

IKC SUMMER BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Saturday, June 17, 2005

Bloomington, Indiana

Board Members Present:

Richard Vernier, President
Bob Sergesketter, Secretary
Keith Dunlap, Treasurer
Dave Haun
Don Ingle
Jerry Lewis
Kriste Lindberg
Nick Noe
Tom Sollman
Bill Tozer (proxy by George Cesnik)
Bob Vandeventer
Sue Vernier
Jamie Winner

Board Members Absent:

Steve Lockwood
Bruce Silvers

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 PM in Room 143 of the Geology Building on the IU campus, President Richard Vernier presiding. George Cesnik was accepted as proxy for Bill Tozer. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved as published in the June 2006 *IKC Update*.

Recording of E-mail Motions and Results

On April 28, 2006, Dunlap moved to approve a bio-inventory of Robinson Ladder Cave Preserve by Dr Jerry Lewis and an examination of bat roost stains by Bat Conservation International. They want to begin soon after the end of the bat hibernation closure which is May 1. The motion was seconded by Sue Vernier. On May 5, 2006, Richard Vernier declared the motion to have been passed with 12 in favor and 3 absent.

On May 11, 2006, Dunlap moved that \$40,000 be transferred from the IKC savings account to 30 day certificates of deposit with staggered maturity dates. This would allow the money to earn higher interest while still providing reasonable liquidity. With the staggered maturity dates we would never be more than a few days from from a CD maturing and almost all of the money would be available within 30 days. The motion was seconded by Sue Vernier. On May 19, 2006, Richard Vernier declared the motion to have been passed with 13 in favor and 2 absent.

On June 8, 2006, Dunlap moved to purchase a tri-axle load of topsoil and have it dumped at the Sullivan property to be used to level some camping sites. This will be done in conjunction with the driveway and parking area improvements that will be taking place the weekend of June 17-18. Dunlap was quoted a price of \$200 for a load of topsoil delivered to the Sullivan property. He has offered to donate the \$200, but altering the camping area requires Board approval, thus the motion. Sue Vernier seconded the motion and it passed with 11 in favor and 4 absent.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Dunlap reported total assets of \$336,881.89. Our land holdings are valued at \$257,013.16 and we have cash in the various funds totaling \$79,868.73. A detailed Treasury Report may be found in the *IKC Update*.

Dunlap reported that membership stands at 189 of which 160 are paid up. The members who have not renewed received reminders in their IKC Update and Dunlap will follow up on those reminders in a few weeks.

Dunlap said that the rollover of funds into several 30 day Certificates of Deposit did not occur because we would have had to accept a lower interest rate than what we are currently earning. However, after Dunlap started discussing moving the money to a different bank, the bank offered a different savings account that would pay 3.8% if the account was \$50,000 or more. Right now we would have over \$50,000 to put in the account but even if it dips lower we'll still earn 3.0%. In comparison, our current savings account is paying 1.0%. Vandeventer asked how liquid the new account is. Dunlap said

that it is completely liquid although there may be a fee if we close the whole account out at once.

Robinson Ladder Cave Acquisition

Dunlap reported that we have received the grants from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust and from the Efroymsen Fund. Fund raising for the Robinson Ladder property is complete and all members have been notified that excess donations have been placed in the Land Acquisition Fund. No one reported hearing any negative comments about this action. The only outstanding expense for the Robinson Ladder property will be the boundary survey. At some time in the future we may need to harden the road with some rock but there are no plans at this time.

Vernier said that he has not received any report from John Benton, Robinson Ladder Property Manager, about the status of surface restoration activities at the property. He said that Allen Pursell of The Nature Conservancy has indicated that TNC might be able to assist this year with the vegetation management aspect of the project but he hasn't heard anything in the past few weeks.

Vernier asked if there was any news concerning the property survey. Dunlap said that Jess Gwinn, the surveyor who will be doing the work, plans to start in the next week or two and the job will probably take a week to complete. He may need some volunteer help. Dunlap said that it would be good if the survey was done before we turn in our closeout report to the Efroymsen Fund. The report is due July 30, 2006.

Ingle reported that Dave McGowan was doing some video work at Robinson Ladder Cave today and Jerry and Salisa Lewis were also doing some work at the cave today.

Education and Outreach

Lindberg reported that State Senator Vi Simpson of Bloomington will introduce a bill designating the Indiana Bat as the official State Bat of Indiana. Noe said that if the bat bill is introduced, the Hoosier Environmental Council will support it. He noted that this is a tough year to get bills through, but bills that don't involve money have a better chance.

Lindberg said that just this morning she incorporated the Cave Biota video into the Project Underground program for the first time.

Ingle reported on upcoming activities with the Girl Scout caving program which will be starting on June 21.

