

**Indiana Karst Conservancy Quarterly Meeting
Saturday, December 17, 2005
Indianapolis, Indiana**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Richard Vernier, President
Bob Sergesketter, Secretary
Keith Dunlap, Treasurer
Bruce Bowman
Bruce Devore
Dave Haun (proxy by George Cesnik)
Don Ingle
Kriste Lindberg
Steve Lockwood
Nick Noe
Tom Sollman
Bill Tozer
Bob Vandeventer (proxy by Karen Tadsen)
Sue Vernier
Jamie Winner (proxy by Kathy Welling)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

The meeting was called to order at 12:13 PM at the home of Nick and Carita Noe in Indianapolis, President Richard Vernier presiding. George Cesnik was accepted as proxy for Dave Haun, Karen Tadsen was accepted as proxy for Bob Vandeventer, and Kathy Welling was accepted as proxy for Jamie Winner. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved as published in the December 2005 *IKC Update*.

Treasurer Dunlap reported net cash assets of \$36,300 and land holdings worth \$257,000 so we have total assets of \$293,300. The cash assets consist of \$23,500 in the General Fund, \$16,300 in the Stewardship Fund, \$2,670 in the Deferred Dues Fund, and a negative \$6,248 in the Land Acquisition Fund. A detailed Treasury Report may be found in the *IKC Update*.
Dunlap reported that we have 183 paid members.

Robinson Ladder Cave Acquisition

Vernier reported that he received an e-mail from John Benton, Robinson Ladder Property Manager. He reports that he found another deer stand that should be removed. It is an old one but was recently discovered. He also said that the road leading from the lower field to the upper field is starting to erode in spots and we may need to take some action to maintain the road. The haying/vegetation management project has been completed by the farmer and the cost was \$300. We should be able to get compensation from the state for 75% of that cost and The Nature Conservancy may pick up the remaining 25%. Dunlap said that he has sent a check to the farmer and he suggested that we wait until we run up some more expenses in the spring and then seek reimbursement for everything at one time. Vernier said that the bales were still on the property when he was last there a few weeks ago. They may have since been removed.

Vernier said that we had talked about a boundary survey of the Robinson Ladder property and he hasn't heard any details or quotes so he asked if we needed a motion to proceed with the project. Dunlap said that he has been in contact with Jess Gwinn who has done our other surveys and he has given a worst case scenario price of \$3,600. There are some things that may complicate the survey. One is that the section the property is in lies in two different counties. Vernier asked if we really need a survey. Dunlap answered that it would be good to know the actual boundaries and we have been including

survey expenses of \$1,600 in our grant requests. The actual cost of surveying the Wayne Cave property, a similar size parcel, was \$1,400. We may be able to reduce the cost by helping with some of the preliminary research and with the survey. He also said that if we're going to do this, now is the time. It's a lot easier when there's no vegetation to fight through. Sue Vernier made a motion that we authorize up to \$3,600 to proceed with the survey, seconded by Welling. There was a short discussion in which it was noted that there has been other surveying going on in the area, for what we don't know. Bowman said that this seems like a lot of money to survey a square parcel, but Dunlap said that we must allow for the worst case price. The motion passed 13-0-2. Dunlap will get in touch with Jeff Gwinn to get things started on the survey.

Vernier reported that the restoration proposal activities are on hold. The mowing was delayed because the farmer was busy with other things. The mowing is now done, but it's too late to spray so that has been pushed out to spring. The spraying of the fescue may be contracted out or we may have to come up with a way to do it ourselves, possibly with rented equipment. We may only be spraying the upper field because Mark Bennett, the State Biologist, has been leaning towards minimal management for the lower field because it already exhibits a lot of the characteristics of a barrens community. Spraying the whole field might be counter productive. Selective spraying with a backpack type sprayer might be a better method in the lower field.

On the subject of a controlled burn, Vernier said that we need to hire someone who knows what they are doing to do that job. No one has been contacted yet. He also noted that there is some difference of opinion within the various state agencies about the correct way to conduct a controlled burn. Details will have to be worked out because there could be a wide variation in the cost of a burn, depending on the methods being used.

Dunlap reported that the Robinson Ladder acquisition is about 70% funded. The project goal is \$83,000 which includes a Stewardship Fund endowment of 10% of the purchase price. Donations and pledges so far amount to about \$59,000 leaving about \$24,000 unfunded. We have several grant applications in the works including one to the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust that he feels comfortable that we will get, but we won't know for sure until March 3. Others that we have not heard from yet are to the National Speleological Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Florida Power and Light, (a real long shot), and to the Efroymsen Fund. We had submitted a pre-proposal to the Efroymsen Fund and they then requested a full proposal which is a positive sign. We probably won't know how all these proposals play out by the February meeting, but we should know by the March meeting.

