

IKC Spring Director's Meeting Minutes

Saturday, February 11, 2006

Bloomington, Indiana

Board members present:

Richard Vernier, President

Bob Sergesketter, Secretary

Keith Dunlap, Treasurer

Bruce Devore

Dave Haun (proxy by George Cesnik)

Don Ingle

Kriste Lindberg

Nick Noe

Tom Sollman

Bill Tozer

Bob Vandeventer (proxy by Patty Ruback)

Sue Vernier

Jamie winner

Board members absent:

Bruce Bowman

Steve Lockwood

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 PM at the home of Kriste Lindberg in Bloomington. President Richard Vernier presiding. George Cesnik was accepted as proxy for Dave Haun and Patty Ruback was accepted as proxy for Bob Vandeventer. The minutes of the December, 2005 meeting have not yet been published so they could not be approved.

Treasurer Dunlap reported a cash balance of \$44,230.86. Land holdings amount to \$257,000. Total IKC assets stand at \$301,230.86. IKC membership stands at 186. There are two grant requests outstanding related to the Robinson Ladder Cave acquisition. We should have more information about them at the March meeting. A detailed Treasury Report may be found in the *IKC Update*.

There was a discussion of how we might recruit more members. Vernier noted that membership seems to hover in the 180 to 200 range. Dunlap said he thinks that number probably represents about one third of the cavers in Indiana. He said that there may be grant money available to fund a membership drive if that's what we want to do.

Vernier asked if we should keep the solicitation within the established caving community or seek members from other conservation minded groups and individuals. Dunlap replied that we would have to decide that when we work out the details but he thought that we would probably need to extend beyond the caving community if we want to see a meaningful increase in membership. For example, he said that the Sycamore Land Trust went from a handful of members to over a thousand with the help of a paid organization builder and funded by a \$40,000 grant. Dunlap said that he realizes that the IKC has a more limited appeal than the Sycamore Land Trust but it gives us an idea of what can be done. Vernier wondered how we could solicit members from like-minded groups such as the Audubon Society or The Nature Conservancy. Patti Cummings, suggested articles or notices in the publications of other conservation organizations. Vernier said that he's not sure of what route to take but we need to think about it. We need broader support if we want to continue purchasing karst property and funding other projects. Dunlap said that the first and most obvious place to start is to recruit from our own, that is, from Indiana cavers. He thinks there are about 400 cavers in Indiana and about 150 of them are IKC

members. That leaves about 250 who are probably aware of the IKC but for one reason or another have not joined. The first time the IKC did a statewide solicitation; membership went from about 50 to about 100. We haven't done that for a long time. Vernier thought that we should try it again or at least have some sort of membership drive this year.

Nominations: Three officers, four directors

The terms of Board members Bowman, Devore, Haun, and Sollman expire this year. Bowman and Devore have decided to not seek re-election. Sollman said that he will run again although it troubles him that new blood is not coming in. That comment prompted Patti Cummings to speak on behalf of the Richard Blenz Nature Conservancy, which is Buckner Cave. She said that there is a lot of visitation at Buckner and if we could get our message to the many Scout troops, church groups, hiking clubs, college students, and all the rest while some of them are still "trainable", we might prevent a lot of problems in the future and gain some members in the process. Perhaps some additional IKC information at Buckner would be helpful. She also said that groups are often looking for trip leaders and that would be an opportunity for us to get a strong conservation message out as well as, promoting safe caving techniques. She said that Art is gone and they are trying to get a consistent access policy in place. They are receiving a lot of requests for trips and they need help in handling cave trips. A lot of the people coming out to Buckner are the people that the IKC needs to reach and she thinks that this could be a good project for the IKC.

Vernier said that we should develop more of a presence at the Buckner property and admitted that he hadn't been there in quite a while. Cummings suggested that we might want to have a get together sometime at Buckner, either in conjunction with an IKC meeting or with a work day at the property. Tozer congratulated Cummings for the work that's going on at the Buckner Property. Vernier said that this is an opportunity that we shouldn't ignore.

Getting back to the nominations, Vernier said that Dave Haun indicated that he would run for re-election to the Board. Also running for Director positions are Dr Jerry Lewis, Patty Ruback, and Bruce Silvers.