Lewis announced that he has received funding for a biology study in Robinson Ladder Cave from the Division of Nature Preserves. He will be setting some pitfall traps in the cave and will also be placing some buckets to collect drip water. He asked that cave visitors please be careful and don't disturb the buckets or traps. Vernier suggested putting notes on the buckets so that people know why they are there. Lewis said that work on the study began today.

A complete Education and Outreach Committee report can be found in the IKC Update.

I-69/Indiana Bat

Vernier said that he has been contacted by Shannon Fisk of the Environmental Law and Policy Center in Chicago in regards to a lawsuit that is being brought regarding the impact that the new terrain I-69 extension project may have to the endangered Indiana Bat. The ELPC is looking for someone to advocate on behalf of the bat. Vernier said that he is not a lawyer and he doesn't understand the exact nature of how this is to be done. Would we be a plaintiff or would we be signing an affidavit as individuals or as an organization saying that we're concerned about the impact of the highway on the bat population? The Hoosier Environmental Council and Citizens for Appropriate Rural Roads are listed as plaintiffs.

Vernier said that he doesn't know what our responsibility would be and what our potential liabilities would be if we were to sign on as either a plaintiff or as an interested party. The lawsuit is a rather voluminous document and Vernier requested that Mr Fisk transmit a copy to Nick Noe. Vernier said that he told Mr Fisk that we would study the lawsuit and consider it but promised nothing. Mr Fisk will be contacting Vernier next week. Vernier requested Noe to summarize the document and give us some background as far as the HEC is involved with this.

Noe said that this has been a long time coming. He said that ever since plans were announced for the new terrain route, the HEC intended to file suit and the HEC began working with the ELPC, an organization known to have some very good environmental attorneys. Noe said that the suit attacks the project on two fronts. First, it says that the plan is in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act. By choosing the route they have selected, they have ignored other less impacting routes. The suit challenges the decision making process in coming to the route they have picked. The second attack is based on the Endangered Species Act. Not only is the Indiana bat being impacted but other species are too.

Noe said that they are looking to the IKC for expertise. We have the people who can say with certainty where the bats are and what the potential impact will be on the bats and their habitat and what mitigation efforts will be required to avoid impacting the bats. He said that it is up to us to determine the level of involvement that the IKC wants. We can jump in with both feet and be a plaintiff, provide funding, send knowledgeable people to testify when the time comes, or we can assume a lesser role in the background, providing information and possibly recruiting experts to testify. We have information that would be difficult if not impossible to get anywhere else and that is why we are being asked to join in the suit.

Vernier said that he talked to John Moore, a senior attorney at the ELPC, and asked him what the down side of joining in a suit could be, specifically the possibility of a countersuit which we would then have to defend and risk losing our assets. Mr Moore said that this suit is against a government entity and the likelihood of a countersuit is nil, in his opinion. He said, however, that we would probably want to get our attorney, which we don't have, involved.

Vernier said that he is concerned that our being a party to this suit may impact our good relationship with the state in other areas. Another concern is that the highway people have done considerable amounts of work identifying and studying karst areas and bat habitats and some re-routing of the corridor, based on those studies, has been done. We can say that we don't like the route and give our reasons why we don't like it, but we can't really say that they haven't examined the situation. That puts us in a spot where we need people with credentials to refute their claims. We have such individuals. Virgil Brack, John Whitaker, and our own Keith Dunlap could all be considered expert witnesses, but to Vernier's knowledge, they have not been asked to testify.

Noe asked what our involvement was with the State Road 37 work that was done south of Bedford a few years ago? Dunlap said that problems occurred after the project was well underway because karst issues were largely ignored in the planning stages. What came out of that situation was an understanding that the highway people would work more closely with the Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management on future projects. The role of the IKC on the SR 37 project was to assist the HEC and Protect Our Woods in their complaint. The case was handled before an Administrative Law Judge and was more of a cooperative discussion than lawyers arguing in a courtroom. The outcome was positive and both sides claimed victory.

Dunlap said that with I-69, there was a lot of anticipation that there would be lawsuits so the company in charge has gone way beyond what they were required to do as far as the impact to bats. They have hired contractors who are experts in bat study, one of whom is Virgil Brack. Dunlap said that there are lots of opinions as to the amount of damage that could be caused to both summer and winter bat habitat, but he thinks that they will do whatever mitigation is needed because they want to build this road.

Someone asked if Bat Conservation International could be involved. Vernier said that BCI didn't come up during his conversation with the ELPC lawyer. Dunlap said that if BCI were involved it would probably be in the role of expert witness. Vernier said that anyway one looks at this, it's going to have a major negative impact on karst, but if we as an organization have nothing to contribute other than to say that we think it's a bad idea, we probably wouldn't be of much benefit to the HEC. Dunlap said that we have a responsibility to be involved, but we don't have the expertise to fill the role that they expect us to fill. We can offer opinions, but we don't have the credentials to back up our opinions.

