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### TCMA Passages

Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA)

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FALL 2000

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## TCMA and the City of Austin Watershed Preserves MOU

The City of Austin held a bond election in 1998 to purchase lands and conservation easements over the Edwards Aquifer region of Travis and Hays Counties to preserve the water quality. These lands, now called the “watershed preserves” cover a large section of the Edwards Limestone outcrop in southwestern Travis and northern Hays Counties, and contain several known caves. These land purchases were mostly finalized by mid 1999. In early 2000

TCMA and the City of Austin, Water and Waste Water Utility Dept., who manages the “watershed preserves” lands, developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to further investigate and report our findings on the caves and features of these recharge lands. This is an agreement between TCMA and the city that provides for access to these lands for karst investigations and research.

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### TCMA WINS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

In August of this year, TCMA was recognized by the City of Austin for its work with the environment and specifically for its educational outreach to the students of the Austin community. Recognition of TCMA’s efforts in karst education has been a long time in arriving, as we have been involved in karst education for many years. Education efforts go far beyond schools; PO Box 202853, Austin Texas, 78270-2853 presentations have been given to various environmental organizations, the Austin City Council, and the Austin Nature Center extensively uses TCMA’s Whirlpool Cave Preserve as an educational resource.

The TCMA also received the Environmental Education Award from the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District, the state chartered agency responsible for the portion of the Edwards Aquifer that feeds Barton Springs in Austin.

About this time Travis County began a serious campaign to build a section of an Outer Loop-SH45, across the Barton Springs Recharge Zone in southwestern Travis County. The highway has been long planned and the route established would cross portions of the newly purchased watershed preserves lands and adversely affect Flint Ridge Cave, a major recharge cave to Barton Springs. The new highway alignment is immediately adjacent to the Flint Ridge Sinkhole, one of the more important point recharge sites in the county. As a result, TCMA has also been very involved in the activity surrounding the placement of the highway and ROW. Due to an old lawsuit and current politics, it appeared that the TCMA is the only organization actively pursuing the Texas Department of Transportation in an attempt to have the highway bypass Flint Ridge Cave. Current plans call for the highway to be built directly over the cave, despite the federal protection offered the

*See MOU on p. 2*

## View from the Palit

Texas Cave Management Association – What is it, and what is its purpose? Every director, and perhaps every member of TCMA has a slightly different view of TCMA. I believe that the purpose of TCMA is to protect and conserve Texas Caves for the good of the planet and for the use of cavers. Those two interests can sometimes overlap, and sometimes not.

### **Management**

Finding an effective way to manage and conserve caves is a challenge, but possibilities are opening as cave country is gobbled up by urban and suburban development. Caves can be liabilities if poorly managed, but can be assets to communities and to cavers if well managed. Information and education are two key components in developing workable management plans for Texas caves. TCMA can develop effective conservation easements, management plans, and even ownership plans for important caves.

### **Ownership**

Should TCMA purchase caves? That is one of the vital questions that TCMA needs to answer. Are Texas cavers ready to contribute funds to purchase Texas caves? Which caves?

*I ask myself, “Why am I acting-President of TCMA? And do I want to continue in this role?” Caving has been good to me, and I started caving in Texas. By working with TCMA I hope to give back to Texas Caving through the conservation and preservation of caves. Let me know how you think we should proceed, and what role you are willing to play.*

- Linda

## **MOU** *(from p. 1)*

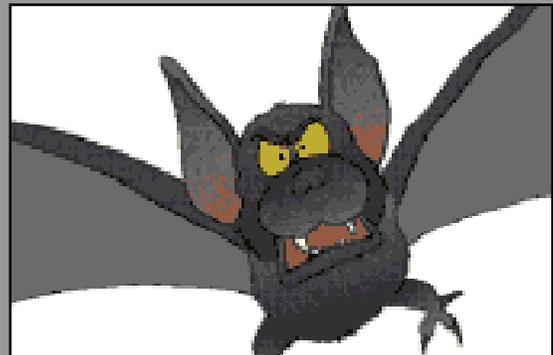
cave through the Balcones Conservation Plan (BCP). The BCP is a joint effort agreement between U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Travis County, and the City of Austin designed to protect several endangered karst invertebrate species and other “species of concern”. TCMA made the only presentation concerning the environmental aspects of the proposed highway at the TxDot Commission meeting in the summer of 1999. TCMA has also met with the city and county numerous times regarding the cave and karst features in the projected highway path. Meetings continue well into 2000 with TCMA taking the lead in protecting Flint Ridge Cave.