President Vernier, Treasurer Dunlap, and Secretary Sergesketter each said that they would seek re-election to their respective positions. The three officer positions are for one-year terms and the Director positions are for three years. The election takes place at the March meeting.

Vernier wondered if there was some way of presenting information about candidates prior to the elections, maybe something like the ballot for the NSS Board of Governors election. He noted that we might have to change the whole voting process because the present system only has about thirty days between approving the slate of candidates and the election. Tozer thought it would be a good idea to publish information on current Board members in the IKC Update so that all IKC members would have some idea of who the leaders are. Noe asked what happens if a Board member resigns. Dunlap said that the Board has the choice of leaving the post vacant or appointing any IKC member to the post for the remainder of the term. Noe said that he may be running for the Indiana House of Representatives and if successful, would probably have to resign from the Board.

Dunlap moved to accept the slate of candidates as discussed, that is, Haun, Lewis, Ruback, Silvers, and Sollman running for four Director positions and Vernier, Dunlap, and Sergesketter running for President, Treasurer, and Secretary, respectively. The motion was seconded by Sue Vernier and passed 13-0-0.

Dunlap said that he will take care of the ballots. He will list name, hometown, and grotto affiliation. Vernier said that the ballot would be a good location for a paragraph about each candidate. Dunlap

agreed but said that the time is too short this year. He'll try it next year. Sollman asked about the number of Directors. Vernier said that the number of Directors is determined by the number of members, with a minimum of four Directors and a maximum of twelve. We are at the maximum now and as long as we have at least 141 members, we will have twelve Directors.

Robinson Ladder Cave Acquisition

John Benton, Robinson Ladder Property Manager, reported that we have received the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) grant money. This is a grant of up to a certain amount to be used over a ten year period to restore the property.

Last fall he and the Verniers met with Department of Natural Resources District Biologist Mark Bennett and did a walk over the property. They discussed the plans to eradicate the fescue in the upper and lower fields. Late in the fall the local farmer who had been haying the two fields for years cut and baled both fields per the recommendation of the biologist. Early this spring we are to either spray or do a controlled burn or both to eradicate the fescue. After that, Bennett thought that through natural process, the native plants would move in and take over. Benton has not had any recent contact with Bennett. The spraying or burning must happen before vegetation starts to green up in the spring. Vernier asked Benton to e-mail Bennett and ask what kind of time line we need to be on. Benton said that one stumbling block concerns the burn and liability issues associated with it. Vernier said that we might get some help from Cliff Chapman of the Division of Nature Preserves. Benton said there seems to be a bit of hesitancy in someone actually taking charge of the burn.

Dunlap asked if the fescue wouldn't come back if it's just burned. Benton said that it could take two burns and a spray to get rid of it. We need to talk to Bennett more about this. The time to act is rapidly approaching.

Dunlap reported that the last external loan for the purchase of the Robinson Ladder property has been paid off. Right now the Cave Acquisition Fund is about \$7,000 short of where it was when we started buying the property. It had about \$9,000 in it. It now has about \$2,000. What we really want is to be back where we were after we make our contribution to the Stewardship Fund. We're about \$16,000 away from that so our goal is to get another \$16,000. We have two grants outstanding, one for \$10,000 and one for \$21,000. If we get either one we'll be in good shape. If we get both, we'll ask one to lower the amount of the grant. We should know by the March meeting where we stand on both grants. The Dick Blenz matching program brought in \$6,700, which was matched by Dick so we made \$13,400. Thanks Dick. Dunlap said that overall we're in good shape and we see the light at the end of the tunnel with the Robinson Ladder project.

Benton said that the administrator of the Efroymsen Fund showed up at Marengo Cave a few weeks ago looking for Robinson Ladder Cave. Gordon Smith, owner of Marengo Cave, just happened to overhear the conversation between the clerk in the gift shop and the gentleman and so Gordon introduced himself, answered his questions, and took him out to the Robinson Ladder property. They did not walk the property, but Gordon told him about the IKC and the significance of the cave and our plans for the property.