Lewis offered the observation that the Endangered Species Act doesn't seem to carry much weight these days. Haun said that as an organization, we really don't have much to offer other than our opinions. Winner agreed saying that we are more of a grassroots organization. He doesn't think we can sign on as a plaintiff because we don't have enough to offer. Vernier said that we can be an interested party, possibly signing a statement saying that we are interested in the Indiana bat and that we believe that the highway will be detrimental to the Indiana bat. Sollman said that he doesn't know enough to have an opinion. As an organization, we have not taken a position. We need to find out a lot more information, but where do we get it?

Vernier said we can talk to the ELPC attorney but that will be one sided. About all we can do is offer our opinion that the new terrain I-69 will have an impact on the bats. Noe said that the IKC has never been known as an advocacy organization. We're more like TNC. We buy property. We would rather spend money on land than lawsuits but we can't buy the I-69 route so the next best thing we can do is let them know what we think.

Vernier said that we know that the route through the karst areas is not the best route and that karst and bats will be impacted, but for now we can give our opinion, but that's about all we can do. We don't understand the ramifications of signing on to this lawsuit. Being an "interested party" could be perceived by some to be the same as being a plaintiff.

Haun moved that the IKC, as an organization, have nothing to do with this lawsuit. The motion died for lack of a second.

Dunlap said that we've been discussing this issue for a while with no motion on the floor and when we got a motion, it died. It appears that we are not ready to take a stand either for or against the lawsuit. He said that as an individual, he is willing to speak to anyone concerning bat hibernacula because he has knowledge and opinions in that area. Vernier said that he wasn't looking for a motion because we really don't know enough about this to say yea or nay on it. We can say that we are still evaluating the matter and at that point, the ball is in their court. They need to convince us to sign on. If we decide to join in, he thinks that we would need an attorney because this is a serious matter and we have no idea of what the downside could be. We should probably be thinking more about what sort of mitigation would be best for the bats if the road is built as planned. Vernier said that at this point, with no motion on the floor, the action will be that he will talk to lawyer Fisk of the ELPC when he calls and will tell him that we are not ready to sign on as a plaintiff or anything else. He will give him BCI contact information and Dunlap's contact information. Anyone else who has anything to say is welcome to contribute their knowledge and opinions.

Wayne Cave Preserve

Sollman reported on today's activities. The driveway gravel that was delivered earlier in the week was spread out and graded. The stump and dirt piles around the perimeter of the clearing at the top of the hill were graded down and spread out. A lot of the logs and sticks were thrown on the big pile in the center of the clearing to dry out and hopefully get burned up by campers. Trash was picked up along the county road and weeds were mowed down. The driveway is in great shape now. Vernier said that we should probably inspect the property for invasive plants sometime.

Buddha Cave Preserve

Cesnik reported that on April 29, 500 trees were planted on a cloudy and cool day by a good crew of 12-15 volunteers. Some mowing was also done. He has plans to do some more multiflora rose eradication and also wants to work on the kiosk.

Sullivan Cave Preserve

Dunlap reported that replacement trees were planted and weed treatment was done. Mowing was done once so far this year. There has been no progress on the outhouse, but there may be some action on that very soon. Gravel for the driveway and parking area was delivered. The truckload of topsoil for the camping area was not delivered. Heavy rain in the area made it impossible for the truck to dump the dirt where it was needed so the order was cancelled. The gravel will be graded tomorrow and also a large tree that fell down will be cut up for firewood.

Vandeventer reported that cave trips continue to be popular. Starting tomorrow, there will be two locks on the road gate. The chain will have a key lock and a combination lock in series so that either one can be unlocked to open the gate. The cave will continue to be secured by a key lock only.

Orangeville Rise

Noe reported that the plate on the stone marker is no longer loose. Carita Noe said that the car across the street from the rise with the tree growing through it is gone. She didn't know if the tree was still there.

Indian Creek Conservation Easement

No report.

Bat Conservation International Project

Vernier reported that he and Sue went to the training session and they now know what a roost stain looks like. Salisa Lewis was more involved with the training and she reported that they checked out thirteen caves and she too has a better understanding of bat roost stains. BCI has tentative plans to do more work in Indiana but no dates are set. Vernier said that he has had no further conversation with anyone from BCI. We don't know what the outcome of all this is or if any recommendations about closing caves or modifying entrances will be forthcoming. After a brief discussion, Vernier said we'll just wait and see if we get any feedback from BCI and if we don't hear from them in a year or so, we'll ask them what's going on.

Dunlap said that they will have to give a report to the foundation that sponsored the research and we should be able to get a copy of that report.

