactive, rather than a reactive stance in planning. However, until recently, there was lack of a formalized, concerted, viable group – dedicated to the mission of preserving the state's karst regions. This presentation offers an overview of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC), a federally recognized, 501(c)3 status organization presently working with communities in West Virginia to pursue its preservation and management missions. The WVCC is doing this by working to purchase or lease caves (such as Rapps Cave, a significant archaeological site that was recently leased to the WVCC). The WVCC also works with landowners of caves in creating management plans that will allow access to such areas while protecting the landowners at the same time. This presentation outlines the stages involved in the evolution of the WVCC as a recent organization and emphasizes specific cave and karst-related goals and objectives, which are central to its mission.

Introduction

West Virginia is having problems similar to those of many other states in reference to its caves. They are becoming more difficult to protect and it is harder to gain access to them. Out of over 3800 caves in West Virginia, only 107 are owned or managed by cavers or groups of cavers. This may seem like a high number of caves owned by cavers, but in comparison to the number of caves in the state, it is a small percentage. This paper will introduce the West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC) as a federally recognized, 501(c)3 status organization that is working to protect the cave and karst features in West Virginia, by stating the history, projects, fundraising, and future goals of the organization.

History

The WVCC was created with a four-part mission statement. First was to protect the cave and karst resources in the state through education and resource management. Second was to

promote the study of caves and karst. Third was to provide maximum possible access to these resources. Finally, the WVCC would offer a full range of management resources.

Recognition of the need for a cave conservancy was noted by many. There were organizations like the West Virginia Association for Cave Studies and the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias that already existed, but the major inhibitor of buying or managing property was the question of who would be responsible. Not until George Sively, the previous owner of Organ Cave, passed away in 1994 did this thought begin to take the form of an organization. In 1995 at the NSS Convention in Blacksburg, VA, the President of the NSS set up an ad hoc committee on Organ Cave. This committee was to stay informed on the Organ Cave situation and work toward the formation of a non-profit organization that would buy the cave if and when it would be offered for sale. Bob Handley was named as chairman of this committee. He then spoke to Cliff Lindsay, who was already managing McClungs Cave along with Ed Swepston and Dave Cowan, about forming an organization that would serve to protect the cave.

Contact was maintained with the heirs, although no progress was made toward the purchase of the cave. Lindsay and Handley, with the help of Swepston, worked up a charter for the Greenbrier Cave Conservancy in the spring of 1997, and it was chartered in July of that year. Shortly after the Greenbrier Cave Conservancy was chartered, Mark Wolinsky of the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Incorporated called Lindsay about access to McClungs Cave. The conversation continued and discussion about the two conservancies took place. Wolinsky suggested that the Greenbrier Cave Conservancy should expand the scope of its efforts. After further discussions, Handley, Lindsay, and Swepston formed the West Virginia Cave Conservancy, being chartered in December of 1997. At the first meeting, the following were asked to join as directors: Lonnie Burns, Tim Brown, Dave and Sandy Cowan, Ray Garton, and Tina Hall. Bill Jones was later asked to be a director, followed later by J.C. Fisher and Jeff Bray in 1998, filling the twelve-member Board of Directors.

In the spring of 1998, there was an opportunity to purchase the property containing the
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original entrance to Maxwellton Sink Cave in Greenbrier County, now closed due to debris burying the cave during a dying hurricane in the early 1970s. This opportunity came about on short notice and forced the organization, in its infancy, to react quickly. There were only two weeks for preparation before the land was to be sold at auction. Cowan and Lindsay did a survey of the land that was thought to be necessary to gain access to the cave, also feeling that the new landowners may feel more comfortable selling if they knew the WVCC was serious. The new owners were encountered after the auction, and negotiations are still taking place. This situation did give the WVCC some quick attention in the caving community through fundraising in preparation for the purchase of the land. This brought the organization into the eyes of the caving community.

Projects

In November of 1998, there was an announcement about an auction that included two entrances of Greenville Saltpeter Cave in Monroe County. This popular cave has four entrances, two of which are already owned by The Institute for Earth Education (IEE), an organization that shares the conservancy's thoughts on preservation of the cave. The WVCC had a very short period of time in which to respond, and once again had to act quickly to be ready for the auction. It was decided that the WVCC would work together with the IEE to purchase the cave. It was also decided that due to the location of one of the entrances being so close to property already owned by the IEE, we would introduce the idea of an underground easement to the auctioneer. The thought was that this could be used to connect a majority of the cave to property owned by the IEE. This idea of an underground easement was introduced and eventually used in the purchase of Organ Cave by the new owners. These were the first two times that an underground easement was used in a purchase involving a cave in West Virginia. The IEE was able to purchase the two entrances and the underground easement at auction, with the help of the WVCC.