Our MOU with the city has allowed the TCMA to pursue several projects on the “watershed preserve lands.” To date we have completed a report on the Reavley Tract, which covers some 99 acres and we have almost finished the report on the Tabor Tract, 300 acres, and we are currently working on the J-17 Tract, which is about 260 acres of karst. In addition to all of this activity we are conducting hydrologic studies in Flint Ridge Cave.

**Don't be a Speleoscrooge!**

If you don't join the TCMA, the ghosts of lost and neglected caves will haunt your every cave trip. Your ascenders won't ascend, your jumars won't jumar, your prusiks won't prusik, and you'll be stuck under a heavy drip in the bottom of a muddy pit. **YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!**

Send in your dues today.



## Village of Western Oaks Karst Park

In 1998, TCMA, the City of Austin (COA), Lumberman's Investment Corporation (LIC), and the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District (BSEACD), began a series of meetings to establish a karst preserve in the newest section of the Lumberman's development in south Austin. The preserve is approximately 18 acres, containing 5 caves, a creek tributary, and a sinkhole.

These caves are primarily to be utilized for biology and water quality purposes. In addition, the karst preserve is to be used for educational purposes. Negotiations have plodded along and after many rounds of meetings and discussions, the "interim" contract was finally signed in August 2000. What does this mean to TCMA? During the "interim" period of construction TCMA is responsible for the maintenance of the caves and features and we will continue our biological monitoring. The actual details and time schedules have not been established as much time and effort went toward getting LIC to sign the agreement to set this area aside as a preserve.

TCMA has had a long established relationship w/LIC at the Marigold Cave Preserve in the Buttercup Creek subdivision in Williamson County, north of Austin. Since the late 1980s TCMA has managed caves in this Cedar Park subdivision. Thankfully this relationship is what brought TCMA to the forefront when the cave and karst issues in the Village of Western Oaks were first identified.



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    *Editor: Joe Mitchell*

## Buttercup Creek Management Contract and the Marigold Preserve

For several years the TCMA, through Mike Warton, has had a contract to manage the Marigold Cave Preserve for Lumberman's Investment Corp (LIC) the developer of the Buttercup Creek Subdivision. When Marigold Cave was discovered the Buttercup Creek Development was well underway and houses were under construction near the cave. When endangered species were discovered in the cave, Mike Warton recommended a karst preserve be established to include the three lots that contained the cave, and that the preserve be managed by the TCMA.

LIC for the Buttercup Creek Subdivision had obtained 10(a) permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to develop on the karst and in bird habitat. Under this permit, all endangered species caves found were required to be protected and the Marigold Cave Preserve was part of that process.

## Whirlpool Cave Preserve

1999 proved to be another successful year for the Whirlpool Cave Preserve. Some 850 individuals visited Whirlpool; many of those were school kids involved with summer camp programs around the state.

The Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer District used Whirlpool Cave as one of the sites for dye trace testing in order to establish the connection between Whirlpool Cave and Barton Springs, a major recreational spring and home of the endangered Barton Springs Salamander. Barton Springs is located approximately 6 miles north of Whirlpool and the dye was detected at the springs within 72 hours.

TCMA members from Houston, along with some local Austin cavers began the re-mapping of Whirlpool Cave. Robin Barber heads up the cast of characters as project leader. Due to the need to finish her dissertation in physics, the project was temporarily put on hold but will start up again before the end of 2000.

