

NSS Vertical Section Annual Business Meeting (Draft 2)

June 16th, 2022

Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, South Dakota

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 9:24 am. 13 people signed the attendance sheet but there were more people there that apparently did not sign in. There was a quorum present.
2. **Officers Reports.**
 - A. **Chairman's Report:** Gene Harrison. Gene was unable to attend the convention this year due to a last minute work commitment. Vice-Chair John Bowling ran the meeting and read this message from Gene.

To our Vertical Section Members...

I have been grateful and humbled for the honor and privilege of leading the NSS Vertical Section for the last four years.

The first two years we in the VS made significant progress in energizing our VS Family and improving our processes and performances.

Examples include

- Successful NSS conferences including NSS2019,
- Upgraded VS Convention and Design Guides to ensure future success
- Initiation and development of the Unified NSS Convention Liability Releases
- First scientific testing and engineering analyses of Roof Truss Loading during Contests and many others

Unfortunately, two years ago we all were beset with multiple adverse factors, including pandemic, unfamiliar remote meetings (Zoom), unintentional errors by many folk, and overall disruption of our traditional processes. It has been a tough period for all, on many levels....

Going forward, the VS will retain the World Famous Climbing Contests and other Vertical Events, and innovation and development of leading edge vertical tech and procedures.

The New Vertical Training Commission will be enhancing our NSS vertical training efforts, based on our VS quarter century of development.

The VS will always remain strong, as our collective strength of our positive and constructive VS Members, with have worked together for the last half century to share, learn, discover, coach and mentor, and all for the benefit not for themselves or their own glory, but clearly for the benefit of all VS and NSS and our Caving Community.

And when you select your next leadership, Please remember to seek those individuals who have actually demonstrated years of personal participation in, and contributions to, the VS and especially our Vertical Events at Conventions. Please choose wisely....

I sincerely wish us all well in the future, and y'all come to Elkins for NSS02023!

Sincerely,
Gene :)

- B. Vice Chair Report:** John Bowling. It's been a rough couple of years but it is good to see everyone in person at a convention again. There has been a lot of political annoyance within the Vertical Section. You can read more on that in the Executive Committee meeting minutes (available online). The big point of discussion today will be what the future of the Vertical Section looks like going forward.
 - C. Secretary's Report:** Ray Sira. We have 317 members on the membership list but that is only because we have not removed anyone in the last 2 years due to there not being an in-person convention. We have 149 people whose membership has already expired and another 47 due to expire this year. If none of these people renew their membership it would give us only 121 members. A number of these people were added to the list after attending the vertical workshop. I no longer automatically add the workshop participants to the membership list, but send them an invitation to join the section. We switched from a Yahoo Group to a Google Group this year for sending messages to our membership. When adding people to the Google Group, there were a few members who I could not find email addresses for. All meeting minutes are now on a Google Docs page and the VS website under the "Board Members" heading.
 - D. Treasurer's Report:** Ray Sira. We have a total of \$7,634.78. This does not include the amount in the symbolic items account. There was no income in the last year. Expenses were personal property tax for the VS equipment trailer of \$12.14. A 300 foot measuring tape for \$20.00, and Sharpies and other miscellaneous supplies for \$18.50.
 - E. Member At-Large:** Rachel Saker. Arrived later. No report.
 - F. Member At-Large:** Mike Rusin. Was unable to attend the convention. No report.
3. Committee Reports.
- A. Website Coordinator:** Gary Bush. Has not received anything to put into a new Nylon Highway. Please submit any articles you may have to Gary for publication in the online Nylon Highway. The website has been updated with all of the past meeting minutes on a separate page on the website. The NSS is changing their web page and Gary is working with them.
 - B. Contest:** Ray Sira. The contest participation was better than he expected. We had 46 separate climbs by 35 individuals. Only 2 ropewalker climbs and 2 knot climbs (by John Bowling). The rest were all Frog systems. 12-year-old Aven Burn set a new age group record in the 120 meter sit-stand category. Awards will be handed out after this meeting. There were times when we could have used more help running things and I expect there will be more participation at next year's convention in West Virginia.

- C. **Workshop:** Kurt Waldron. Very low attendance this year. There were only 8 or 9 participants and only enough instructors for 1 at each station but we made it work.
 - D. **Rebelay Workshop:** Gary Bush. 22 people ran through the course. Some people went through multiple times. Gary is looking for someone to take over running the Rebelay Workshop.
 - E. **By-Laws:** Bill Boehle. There were a couple of tweaks made that were recommended by the NSS General Council and the BOG. Mostly having to do with the code of conduct. We added a section to our by-laws referring to the NSS code of conduct. A couple of more minor changes were recommended by the NSS General Council that will be looked into in the coming year. Mostly just changes to how things are worded.
 - F. **Symbolic Items:** Crista Hay. Crista was unable to make it to convention. Bill is working with On Rope 1 on an agreement to have them sell our symbolic items. Bill will retrieve and inventory the items and deliver them to On Rope 1. The symbolic items checking account will then be closed and the money deposited to the regular Vertical Section checking account.
 - G. **Equipment:** Ray Sira. We added 12 each 6 foot and 12 foot rigging slings for rigging all of the contest and workshop ropes. There have been some suggestions on equipment that should be added to the workshop climbing systems. The executive committee will look into it. Ray will probably be taking the trailer to the next two conventions.
 - H. **Awards:** Currently unfilled. If you know of someone who would be interested, please let us know. We have been without a chair for this committee for some time.
 - I. **Outreach:** Currently unfilled. No report. Rachel is not present but would probably object to being considered a member of the Outreach Committee.
 - J. **2023 West Virginia Convention Liaison:** Gene has been in contact with the convention staff. Ray will also contact them and see if he can look at the facilities during OTR.
 - K. **Education Coordinator:** Hazel Barton. Hazel is at another meeting, but should be here soon. Ron Miller, the director of the Vertical Training Commission, will be giving a talk during the Vertical Session on Developing a National Vertical Training Program for U.S. Cavers.
4. **Old Business.**
- A. Bill Boehle made a motion to accept the minutes from the 2021 business meeting as published with 1 spelling change. John Bowling seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous consent.
5. **New Business.**
- A. **Bruce Smith** asked what has happened to the Nylon Highway. It was not included in the agenda. He stated this is overtly missing. Gary Bush said that the Nylon Highway Editor position now falls under the Website Coordinator position, since we no longer publish a printed version of the Nylon Highway. Tim White no longer had the time to continue being the Nylon Highway Editor. Bruce and Gary agree that we need someone actively seeking out articles for publication. Nobody has been willing to step forward. John DeRoo mentioned that the Communication and Electronics section has the same problem. They amended their by-laws to eliminate the Editor position. They have not found a solution either. Bruce also mentioned how Gary Storricks has resigned his membership in the Vertical Section, because of the political problems over the last couple of years.