The WVCC also helps the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCI) manage Lobelia Saltpeter Cave in Pocahontas County. This cave and property was offered to the SCCI while the WVCC was still forming. When the SCCI heard

that a group had formed in West Virginia, they offered to work together on the management of the cave. The first project on this property was to clean it up since there had recently been a fire on the property. The WVCC worked with the state in a special program, called "West Virginia Make It Shine" month, and was able to remove the garbage from the site at no charge. Artifacts were also found in the cave, and these were sent to nearby Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park for protection in fear that they would be vandalized at their current location in the easily accessible cave.

Most recently, Rapps Cave in Greenbrier County, a known archaeological site, was purchased by some landowners who were interested in conservation. The WVCC worked with these new landowners to create a lease agreement that would allow for a professional archaeological dig. The WVCC asked for a grant from the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias and received \$16,000 to contract archaeologists for the dig. The dig begins in April of 2000. Although the cave is not open to the public at this time, any that are interested in helping with the archaeological process are encouraged to contact the conservancy.

Fundraising

The fundraising practices of the WVCC have been varied. Many different levels of membership are available, including a charter membership for the first year of the organization. The National Speleological Society (NSS) Conventions have also been sources of funds, by making brochures available through a number of vendors. At the Old Timers' Reunion (OTR) which is held Labor Day Weekend each year, the WVCC has been very noticeable since OTR takes place in West Virginia. The goal here seems to be to create a fundraiser that is different and unique, and which people will remember from year to year. In 1998, a small crane was constructed with a "pit" of buttons, all reading "Dig The Max," in reference to the hopeful purchase of Maxwellton Sink Cave. The patrons used a little crane to dig buttons from the pit. Each button cost ten dollars, and some of the buttons had winning numbers on the backs, which corresponded to prizes donated by vendors. In 1999, we had a rubber duck race in the Tygart Valley River. The ducks were donated by the city

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of Ronceverte, and were sold for five dollars. Each duck had a number, and the first twenty ducks to cross the finish line won prizes. The WVCC also plans an annual banquet. This fundraiser takes place in Lewisburg and is a time for members to meet and talk to each other and the directors. Members and benefactors are also recognized for their support.

Future Goals

The WVCC plans to continue its negotiating for Maxwellton Sink Cave, but also has other plans for the future. There are currently negotiations under way for the purchase of Bone Cave in Greenbrier County. The WVCC is also working with the owner of Haynes Cave in Monroe County on a management plan. There has also been some positive response concerning opening negotiations for some of the lesser known entrances to Organ Cave. The WVCC also plans to spread to more parts of West Virginia.

Conclusion

While only in its first two years, the WVCC has accomplished a great deal toward preserving the cave and karst features of West Virginia. As the organization grows, its goals will be met and it will be instrumental in protecting more caves in the state, as well as raising the percentage of caves owned by cavers from three percent to a much higher percentage. It also looks toward the future to educate citizens so that caves and the life inside them may not be as endangered in the future.

Acknowledgements

I greatly appreciate the efforts of all the board members of the WVCC, especially Bob Handley, Cliff Lindsay, and Dave Cowan for helping in various ways with this paper. I also thank Dr. Parvinder S. Sethi at Radford University for his help with preparations for the presentation of this paper at the 14th National Cave and Karst Management Symposium. I also want to thank Yvonne Droms for her comments on this paper.

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The West Virginia Cave Conservancy- Growing Through Acquisition Problems and Their Solutions

*Jeff Bray, West Virginia Cave
Conservancy*

Abstract

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC) has encountered a number of problems since its start in 1997. Many of the problems that are encountered have to do with situations that are beyond the control of the board of directors or others involved with any particular project. They are instead common problems that any young conservancy may encounter as well. These range from land acquisitions taking much longer than expected for various reasons, landowners not finding the urgency to have their resource protected, multiple heirs in estates, and the constant struggle between saving money and getting work done quickly. There are also a number of perceived thoughts that the general "caving" public has about conservancies as a whole that should be addressed. This paper will discuss these issues and present the solutions that the WVCC has perceived in disposing of these problems.

Through the initial years of its existence, the West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC) has encountered many issues that have proven to be obstacles along a variety of fronts. They range from issues that are encountered primarily in the acquisition phases of hopeful land transfers, to those involved in public opinion among cavers and landowners alike. The purpose of this paper is to briefly outline the different types of issues that have proven to be obstacles to the WVCC's cause. Some of these obstacles have definite solutions. Some of those solutions may or may not work in every situation. There are also some issues that do not have solutions yet, but hopefully recognition of the existence of the problem may help other conservancies in a similar situation find a way to deal with these issues before they become too great of a problem.