Beck's Mill

Ingle reported that he did not make it to the latest meeting. He said that the group is somewhat disorganized. They are in the process of trying to set up an e-mail data base so that they can get regular meeting notices out. He said that he provided an e-mail address but still didn't get a meeting notice. They are trying some small scale fund raising. They are in contact with TNC about trying to increase their acreage. Plans include putting in interpretive hiking trails. They have done a lot of work in the immediate vicinity of the mill such as brush clearing and the site looks a lot better. Ingle said that he has made some suggestions such as applying for grants. They are just getting started and he will continue to keep in contact with them to see what develops. Vernier asked if they were doing anything as far as the caves. Ingle said that they are working strictly on the mill right now. They need to raise about \$50,000 for emergency maintenance to the mill just to keep the building together until they raise the funds to properly rebuild and restore it.

Richard Blenz Nature Conservancy/Buckner Cave

Vernier said that Dave Everton is requesting that we provide the RBNC with an IKC membership list in order to notify members of upcoming RBNC workdays. Dunlap said that he has concerns about control of our membership list. He said that about 75% of IKC members have provided e-mail addresses and he has been very conservative about sending out e-mails to the whole membership, usually limiting it to quarterly meeting announcements. He has indicated to Everton that when he sends e-mails about IKC business, he would include information concerning Buckner Cave workdays but he doesn't want to send out special e-mails just for RBNC projects. Dunlap said that he doesn't think that Everton has a problem with that. He just wants the IKC to help promote the activities of the RBNC because our membership covers a large area with members in every grotto in Indiana and many in other states as well.

Winner said that interested people can contact the RBNC and ask to be included on their e-mail list. Sollman said that he sees no problem with listing workday dates in the IKC Update or running articles about the Buckner project. Dunlap said that Everton asked if the IKC would want to sponsor a workday at the RBNC, thinking perhaps that we could get more people to show up. An IKC workday at the Buckner project is a possibility although Dunlap acknowledged that some on the IKC Board have mixed feelings about sand blasting.

Vernier said that he's not sure that they have totally addressed the safety issues surrounding the sand blasting techniques being used to clean graffiti in the cave. He's been told that it's just sand but the bags are covered with hazard warning labels. He said that when he was there, the operators of the equipment were wearing respirators, but there were many people who were not. Another concern is that the blasting media remains in the cave.

Dunlap said that he also has mixed feelings about the methods used, but on the other hand, they're doing something positive and we should support them, but he doesn't think we can do much beyond promoting the workdays and helping out as individual volunteers. Vernier wondered if a Shop Vac could be used in the cave to get rid of most of the blasting media. Carita Noe said that silica inhalation can result in very serious illness and she thought that anyone working around the work site needed a respirator.

Dunlap said that at the last meeting we had a motion passed to have the IKC join the RBNC as an institutional member. They do not have such a membership category but they gratefully accepted our \$25.00 check anyway.

Vandeventer reported that Anmar Mirza recently attended a Central Indiana Grotto meeting and talked about the work going on at Buckner. Dunlap said that it was an excellent presentation and covered other aspects of the work of the RBNC in addition to the sand blasting. Anmar may be willing to present the program to other grottoes to drum up interest.

Vernier said that the work going on at Buckner Cave is definitely positive and while we may have questions about some of the methods being used, the interest and involvement that is being generated is good. Buckner Cave has acquired a terrible reputation over the years and yet it is a very nice cave. It's never going to be what it once was, but it is still a great recreational cave.

Spelloggers

Vernier reported that we have an order from the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources for twenty spelloggers. He said that they are being assembled in his basement and hopefully we'll make a little money on them.

Items from the Floor

Haun asked if the Evansville Grotto is still planning to hold a spaghetti supper at the 2007 NSS Convention and if not, is the IKC interested in doing it? Sue Vernier said that it looks as though the Evansville Grotto will not be putting on the supper. Dunlap said that another possibility would be to have a local organization put on a dinner of some kind with the IKC promoting the event and selling tickets and keeping a dollar per ticket for our work. No action was taken.

Next Meeting

Vernier said that the next meeting is usually held in conjunction with the CIG annual camping and cookout weekend at Rea's quarry and that date is September 23. Ingle suggested having the fall meeting and traditional cookout at the RBNC in conjunction with one of their workdays. Vernier thought that was a good idea but he would rather not try to have a business meeting and cookout after a day of sand blasting cave walls or other speleo-drudgery. We could, however, host a cookout or pot luck at some other time, possibly in conjunction with a planned work day. This was discussed briefly, but no action was taken.

The next meeting will be Saturday, September 23, 2007 at Tom Rea's place near Cloverdale. The meeting will start at 1:00 PM EDT. Following the meeting, the annual pot luck supper, cookout, and dessert contest will be held. This is being held in conjunction with the annual CIG picnic and campout.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Bob Sergesketter, Secretary