Dunlap said that the Dick Blenz matching fund is up to about \$4,000.

Wayne Cave Patron

Vernier said that he received an e-mail from Tom Willett, cave patron for Wayne Cave. Tom wants to retire from that position and is asking that we name a replacement. He said that he will stay on for a few months until we find someone to take the job. Dave Everton has volunteered to take the position. Vernier wondered if we want to wait and see if anyone else wants to be considered or just go ahead and appoint Everton to the position. Dunlap said that Everton definitely wants to do it and has told him in the past that if the position opened up that he would be willing to take it. Sue Vernier moved to appoint Everton as cave patron for Wayne Cave. No one seconded but during the discussion that followed, several people said that we should somehow make it known that the position is open. Ingle said that we could appoint Everton as an interim cave patron until we can publicize the opening and see if there is anyone else interested. He said that if Everton decided that he didn't want the post that he would be interested in taking it. Vernier said that he didn't think that Willett was in such a hurry to be relieved that we needed to appoint an interim patron. He thought that we could make an e-mail solicitation for volunteers and make a decision at the February meeting. Tozer said that if we have a willing volunteer for the position, there is no reason not to move forward and appoint Everton. Bowman said he has no problem with Everton but we should let people know that the position is available. Tozer said we should go ahead and appoint Everton, but we should get the word out that if IKC members have an interest in any of the cave patron or property manager positions they should let

the Board know so that if a position opens we have an idea of who might be interested.

Welling made a motion to accept Dave Everton's offer to take the post of Wayne Cave Patron, seconded by Sue Vernier.

Dunlap said that he agreed with Bowman in thinking that the post should be advertised first before an appointment is made. Sollman said that while he intends to vote for the motion, he thinks that we should more formalize the procedure for selecting people to fill these positions. Welling agreed saying that some sort of policy statement laying out procedures for soliciting volunteers would be a good idea, but for this case, where we already have a willing volunteer who is well qualified, we should move on with the appointment. There was no more discussion so the vote was taken and the motion passed 12-1-2. Dave Everton is the new Wayne Cave Patron.

Dunlap asked if the Board thought it would be appropriate to recognize Tom Willett's many years of service as Wayne Cave Patron. Everyone agreed that it would. Tom Rea will work on a certificate or plaque. Vernier will write a letter on behalf of the Board thanking Willett.

National Forest Volunteer Award

Vernier said that the IKC has won the 2005 National Forest Eastern Region Volunteer of the Year Award. He then introduced Cindy Basile, Karst Coordinator and Wildlife Biologist with the Hoosier National Forest. Cindy said that she and Kriste Lindberg, George Cesnik, and Bob Vandeventer were at the awards ceremony in Milwaukee. She said that the Volunteer of the Year award is given out at the end of the program and when she talked to the audience describing the volunteer work that the IKC does and the number of hours of work donated to the HNF, there were gasps of amazement. She and Kriste also got to do a poster presentation on partnership to the regional leadership team and Kriste also demonstrated the groundwater model. Cindy congratulated the IKC and reminded us that this is a very prestigious award and we should be proud to have received it. She thanked us for our past efforts and encouraged us to continue our mission. Lindberg showed everyone the award and several photos were taken and backs were patted all around.

Shiloh Owner Appreciation Gift

Dunlap said that we have had a formal lease agreement with the owner of the Quarry Entrance to Shiloh Cave for a number of years. We paid him a dollar a year and he would never cash the check. Jim Adams, Shiloh Cave Patron, was talking to the owner recently and the owner said that instead of the check, he would rather have a gift certificate to Shapiro's. He also mentioned that he doesn't have any good photos of his cave. Dunlap suggested that we get a \$25.00 gift, certificate and also said that Dave Everton took a really good photo in Shiloh Cave that the Central Indiana Grotto used for their Christmas cards this year. He would like to have that photo professionally printed and framed for presentation to the Shiloh Cave owner. He estimated the total cost of the picture and the certificate to be about \$75.00. Ingle moved to authorize the expenditure of up to \$75.00 for the Shiloh Cave owner appreciation gift, seconded by Welling. The motion passed 15-0-0. Dunlap said that the owner doesn't want to continue with the formal lease agreement. He has no objection to our continued use of the cave and the access policy has not changed. He also said that the quarry company is moving it's headquarters from downtown Bedford out to the quarry.