A conservancy may encounter quite a wide range of problems. First, and most obvious, are

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problems with acquisition, which include the possibility of there being multiple heirs to a property, of the property being offered only at auction, and of there being an issue of easements under neighboring property (underground easements). When there are at least two parties involved, transfers can often take longer than anticipated. Many times, when dealing with land transfers, there are more than two parties involved. There is the buyer, the seller, the lawyer for each side, and maybe a realtor, just to name a few. Each of these may have good intentions to address the issue quickly, but the fact of the matter is that other items do come up and distract each party, especially the parties that may be "hired" by the conservancy. A conservancy is not only in the business of preserving caves and karst, it is also trying to preserve money used in the acquisition of these properties. So it is not uncommon for a conservancy to have a "friend in the business" that will do work for very little or for free. This often slows things down as well, since work done for little or no payment will be put at the bottom of the to-do list. A good solution to this problem is to just go ahead and pay regular price for work done. This may seem like a great deal of money, but if your fundraising tactics are well-tuned, then it should not be a major problem raising the additional money to make up for that which was spent on a lawyer that works swiftly.

Many times the conservancy does not have a choice in how much property is available with the cave that is desired. This means that there is a good chance that there will be too much property offered with the sale, thus running the price up. There are many ways that this can be dealt with. Sometimes it is possible to put the unneeded portion of the property back on the market. This could make back some of the money that was spent to acquire the cave. There could also be a caver who has similar interests as the conservancy and who would be interested in the remainder of the property. This could be a positive situation to explore. Of course, this would all be negotiated only after attempts to subdivide with the seller initially fail.

Public perception can be subdivided into two topics: caver public opinion and non-caver public opinion. Caver public opinion is important since this is where most of the funding for the acquisition will come from. If the cavers do not

trust or like what you are doing, then it is very difficult to get their money to help the cause. The best way to deal with this is to just be honest, and open. Have regular newsletters that go out to your membership. Write articles to be included in other publications that cavers read so they can see you are active. Invite your membership to act as committee members, and seek their input. This helps keep the cavers comfortable with your activities.

Non-caver public opinion can be more difficult to work with. There are many ways in which one can work on this, but the most important thing to remember are skills acquired by most cavers who deal with landowners. Treat them with respect, knowing that you (the conservancy or caver) are not the owner of a particular cave at the moment. Do not be too pushy, but do not be a pushover as well. Act professional when representing your conservancy, but keep in mind that some landowners may feel more comfortable with a less professional approach. Be able to adapt quickly and sufficiently. Finally, offer to be interviewed by your local newspaper, allowing the message to infiltrate the public, so they can better understand your purpose. This may also create some unexpected opportunities for your conservancy.

Possibly one of the most overlooked, yet influential problems is competition. This also has two categories. The most obvious and most difficult to deal with is the concept of running of the price of caves or land with caves. If the public begins to think that caves can be sold at a more premium price, this will make future acquisitions more difficult. Unfortunately, this problem has no good solution. A conservancy can always attempt to get the lowest price, but many landowners always want the most money for their property. The hope is that you can keep the fact the property has a cave as minor a detail as possible.

Competition as conservancy against conservancy or conservancy against caver has been discussed in a few publications recently, and is becoming a more prevalent issue. The best way to deal with this is to have very clear, open, and effective communication among the cavers in your region, and among other conservancies. Even though you may belong to the Mid-Atlantic Cave Conservancy, the West Virginia Cave Conservancy

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may be a better manager for the cave in the long run, and vice-versa. Proximity to the property usually plays a major role in this, and can sometimes be very obvious. The larger problem occurs when an individual caver has interest in a property and a conservancy does not realize it. This is very difficult to catch ahead of time. If it is known ahead of time, it is generally a good idea to support the individual in their quest. In the case of an auction, if the property's price begins to turn more costly, then maybe the two can work together, making spur-of-the-moment agreements. Usually, though, the two parties may not know each other ahead of time. There is probably no good solution for this issue at this time.

Land acquisitions can be a difficult task that can mean a great deal of time and effort for all

involved. This paper does not cover all the problems a conservancy may encounter when acquiring land, but it certainly addresses some of the more common. Again, all the problems do not have definite answers, and the ones listed here are not the only solutions. They are just the ones that the WVCC has found to be helpful when trying to acquire caves. The ultimate goal is that all cavers work together on this common goal and show support when possible. Communication tends to be the initial step in doing this, so hopefully this communication will help others in the future realize that there is a great deal involved and a great deal to learn.