Dunlap asked about progress regarding the gathering of old survey data in preparation for the boundary survey of the Robinson Ladder property. Benton said that he spent several hours recently at the Crawford County courthouse in English looking up data requested by Jeff Gwinn who will be doing the survey. This involved looking up such information as old surveys of our property as well as all adjoining properties, old deeds, and notes from the original survey of Crawford County dating back to 1810. Since the section that our property is in, is partially in Harrison County, he will have to do the

same thing at the Harrison County courthouse though he doesn't think it will be as involved since none of the property is actually in Harrison County.

Under Earth Day

Under Earth Day will be April 22 at the Robinson Ladder property. The work day will commence at noon. Projects include some road repair on the lane from the lower field to the upper field, removal of an old deer stand that was overlooked before, some fence removal, and grapevine cutting. Prior to the workday at Robinson Ladder, TNC will have an open house at the O'Bannon Woods State Park Nature Center from 9 to 11 AM. Dick and Sue Vernier plan on being there as is Don Ingle. They will display IKC information and possibly the groundwater model, the cave video poster, and a DVD of clips from the cave biota video. The workday at Robinson Ladder should be over by 4:00PM. Everyone can then go down the road to Milltown for the annual Indiana Cave Symposium, which will be held that evening, preceded by a cookout. Please bring a covered dish to share.

Bat Conservation International¹ Project

Dunlap reported that he has sent e-mails to Jim Kennedy of BCI and Kennedy has called a couple of times in the last few days when Dunlap was not available to take the call, but eventually they will get together. Dunlap said that he knows their project is moving along in Kentucky but he doesn't know what they have planned for Indiana. He sent Kennedy all the information that he requested and now we wait until we hear from him.

Beck's Mill

Tom Rea was planning on attending a meeting of the group organized to preserve and possibly rebuild Beck's Mill in Washington County, but Tom wasn't present to report. Noe said that they have a nice website. They have some very ambitious plans such as totally refurbishing the mill and getting it running again. He said we might want to consider the implications to the cave system if the water is backed up again. Vernier said that if we can get some level of involvement then it could mean a little additional exposure for the IKC.

Indiana State Bat

Noe reported that the bill did not get introduced in this session of the legislature. This was a short session and the number of bills that each legislator can introduce is limited. This was a brand new issue and it came in kind of late so it ended up at the bottom of a lot of people's lists. If we keep after it and keep the cards and letters coming in, there's a good chance that it will be introduced in the 90 day session which begins in January 2007.

Education and Outreach Report

Lindberg reported that the production, of the cave video is moving right along. She showed a large poster promoting the video. Benton asked how the video will be distributed. Lindberg said distribution is still being worked out. She said that it will probably not be sold. She said that she is going to incorporate it into several new programs that she is developing in conjunction with Project Underground. One program is called Cave Critter creations will be coming out with the Bloomington Parks and Recreation summer guide. She will also be meeting soon with the person who oversees the Natural Resources Education Center at Fort Benjamin Harrison. They do several different educational programs and Lindberg is going to promote Project Underground. Lindberg said she will publish a recap of Education and Outreach programs for 2005 in the IKC Update.

Noe reported that he attended the two-day HASTI (Hoosier Association of Science Teachers, Inc) convention. Noe was obviously trying to get Tozer envious. Noe said that he was handing out the link to the cave biota website and the information was very well received. Lindberg reported that she got a message from the editor of the NSS News. He wants to put the IKC poster on the back cover of the special conservation issue of the NSS News published this spring.

Buddha Cave Preserve Projects

Vernier reported that Dr Jerry Lewis has completed his report on his findings from his collection and analysis of dead bugs in Buddha Cave. The work and report was sponsored by the Department of Natural Resources. He hasn't received much feedback from the DNR yet, but what he has heard has been positive. Vernier said that he, Dunlap, and George Cesnik, the Buddha Cave Preserve Property Manager, have copies of the report. It was not sent to all of the Board members because of the size of the document. If someone wants a copy, please contact George Cesnik. Cesnik said that he has only read about half of the report so far but has already concluded that Buddha Cave is biologically very diverse. Vernier described it as a biological hot spot.