HEC Membership

Bowman moved that we renew our membership in the Hoosier Environmental Council at the \$100.00 level. Dunlap seconded and the motion passed 14-0-1.

Under-Earth Day

Earth Day is on April 22 this year and Noe said that is also the date for the Indiana Cave Symposium. Dunlap said that combining the two events on the same day or weekend generally hasn't worked well. He said that the symposium will likely be at Milltown this year.

Vernier said that things we could be doing for Under-Earth Day include reforestation work at the Buddha property or working at the Robinson Ladder property on grapevine control, driveway

maintenance, and deer stand removal. Dunlap said that we could probably get the Robinson Ladder projects done and still have the symposium on the same day. If we would decide on working at Buddha, it would have to be on a different weekend. Vernier said that it might be possible to do the spraying at Robinson Ladder but we will have to figure out how many people we would need and also get the needed equipment. Bowman suggested that we tentatively plan to have Under-Earth Day at Robinson Ladder on April 22, the same day as the Indiana Cave Symposium, and make the final decision at the February Board meeting. Vernier noted that Robinson Ladder Cave will still be closed for the bats on that date.

Piggy Pit (Rominger Well) HNF Project

Vernier said that we have received the \$2,300 for building and installing the cover for the pit.

HNF Grant Request/Documentary Video

Vernier said that previously approved \$1,500 has been given to Dave McGowan as the IKC share of the funding for the video. Check the website, www.cavebiota.com, to see the latest clips from the video. Welling said that McGowan recently did a presentation at the Central Indiana Grotto meeting. Lindberg said that he also gave a presentation at a Bloomington Indiana Grotto meeting.

Bat Conservation International Project

Vernier said that BCI has received a grant from the Pulliam Trust in the amount of \$23,000 to fund work relative to Indiana bat recovery in Indiana. The data that Keith Dunlap and Dr. Virgil Brack have compiled over the years has suggested that Indiana may be the last stand for the Indiana bat. There are at least some positive trends for the bat population and this has been recognized by BCI. There may be some benefit in identifying past bat hibernacula within the state and then identifying why the bats abandoned these locations and then taking some sort of remedial action. The grant that BCI received from the Pulliam Trust will be used to fund work along those lines. They will need volunteers to seek out potential sites. There will also be some work involved in installing and retrieving temperature logging devices and maybe some cave entrance modification such as what was done at Saltpeter Cave near Wyandotte Cave a few years ago. They will also be looking for volunteers to actually run the project as well as people to do the legwork.

Dunlap has talked to Jim Kennedy of BCI directly and he said that there is potential funding available for an organization to carry out this project, either with unpaid volunteer labor or maybe even hiring somebody for some of the work if it turns out to require a bigger commitment than the organization can handle. Dunlap said that Kennedy needs to get this done in the next two or three months. BCI is running a parallel program in Kentucky and it is fairly well established. They pursued the funding to do the same project in Indiana although on a smaller scale. Dunlap thinks that the biggest problem for the project in Indiana will be identifying caves to visit because we've already visited and evaluated a lot of the caves that would be of interest though perhaps not to the degree that BCI would like to study them.

Dunlap thinks that it is a good project but he's not sure how Kennedy is going to involve the various parties that have expressed interest in helping. He doesn't think that the IKC is in a position to take on a major role in running the project but we can certainly help in some way. We need to figure out to what degree the IKC wants to be involved. Kennedy told Dunlap that the individuals or organization that runs this project could earn a significant part of the grant money.

Vernier said that the ball is in Kennedy's court now as to what he wants us to do. He said that there may be some opportunities for historical research on some of the caves to try and find out about past bat populations. Old trip reports, grotto newsletter articles, and books and reports by geologists and biologists may contain references about bat use of certain caves.

Dunlap said that Kennedy is also interested in caves in Indiana that have historical records of saltpeter mining. He thought that Sollman may be interested in helping in that area. Sollman said that he's already done that, in fact, almost everything Kennedy wants to do has already been done. Dunlap agreed but said that Kennedy, being from out of state, may not know what has been done and still may

want to visit some of the caves to get first hand information rather than rely on old trip reports which Sollman admitted can leave a lot to be desired. He said that a lot of the trip reports from the 50's and 60's tend to dwell more on who got stuck and how much beer was consumed rather than scientific observations. Nevertheless, Sollman said that he will help as much as he can.

