

Underwater Speleology

Journal of the Cave Diving Section of the National Speleological Society

Volume 52, No. 2
Summer 2025

WW26

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*See nsscds.org for full Grand Prize Raffle details. The Grand Prize Raffle is provided courtesy of the NSS-CDS purchased using proceeds from raffle ticket donations. No purchase or contribution necessary. Open to individuals 18 years or older. Void where prohibited.

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Underwater Speleology

Volume 52, Number 2, Summer 2025

features

Positioning the Elements - Tips for Composing Underwater Cave Photos
by Jennifer Dillaman.....6

2025 International Workshop was Biggest, Best Ever
by Barbara Dwyer 21

Welcome to the New Board12

Volunteerism: CDS's Lifeblood
by Fred Stratton.....14

Lifetime Achievement Award: Profile of Lamar and Lee Ann Hires
by Rachael McCarthy.....28

columns, news, and announcements

A Note from the Chair
by Fred Stratton4

Training Update
by Chris Brock16

Yucatán Update
by Robbie Schmittmer19

Milestone Dives and Awards
by Gayle Hall37

2025 Underwater Speleology advertising rates - see page 42

Cover: Behind the Rock on Rock restriction, about 5000 ft back in Devil's. The diver is Josh Dillaman. © Jennifer Dillaman.

A Note from the Chair

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Dear fellow members,

Our bylaws require the chair to deliver an annual “State of the CDS.” I’ll review some highlights of the 2024-2025 Board of Directors’ term and provide an insight into our goals and plans for the 2025-2026 term.

Education: We are pleased to announce a major leap forward for our educational mission. The first NSS-CDS online SCUBA training course is now live! The Full Cave Diver course is available in our online store. Read the full story on Page 16.

Events: The 2025 Winter Workshop (January) and International Cave Diving Conference (May) both were the most successful and best attended in the Section’s history. This was thanks to extensive volunteer efforts, sponsor generosity, member participation, and the draw of world-class speakers.

We outgrew the Hart Springs building and moved the Workshop to the High Springs Civic Center. We upgraded the Conference from the Armory to Rembert Farms in Alachua. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive on both moves.

Finances: We are in a fairly strong financial position. Contributing factors include a refreshed online store with new products, member generosity, successful fundraising efforts for ad hoc purposes, general fundraising during Section events, strict adherence to our budgetary processes, and penny pinching by the Board. Examples of the latter include repurposing two four-foot diver benches that we salvaged from Madison Blue Springs State Park (replaced with eight-foot “CDS Super Benches”) that we cleaned, stained, and installed at Edward’s Springs. Detailed monthly financial reports are attached to our monthly Board of Directors’ meeting minutes, which are available on our website.

Cave Access: The Cave Access Committee has steadily worked over the past year to open Edward’s Spring near Live Oak, FL, to NSS-CDS members. This is a challenging system with high flow and depths in the heliotrox range. For divers with appropriate training and experience, it is a rewarding experience. The process for diving Edward’s is similar to diving Cow Springs: Complete the online waiver, receive the gate code via email, and reply “I am out of the water” to the email once your dive is complete. Enjoy!

To our readers and members: Views represented in *Underwater Speleology* articles are solely the author’s and do not reflect the views of the NSS-CDS Board of Directors or of the Editor.

We advocate freedom of speech and welcome discussion. Feel free to rebut previous articles and/or to submit your own.

The magazine encourages members to submit news, stories, letters, trip and exploration reports, maps, and photos for consideration. Please contact the Editor for publication guidelines and to avoid duplication of work.

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UWS is a membership benefit. Information about membership fees and registration can be found at <https://nsscds.org>.

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NSS-CDS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

by Fred Stratton

Community: The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season was quite active. Helene swept through the Big Bend region and rudely roared through Suwannee County before sweeping inland to Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Diver favorites Madison, Peacock, and Cow required work. Eager, energetic volunteers turned out in numbers. Read more about our great volunteers in the story on Page 14.

Accident Analysis: We lost two members of the cave diving community in Florida in the first quarter of 2025. The Safety Committee has published the event of 01 February 2025. (Available for reading at <https://nsscds.org/accident-analysis/>). The event in April is still under investigation. I've observed a quiet, patient response among the cave diving community in the wake of both incidents. This restraint is admirable and greatly appreciated by law enforcement, investigators, and the affected families.

Recognition: In addition to our annual recognition awards for Volunteerism, Exploration, and Lifetime Achievement, we added a Conservation Award. The section has presented this award periodically in the past. Our members are engaged to the extent that candidates for an annual award are plentiful. Congratulations to all 2025 award recipients..

Going International: We will conduct our first event beyond our borders at the 2026 Winter Workshop in Tulum, Mexico. Seats are limited to 50 so buy your ticket now! Tickets for a Tulum Cave Diving Trip for Two will go on sale soon for \$20 each. (You need not be present to win).

What's in store for the year ahead?