Vernier reported that there had been a meeting with Cliff Chapman regarding management options at the Buddha property. There was some discussion but Vernier said that we can't do much without getting approval from the Division of Nature Preserves. Cesnik said that Chapman mentioned some options such as getting rid of the fescue and planting trees, or doing nothing. Vernier thought that Chapman would like to see more oak trees planted. Dunlap asked Cesnik if he had any interest in doing some tree planting this spring. Cesnik, said that he would be interested. Dunlap asked if the Board was interested. Vernier asked if he had an idea of the cost. Dunlap said that trees cost \$30 per hundred and that he thought 500 trees would be about right. Sollman thought that we should consider planting some trees in the valley leading into the Buddha Cave entrance. He said he doesn't think that historically the cave used to flood like it does now and that having more trees in the valley would slow down the erosion and the deposition of silt in the cave. Dunlap said that it might be hard to get trees growing in that area because of the competing vegetation. Sollman admitted that there would be a high mortality rate but thinks that some will thrive. Ruback asked if we have an idea what the impact of planting particular trees around a cave entrance is as far as affecting the water entering the cave. Sollman said the things we can be fairly sure of is that the Buddha Cave area used to be all forest and that flooding of the magnitude that is presently occurring was not happening. Dunlap said that he thinks the area in question may reforest itself faster if left alone. We have stopped mowing it and there is some evidence that trees are starting to come up. Sollman agreed that natural reforestation is preferable to planting hundreds of genetically identical trees. There was more discussion and then we decided to let Cesnik and Chapman decide what kind of trees to plant and how many. Dunlap moved to fund the expenditure of up to \$500 for the purchase and planting of 500 trees for the Buddha Karst Preserve, subject to approval by the Division of Nature Preserves, seconded by Cesnik. The motion passed 13-0-0.

Cesnik also reported that Chapman was promoting a wholesale treatment of the fescue at Buddha using a truck sprayer and Roundup if we really want to wipe it out. Vernier thought that we need to hold off on that plan for a while. We probably want to establish a committee to look at what we want to do with the property and what the impact on the cave environment would be with a massive spray program. Sunlight is supposed to break the chemical down but what happens if the product goes directly into the cave? Dunlap noted that the small areas that he has sprayed around young trees are immediately taken over by thistle, Johnson grass, and other undesirable plants. He thought that if we really want to go with a large-scale spray program, we should do a test plot first and see what happens after a year or two. Vernier said a good place to try it would be along the road on the upper part of the property where the Indian grass is.

Wayne Cave Preserve

Robert Sollman, the Wayne Cave Preserve Property Manager, reported that he wants to get a layer of fine gravel on the driveway. He wants to coordinate that project with Dunlap's plans for additional gravel at the Sullivan property. A firm date will be set by the March IKC meeting.

Ingle said that the group that was at the property back in December was from Goshen, Indiana. He stopped by and talked with them on his way home from the December IKC meeting. He said that they were appreciative of the improvements to the property. Some of them were sleeping in a van in the parking area and some were in a local motel. Vernier presented Robert Sollman with a Certificate of Appreciation for his work at the Wayne property and also a plaque which will be part of an informational kiosk at some point in the future. Another certificate was also given, to be presented to Robert's Scout troop.

There was a long discussion on kiosk construction which also led to discussing the need for better informational displays in the kiosk at the Buddha property. There was no action taken but a lot of things are going to get looked into and maybe there will be some ideas at the next meeting.