Vernier asked if we need to take any action now on any of this. Tozer suggested that we wait until Kennedy defines what he wants us do to. No action needs to be taken now. Vernier said that we are disseminating the information among the caving community and we are receiving feedback from people who are interested in participating in some fashion. We could let Kennedy know that there are some historical references that could be researched and there are studies available on saltpeter connections to caves of Indiana. We will then wait and see what his next move is.

Becks Mill

We have received a communication from Hank Huffman urging us to make contact with a group called "Friends of Beck's Mill". This organization is trying to restore and maintain the Beck's Mill property in Washington County, Indiana. Dunlap said that the mill and 13 acres is in the process of being transferred to this non-profit group and they want to restore it. Sollman asked if we wouldn't be more interested in Beck's Mill Cave, the water source for the mill, rather than the building. Vernier said that he is just passing on the information for anyone who may be interested in joining the organization and participating on an individual basis. Carita Noe said that an issue that may be of interest to us is the way the cave entrance has been changing. The cave stream is rerouting itself and the water is bypassing the small reservoir that is located just outside the entrance. The reservoir is supposed to supply water to the sluiceway which then feeds water to the mill wheel. They want to block the present route of the cave stream and force it back to the former route so that it feeds the reservoir and sluice. She said that the water has been diverted from the original route for so long that the cave habitat has changed. Blind fish and other cave creatures have been observed and her concern is that methods used to get the water back to where it will operate the mill wheel may adversely affect the cave habitat. We should have someone who can advise them in their effort so that the cave habitat is not changed. Vernier said that he sent them a letter offering our knowledge and expertise regarding the cave portion of their project. He has not received a reply. Tom Rea said that he intends to attend a meeting of the group in January. Sollman said that he is all for helping them with the caves on their property.

Sullivan Cave Preserve/Outhouses

Dunlap checked on several sources for outhouses. To rent one would be \$1,000 a year, serviced weekly. We wouldn't need to have it serviced that often but the owner insisted on that schedule. He asked about buying a used one but no one had any for sale. A friend of Dave Haun did have one out on his property that we could have for nothing but we don't know what condition it's in. Dunlap said that he and Dave will check on it. If we get one, either donated or purchased, we still have to make arrangements for getting it serviced. No action was taken.

At this point, Bruce Devore and Karen Tadsen, proxy for Bob Vandeventer, had to leave. Before leaving, Tadsen relayed a message from Vandeventer. "Combination locks suck." This launched a brief discussion on problems associated with some of the locks on our properties.

Indiana State Bat

Noe said that he talked to State Senator Brent Waltz who is probably going to champion it on the Senate side and David Orentlicher will push for it in the House. Waltz is a Republican and Orentlicher is a Democrat so the bill will have bipartisan support. Lindberg said that the Bloomington Herald-Times is sponsoring a contest in the paper involving school children writing letters explaining why they support designating the Indiana bat as the State Bat of Indiana.

Education and Outreach Report

Lindberg said that there will be an area wide karst meeting at the HNF office on January 13. Vernier said that it was his understanding that the meeting will be concentrating mainly on the cave video.

Cindy Basile said that at least the first part of the meeting will be figuring out where we want to go with this video once it is complete.

Lindberg thanked George Cesnik and Bob Vandeventer for helping out with Education and Outreach projects. She also said that the HNF might have some funding available to do some cleanup projects on Forest Service property. Basile said that they have about \$20,000 available for soil and water improvement projects. In the past that money was used to clean up dumps and now they are making the transition to other types of cleanups too. She hopes that this will become a permanent source of funding that they can count on. Any kind of project that that can be somehow tied into soil and water improvement could be funded from this account. For example, if we had cleaned out the Rominger Well pit before putting the cover on it, the whole project could have been funded from this account. She is interested in finding a property or two that can be earmarked for cleanup in 2006. Noe asked when the money goes away if not used. The money must be used by September 30, 2006. Basile said she really wants to get something going on this as soon as possible so she needs some proposals. Vernier said that the IKC has a long history of being involved with cleanups so we can certainly do a project like this. It mainly becomes a problem of scheduling to get the most people involved. We can look into partnerships with other groups such as The Nature Conservancy. Welling mentioned past projects with the Ohio Valley Region. Maybe we can get them involved again. Vernier said that we can publicize the information within the OVR as well as the various grottos. Basile said that she can hire a private contractor to do the work or do a partnership with the IKC and then we could get paid for what we've been doing for nothing. Dunlap said That we are very interested in doing something on this but we probably can't handle \$20,000 worth. Lindberg said she'll be talking to Tim Maloney of the HEC after the next HNF meeting and maybe together they can come up with something. Lindberg said that she has been contacted by the Indiana Conservation Alliance to see if the IKC is interested in joining them. Vernier said that he was unaware of the group until very recently. He would like to have more information about them before we join, such as their real purpose and objectives. Lindberg will attend their next meeting and report. Noe said that the HEC doesn't belong but they are looking it over.

