

Western Cave Conservancy

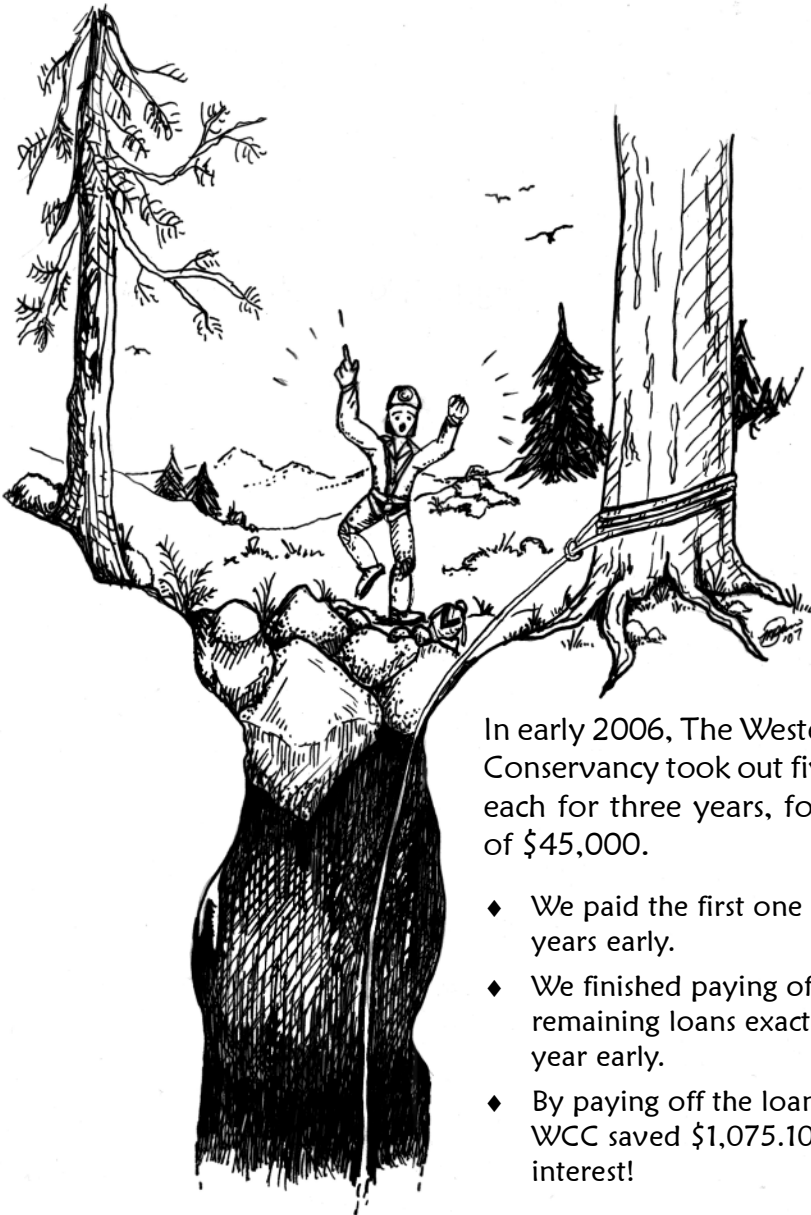
Protecting the West's Last Frontier

Vol 4 No 2

Fall/Winter 2007

Rippled Cave All Paid Off!

WE'RE OUT OF THE HOLE!



In early 2006, The Western Cave Conservancy took out five loans, each for three years, for a total of \$45,000.

- ◆ We paid the first one off two years early.
- ◆ We finished paying off the remaining loans exactly one year early.
- ◆ By paying off the loans early, WCC saved \$1,075.10 in interest!

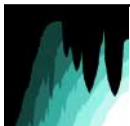
Photo: Bill Frantz



WCC Treasurer Martin Haye and President Marianne Russo are all smiles as Marianne holds up the final loan payment check. The Weller Natural Preserve Property is now completely paid off.

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by the
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Conservancy

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The Western Cave Conservancy (WCC) is a California public benefit corporation and is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to WCC are tax-deductible.

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Western Cave Conservancy

Weller Natural Preserve—Work Party Season is Here!

by Marianne Russo, Weller Preserve Manager

Now that the weather has cooled down and the rains have returned, we are gearing up to return to the preserve for our second season of work. Director Jerry Johnson and I visited the Amador County offices and the preserve at the end of November to renew our burn permit, pay property taxes, and start planning this season's tasks. We inspected the areas where we left off work last spring and talked about what should be done next. There is still a lot of work to do, and there should be plenty of opportunities to join in over the coming months!

Preserve Improvement goals for 2008:

- ◆ Clear, survey, and mark the northern boundary of the parcel.
- ◆ Finish clearing out dead manzanita and thin live growth on the south-facing slope near the cave and in another zone at the northwest property corner. (Cut material will be burned.)
- ◆ Pull out or spray the remaining Scotch Broom in the two known infestation zones (monitor for regrowth regularly).
- ◆ Continue creation of a fire-safe zone (brush clearing, tree trimming) immediately adjacent to the road.
- ◆ Scout and mark a loop trail through the northern property section.
- ◆ Partially demolish the existing building to remodel it into a storage shed for tools, water, and a portable toilet kit.