- B. Hazel Barton** was now in attendance and deferred her Education Committee report to Ron Miller, who will speak about the Vertical Training Commission during the Vertical Session. She wants to make sure that we can integrate the efforts of the Vertical Section seamlessly into the VTC. The VTC clearly recognizes the knowledgebase, expertise and experience of the Vertical Section and wants to find a way that is synergistic, that we can both benefit from the development of the VTC. The role the Vertical Section plays at the Conventions will be a critical role to that.
- C. Kurt Waldron** mentioned that Rachel Saker had suggested making some changes to the Frog systems we have. We need some seat harnesses that are appropriate, that people can use during training, because some people do not have an appropriate Frog harness. We need to know in advance how many people will be attending the workshop. We did not know that this year. He had to beat the bushes this year to find people to help with the workshop. He is going to look into working with the VTC for people to help with the workshop. Gary made a **motion**: The Vertical Section acquires 2 Frog harnesses (1 standard & 1 Large). John Bowling seconded the motion. Motion was approved by acclamation.

10:00 am - The meeting was suspended at this time for the Vertical Session.

6. Vertical Session Presentations:

- A. Ron Miller:** NSS Vertical Training Commission: Developing a National Vertical Training Program.
- B. Reilly Blackwell:** Educational Factors in American Vertical Caving Incidents, 2000-2020.
- C. Kurt Waldron:** A Self Belay Climbing System.

11:10 am - The business meeting continued.

- 7. General Discussion** - Marty Reams commented that she is looking forward to talking to the VS Board about the rolls of the VTC and the Vertical Section. Kurt Waldron sees the Vertical Training Commission as the group for training vertically competent cavers, the NCRC as the group for teaching complex rigging for rescues and The Vertical Section as being the social front & forum where research and development can occur. Rachel Saker said the Vertical Section needs to exist outside of the NSS conventions and represent all vertical cavers, not just those who can go to the conventions. Gary Bush and Rachel both mentioned the Nylon Highway was a great source of information about new equipment, techniques and ideas. More needs to be done to revive it. Bill Boehle said the by-laws spell out our mission. We may need to look at revising the mission statement in the by-laws. Rachel and Ray Sira want to thank everyone who came out and helped with all of the set up and running the different events. John Bowling would like the Board to look at rearranging when things take place during the convention. Bruce Smith mentioned how John Woods would help people with setting up their gear and we need someone to continue this. Kurt said he would be willing to do this. Rachel mentioned we need to take a look revising what we are teaching and our climbing systems.

8. Elections

- A. Secretary-Treasurer (1-year Term):** Gary Bush nominated Ray Sira. Ray would be willing to continue in the position for one more year, but would really like to find someone else to take over this position. John DeRoo said he would be willing to run for the position. Ray then declined his nomination. With no objections, John was elected by acclamation.
- B. Two “At-Large” Executive Committee Members (2-year terms):** Current executive committee elected members are Gene Harrison (Chairman), John Bowling (Vice Chairman), Rachel Saker (Member At-Large) and Mike Rusin (Member At-Large). Gene and Rachel’s terms are expiring. Gene was not able to be here and did not express any interest in running again. Bill Boehle nominated Amy Bern and John Bowling nominated Rachel Saker. There were no other nominations. With no objections, Amy and Rachel were elected by acclamation.

9. The VS Business Meeting was adjourned at 11:47 am.

Vertical Section Executive Committee Meetings: A brief meeting of the Executive Committee was held on Sunday June 12th, where we discussed the setup and running of the convention vertical events. Mostly we spent the time setting up the ropes and scaffolding.

After the 6/16/2022 Business Meeting, a brief meeting of the elected members of the Vertical Section Executive Committee was held. Present were John Bowling, Rachel Saker, John DeRoo, and Amy Bern. Member-At-Large Mike Rusin was unable to attend the convention. During this meeting the following committee members were appointed:

Chair – John Bowling.

Vice-Chair – Rachel Saker.

Contest Coordinator – Ray Sira.

Vertical Techniques Workshop Coordinator – Kurt Waldron.

Website Coordinator – Gary Bush.

Education Coordinator – Hazel Barton, PhD.

These Appointments, along with Secretary/Treasurer John DeRoo and Members-At-Large Mike Rusin and Amy Bern, are the members of the Vertical Section Executive Committee.