Sullivan Cave Preserve

Dunlap has put together an updated management plan. There are not a lot of changes. It mainly addresses things that were in the original plan that were to be done and now are done. The primary reason for revising the plan is that we are now operating the cave under the grotto liaison system and that wasn't in the original plan. In the liability waiver, the language was changed to address the issue of cavers being under adjoining property. Dunlap asked if we want to make a motion and pass it right away or wait until the March meeting. Sollman had a question about camping at the Sullivan property. He felt that the stipulation that camping permission must be sought in advance and would generally be given to only one group at a time is too restrictive. He thought that as an IKC member, he or any other member should be able to visit and camp on IKC owned property with a minimum of red tape as long as it doesn't hamper some other member's use of the same property. Dunlap said it's more of a logistic problem in that there is a limited amount of space suitable for camping and also limited room for vehicles. He said that one reason the policy is written that way is that if a group from, for example, Chicago, were to plan a trip weeks in advance and have permission to camp but maybe not arrive until two or three in the morning, they need to know that they'll have a place to camp when they arrive. If it's opened up to a first come, first served basis, someone who just assumes it's all right to set up camp on the spur of the moment could cause a problem. He admitted that a situation like that might be a rarity, but it's still an issue that must be dealt with. Dunlap said he sees the problem both ways and really doesn't have an answer and maybe the Board needs to discuss it and work something out. Sollman said he thinks that we need to open it up and if a problem develops, we'll deal with it. Tozer said that because of the heavy use of the Sullivan property, maybe we ought to consider expanding the camping area somehow. Sue Vernier thought that the real limiting factor is room for vehicle parking. Tozer agreed and Sollman pointed out that parking is already a big issue just for the groups that come for a day trip of caving. Sullivan Cave patron Bob Vandeventer was not present so we decided to table the issue until the next meeting when we can get his input. This did not stop the discussion, however. Tozer said that he agrees with Sollman's position that members should be able to camp there on the spur of the moment and he would like to see that happen. Dunlap said that when we revise management plans, we probably should make the camping policy more liberal. Sollman said that we want people to see tangible benefits from belonging to the IKC as well as the high ideals of conservation and preservation of karst. The discussion continued several more minutes until Vernier again tabled the issue (until we can include Vandeventer in the debate).

Dunlap said that he and Dave Haun have not yet had a chance to check out the free porta-john that was offered to us for possible use at the Sullivan property. Dunlap is planning a workday at Sullivan to replace about 100 trees. He is thinking of doing it on April 8th but we also need to schedule a tree planting day at Buddha so the Sullivan tree planting may be moved to a different date. He will be getting the trees in early April.

Items From the Floor

Winner reported that the State Forester, Jack Seifert, is interested in purchasing property with caves, especially caves containing Indiana bats. Since he was aware of Winner's involvement with the IKC, he asked Winner if he knew of any caves that fit that criterion. Winner assumed he was only interested in caves in the Harrison Crawford region. He is interested in attending an IKC meeting. Winner suggested that he talk to Dunlap and he also gave him Vernier's contact information. He also told him about our March meeting and he might be there. Jug Hole and Parker's pit were mentioned as being of interest. The owners of those two caves must be contacted to see if they are willing to sell. Winner thinks that this whole process relates to the Fish and Wildlife Service's Habitat Conservation Plan that they are trying to draft right now relating to the Indiana Bat. Winner said he is unsure how all of this will pan out. Tozer wondered if they are planning on buying these properties and then closing the caves. Winner said he thought that could happen, at least for part of the year but he doesn't know. There was much more discussion but no action taken.

Dunlap said that Indiana Senate bill number 354 made it through the Indiana Senate and is now in the House of Representatives. This bill redefines Classified Forest and Classified Wildlife Habitat areas and combines them into a single category now called Wildlands and will be administered through the Division of Forestry. He thinks that if passed it will help us at places like Robinson Ladder where part of the property is timber and the rest is open area. There was another long discussion.

Lindberg reported that she has been paired with a representative of the Indiana Forest Alliance for a presentation to some community development group.

Benton reported that he has submitted an article about the Robinson Ladder property to the NSS News for inclusion in the conservation issue.

Lindberg said that Dave McGowan has been in contact with her about getting some additional funding. This turned in to a discussion of whether the video is on track for a timely completion or if there could be a funding problem. Tozer asked Lindberg if McGowan has enough money to get the bits and pieces put together into a DVD and whatever else will be put on the web. Lindberg said that she's not sure. Tozer said that we need to know if additional funding is needed to complete what he has already committed to do. Dunlap said that McGowan will complete what he has contracted to do, that is, develop a video about cave life. However, additional funding could result in a better product with wider distribution. Vernier said that McGowan has talked about generating "education packets" for school and teacher distribution. Tozer said that the opportunities for the video are present and growing, but he wonders if additional funding is needed to expand the opportunities even further or to cover what he's already done. There was much more discussion but no action was taken.

The next meeting will be March 18, 2006, at the Decatur Branch of the Marion County Library. The meeting will start at 10:00 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Sergesketter, Secretary