With luck, we may be able to start the remodel of the building this summer. We hope to publish our plans in the next newsletter. It will be a much smaller building, but will give us a good weather tight place to store equipment and will include a nice covered patio area where folks can get out of the rain to eat lunch or organize gear.

We would love to have more people get involved to help us reach these goals. It is beautiful up there, the work is great exercise, and we have a lot of fun. Afterwards, we usually reward ourselves with a good Chinese or Mexican dinner! If this sounds good to you, please contact our Volunteer Coordinators and get on the list. Sherry and Dale will email announcements of workdays and provide other information.

To get involved contact:

Sherry and Dale Hartwig, WCC Volunteer Coordinators
(209) 533-1997
email: n2caves@mlode.com
or vol@westerncaves.org

You can also contact me for general questions or information:

Marianne Russo
(916) 663-2571
mrusso@westerncaves.org

Announcing the New WCC Advisory Board

At the 2007 spring board meeting, the directors voted their approval of a motion to create a new category of conservancy volunteer, the Advisory Board Member. The purpose of this board is to both draw in volunteers with special expertise and/or abundant enthusiasm and as a way to keep former directors who wish to continue serving in a lesser capacity. We anticipate that some persons on this board will be likely candidates for open positions on the Board of Directors. The director of Human Resources will solicit and put forth nominations for the Advisory Board to the Board of Directors, who will review and vote on them. Terms on the Advisory Board will last two years. Reappointments can be approved multiple times if 1) the appointee desires reappointment and 2) he or she has made contributions consistent with the Board of Director's expectations.

The benefits the WCC will derive from this new board will be more engaged volunteers and, we hope, some good future Directors. The benefits Advisory Board members will receive are a closer relationship with the Board of Directors and first-hand knowledge of what goes on at the quarterly board meetings. Another email

list will be added to our existing fleet and members will receive meeting agendas and the resulting minutes. They will be eligible to attend any of the board meetings if they wish, but no meeting attendance is required. The Advisory Board will not function as a committee or have any meetings; it will be a collection of individuals who do substantial or highly specialized volunteer work for the conservancy on a variety of levels.

Although we have several names in mind already, we would love to hear suggestions from our members. If you are interested in getting more involved in the WCC or know someone who would be a good fit, don't hesitate to contact us. We are interested in people with special expertise (attorneys, real estate professionals, insurance agents, webmasters, etc) and folks with lots of energy, enthusiasm, and a willingness to get the job done! Jerry Johnson is the newly elected Director of Human Resources, and during the coming quarter he will be assuming these duties from Marianne Russo, the current Director. Please feel free to contact either one of them with your nomination suggestions or questions about the Advisory Board.



Photo: Kip Baumann

Letter from the President

Seasons Greetings!

As another year draws to a close, I am reflecting on all that our fledgling conservancy has accomplished in just over five short years. For many of us it seems like it has taken forever to reach some goals, whether it was to finally purchase the Weller Natural Preserve or to reach an agreement with the Forest Service for the management of Windeler Cave. When I sat down this morning to write this letter I reached for my records on our first board meeting, which to my amazement took place in September of 2002. It feels like it has been so much longer! I realized we are usually so focused on goals and tasks that need to be accomplished that we overlook all the great things we have done. So today I am going to

look back at some of these, giving all the individuals who have volunteered so much of their time and energy a big pat on the back.

Creating a Conservancy: NOT a small task. The hoops to jump through and the red tape to wrestle with are enough to discourage all but the most stalwart! Once you finally have a real, federally recognized 501(c)3 tax-exempt charity, then comes all the rest of the work to develop a functioning organization that maintains the necessary accounting and business records required by law. We also have a responsibility to our supporters to maintain accurate records of all the decisions and activities supported by their donations. We have done a commendable job achieving these goals, and improvements are constantly underway. Elsewhere in this newsletter is an introduction to our new Advisory Board, which reflects our newest effort to bring volunteers in closer to the central activities of the conservancy.

Weller Natural Preserve: It has already been over a year and a half since the purchase of Rippled Cave and the surrounding 15 acres was culminated. In that short time much has been accomplished. The cave has been reopened to NSS grotto trips, a draft management plan has been prepared, trash has been removed from the property, the old building has been cleaned up and secured for short-term use, the brush-choked western boundary has been cleared and marked, at least 85% of the Scotch Broom has been eliminated, and some of the high-fire-risk stands of manzanita to the west and south of the cave have been significantly thinned. During the many days that volunteers spent working at the preserve last winter and spring we had the opportunity to meet and get to know most of our neighbors. These were all positive interactions and I believe that we have become truly welcome in the neighborhood.

Windeler Cave: Just like the purchase of Rippled Cave, this process seems to be taking forever, and I know some folks are frustrated and getting impatient. But...the MOU with the Forest was *finally* signed at the beginning of this year. A working relationship with Forest Service personnel has been established, a pot of money is ready for necessary gate and security costs, and work on gate fabrication is getting started. I have a feeling that a year or so from now we will have all these delays behind us and will be tackling the day-to-day management of this special cave.