Our special thanks Nico Hauwert former manager of Whirlpool Cave Preserve. Nico served as manager of the preserve since 1996 and provided a very valuable service to the TCMA as manager, educator, facilitator of all the preserve needs. Nico resigned from his position as manager to pursue his PhD in Hydrogeology at the University of Texas and we congratulate him on becoming a first time parent earlier this summer. Julie Jenkins succeeds Nico as manager of the preserve.

## TEXAS CAVE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

### Edited Meeting Notes

**Meeting Date: May 6, 2000 Location: John Knox Ranch**

The TCMA Board of Directors Meeting was held in conjunction with the TSA Spring 2000 Convention at the John Knox Presbyterian Summer Camp.

#### Officer/Director Terms and Current Status

Those in attendance who were directors and agreed to continue as directors were made directors. The officers who were not directors were made directors. The by-laws stipulate nine (9) directors. There were eight (8) directors appointed with a ninth position vacant. Staggered terms were assigned based on longevity of membership. The vacant position, when filled, will have a term of one (1) year. The terms are effective January 1, 2000 and run for 1, 2 or 3 years. The directors/officers and their terms are as follows:

#### Treasurer Appointed

Sue Schindel was appointed Treasurer. With her extensive involvement in the caving community, her history with non-profits, and with her experience in keeping the books for the family caving supply business, the Board welcomes Sue as a new member and an officer. Sue will serve for one (1) year at the discretion of the Board. The previous treasurer, Bruce Anderson, sent the financial records to Jay Jordan. The Board assumes that Jay will be in contact with Sue to transfer the records. The Board noted the fine job that Bruce did as Treasurer and thanks him for all his hard work.

#### Renewal Date of Annual Membership

As a temporary fix, the membership year will continue being based on a calendar year. The membership for a person joining in October or later will be for the coming calendar year. Their voting rights will begin at the time they join. The membership for a person joining before October will be for the current calendar year.

#### Clarification of Classes of Membership and Dues

The classes of membership as listed in the by-laws were reviewed and explained. The amount of dues for each class was either continued as in Regular and Family or newly defined and set as in Student (now Associate), Corporate and Institutional. The classes of membership and amount of dues are as follows:

1. Regular           \$15.00,
2. Family           \$22.50
3. Associate       \$10.00

Note: The category formerly called Student on the membership form with dues of \$5.00 is now renamed Associate as per the by-laws. The requirements for this class of membership are a student and 21 years of age or less. Associate is now students and "other". "Other" will be defined later.

#### Advisory Board

Ron Ralph will research the present status of the members of the advisory board. He will E-mail to the board the list of members of the advisory board with recommendations for action.

#### President Pro Tem

Linda Palit was appointed president pro tem and will assume all the duties and have all the authority of the president until the October 2000 TCMA meeting at which time the board will discuss the position of president.

#### General Cave Management

Throughout the meeting several statements regarding cave management were made. Following is a summary of some of them:

- Develop cave management plans for all caves being managed by TCMA.
- Each cave will have a different management plan depending on what the cave is being managed for recreation, education, scientific study, protection of species, etc.

<b>Directors/Officers Attending:</b>
Carl Ponebshek (Director)
Ron Ralph (Director)
Dan Hogenauer (Director)
Bill Russell (Director)
Linda Palit (Director)
Julie Jenkins (Vice President)
Bob Burnett (Secretary)
<b>Directors/Officers Absent:</b>
Jay Jordan (Director & President)
<b>Noted Attendees:</b>
Sue Schindel
Susan Souby (taking Minutes for Bob Burnett)

Director/Officer	Term of Office
Carl Ponebshek (Director)	1 year Jan 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2000
Ron Ralph (Director)	1 year Jan 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2000
Vacant (Director)	1 year
Dan Hogenauer (Director)	2 years Jan 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2001
Bill Russell (Director)	2 years Jan 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2001
Jay Jordan (President & Director)	2 years Jan 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2001
Linda Palit (Director)	3 years Jan 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2002
Julie Jenkins (Vice President & Director)	3 years Jan 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2002
Bob Burnett (Secretary & Director)	3 years Jan 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2002