Buddha Cave Preserve Projects

Property Manager Cesnik said that he has been to the property a few times and removed some trees that had fallen across trails and sprayed some multiflora rose plants. He said that we ought to get some information on display in the kiosk that was erected on the property some time ago. He met with Cliff Chapman at the property to discuss some ideas about what kind of management we want to do. He talked about getting a truck sprayer and going over the whole property with Roundup. Once the fescue is killed, the native plants should move in. The Indiana Division of Nature Preserves must review and approve any plans before we do anything. We maybe able to get into the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) to fund some of the work at the property.

Vernier said that the WHIP is what we're using at the Robinson Ladder property and there can sometimes be a difference in philosophy between different state and federal agencies as to how to best manage an area.

Dunlap said that we don't have to do anything at Buddha if we don't want to. It's up to Cesnik with approval of Cliff Chapman. Sue Vernier said that she had a conversation with Chapman in which he said that if we want to experiment in small areas, we could. Basile said that if you are looking at regeneration, burning is the best bet. Burning doesn't kill fescue but it will knock it back and give the native plants a chance to move in. She said if you really want to wipe out the fescue, you must spray it. Dunlap said that we know how to spray but we don't know how to burn. Vernier said that Chapman can get someone to handle the burning if that's what we want.

Basile said that organizations such as Quail Unlimited and The Wild Turkey Federation may partner with us to do some of this work. While they are primarily interested in game management, lots of species benefit from the work they do. Tom Rea questioned if they would be interested if they couldn't hunt the property. Basile said they would because they are interested in providing habitat as well as hunting.

Lots of ideas were tossed around but no action as. taken. We need to continue thinking about what we want to do with the Buddha Cave Preserve.

Wayne Cave Preserve

Property Manager Robert Sollman was not present. Tom Sollman said that he stopped at the preserve on his way to the meeting. He cleaned a couple of trees from the rail and said it looks like there is a lot of activity at the property. There was a bus there from some college with a group apparently in the cave. He said that the large rocks on the driveway are sinking nicely and should provide a good base for a layer of smaller gravel to be applied in early summer. There is a lot of stump cleanup to be done as well. Maybe both projects could be done at the same time, possibly timed with the June Board meeting. Dunlap said that about \$1,600 has been spent so far on property improvements. \$2,500 was allotted.

Sullivan Cave Preserve

Sullivan Cave Property Manager Dunlap, reported that Management Plan revisions are still dragging on.

About one hundred trees need to be planted in early April to replace dead ones. Sometime in May we need to spray around the existing trees. Many of the trees are doing very well, but there was a lot of cicada damage to the oaks.

The offending trash producing trailer on the adjoining property is gone.

We will have some gravel hauled in to widen the parking area this summer. Some gravel will also be spread on the lane. It has a good base but could use a little maintenance. Vernier asked if there had been any feedback from the student who was doing the air flow study at the cave. Dunlap said that he hasn't heard from him lately but he's pretty sure that he is finished with the study that he was doing for his class. Dunlap thinks that he wants to continue the study on his own. Sollman asked if we will get a copy of his study. Dunlap said he hopes that we will. Tozer asked if there wasn't some kind of cicada study at Sullivan and what the results were. Dunlap said that was actually the Wayne property and he doesn't think it was used for the study. Vernier said that he would be interested in the results of the airflow study and if the results or methods used could be applicable to Robinson Ladder Cave.

There were no items from the floor.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be February 11, 2006, at Kriste Lindberg's home in Bloomington. The meeting will start at 6 PM [this was later switched to 1 PM].

The annual business meeting will be March 18, 2006, at 10:00 AM at the Greenwood library [this was later changed to the Decatur Branch of the Marion County Library].

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM. Thanks to Nick and Carita for hosting the meeting and for furnishing the refreshments..

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Sergesketter, Secretary