Other Projects: A little over a year ago we contributed financial assistance to the Timpanogos Grotto in Utah for the gating of Nutty Putty Cave. This was a good cause and a great example of "friend raising!"

Fundraising: All I can say is, "Wow!" All the loans for Rippled Cave have been paid off now, a year early no less, saving the WCC a significant amount of money in interest. We already have \$3500.00 in the Windeler Cave Fund and we are starting to rebuild our reserve. I can't say thank you enough!

News, Communication and Public Relations: Our newsletter has been of consistently of high quality and is available both in hard copy and an electronic version. Our website is well designed and includes lots of useful information, along with back-issues of the newsletter and other conservancy documents. We have also been very successful at being a presence at NSS regional and national events (conventions, regionals, speleo-ed seminars, and conservancy forums) where we have given presentations, put on fundraising dinners, networked, learned and listened. We have also, on numerous occasions, been a conduit for urgent information regarding threats to caves in the West.

Frankly, I think it's an impressive list, and I'm sure I've forgotten many good things. It is all the more impressive when you remember that ALL of this has been done with volunteer effort, by people who fit this work in around their jobs, families, caving and the rest of their everyday lives. It serves to make a strong case that the volunteers and supporters of the Western Cave Conservancy have every reason to feel proud of their efforts during the last five short years. Just imagine what the next five years may bring....

Have a wonderful holiday season and don't forget to generously renew your membership in the WCC!

Marianne Russo
President, Western Cave Conservancy

THE WCC GOES TO PINNACLES

At the 2007 Western Regional

On the last weekend of October, the San Francisco Bay Chapter of the NSS hosted this year's Regional Meeting at Pinnacles National Monument in San Benito County, California. It was a lovely weekend; fine fall weather, great company, spectacular landscapes, and even *caving*! Saturday's activities in camp included presentations, two of which were given by WCC staff. President Marianne Russo updated people on WCC projects like the Weller Preserve and Windeler, while Director of Research, Rolf Aalbu, presented the current draft of the cave assessment selection criteria for discussion and comment. These criteria will be used to develop an inventory form that can be used to evaluate and rank caves. They can ultimately be used on inventory projects as well as for giving the conservancy guidance when making decisions about future acquisitions.

On Saturday evening, the attendees enjoyed a wonderful dinner prepared by WCC volunteers. The menu included several different kinds of chili, cornbread, salad, chips, salsa and a scrumptious selection of decadent desserts. The dinner tickets were \$20.00 and almost everyone who attended the event joined in. Danica Schachner, event registrar, arranged a very special bonus for the WCC and everyone attending the dinner: a \$100.00 gift certificate from R.E.I., good for merchandise at any one of their outlets! Attendees wrote their names on the backs of their dinner tickets and after everyone was seated, I drew the winning name out of a hat. The WCC raised \$1171.00 after expenses from this effort. A huge THANK YOU goes to Chef Eileen Belan, Saladmaster Bill Papke, and all the other cooks, assistants, facilitators, and clean-up crewmembers. You all did an outstanding job.

Announcing the 2008 Annual Public Meeting of the Western Cave Conservancy

DATE: JAN. 19, 2008
TIME: 1:00-5:30 PM
LOCATION: THE "EVENT CENTER" MEETING ROOM
RALEY'S GROCERY STORE
8870 MADISON AVENUE
FAIR OAKS, CA

Directions: From US 50 about 15 miles east of downtown Sacramento, take the Hazel Avenue exit, head north about 2.5 miles to Madison Avenue. The Raley's will be on your left, facing Madison, in the southwest corner of the Hazel/Madison intersection.

From I-80, take the Madison Avenue East exit (a right turn for Reno-bound lanes and left turn over the freeway for Sacramento-bound). Proceed about 7 miles along Madison to Hazel Avenue. Right before the intersection, turn right into the Raley's parking lot.

The Event Center room is right next to the Pharmacy, which is located on the left-hand side of the store, in the front. There is a Java City on the other side of the store, also in front, for your sipping pleasure.

Everyone is welcome. For questions please call or email Marianne Russo: (916) 663-2571, mrusso@westerncaves.org

CAVE CONSERVATION HERO

EILEEN BELAN

In 2003, when members of the WCC PR Committee were planning activities for the 2003 NSS Convention in Porterville California, one of the fundraising ideas was to do a dinner at the convention. They talked about what that would entail, and soon, Eileen Belan had volunteered to be the organizer of the NSS Convention Wednesday night WCC banquet, an event which netted \$378.56 for the WCC.

Four years and five banquets later, Eileen's Fundraising Dinners have raised a total of \$3764.36 for the Western Cave Conservancy and \$1,343.88 for the Lava Beds Natural History Association.

Now she is retiring from active duty, leaving big Banquet Coordinator shoes for her successor, Marc Hasbrouck, to fill. Eileen, you are a true Cave Conservation Hero!



Eileen during a brief moment of calm at the 2005 Speleo-Ed.