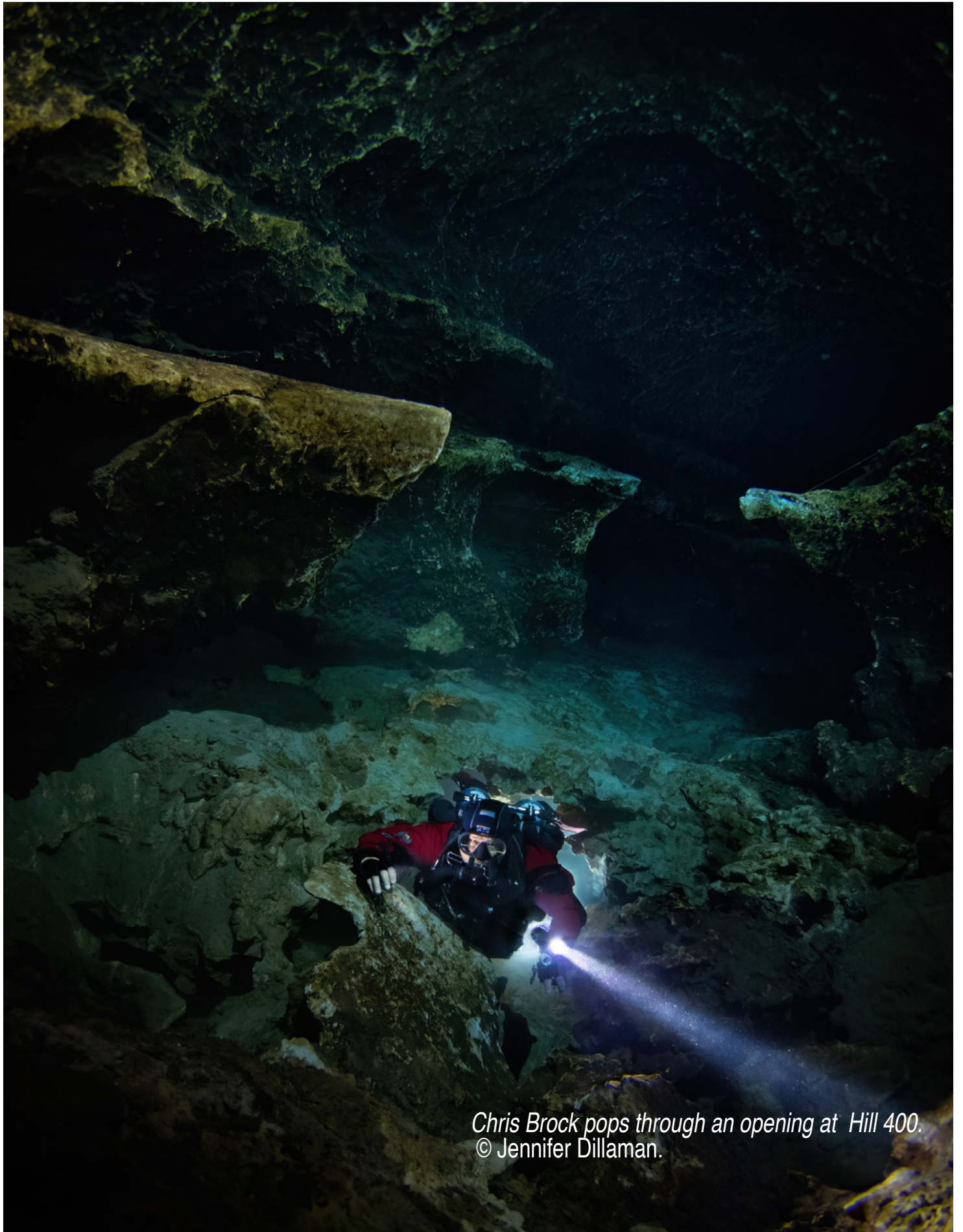
- Details on fundraising and a construction timeline for the Wall of Honor to be built at Cow Springs;
- Details on the 2026 Winter Workshop;
- New courses that the Training Committee is diligently building;
- Community diving events. No cost and no obligation other than to show up, have fun, dive, and enjoy each other's company;
- Volunteer opportunities to make a difference to the Section, in the community, and in the cave systems we treasure. (We have immediate opportunities in fundraising, marketing, and event planning); and
- Infrastructure upgrades and format changes that will make future events more professional and enjoyable.

My fellow directors and I are honored to serve you. Let us know how we are doing.

Go dive. Have fun. Be safe.

Fred Stratton

Fred Stratton is the 2025-202 NSS-CDS Chair. He has been cave diving since 2003.



*Chris Brock pops through an opening at Hill 400.
© Jennifer Dillaman.*

POSITIONING THE ELEMENTS FOR CAVE DIVING PHOTOGRAPHY

Story and photos by
Jennifer Dillaman

The secret to cave diving photography and videography is more than just a good camera. It is a way of seeing the environment around you and positioning all the elements to come together as one.

As cave and technical divers, we often want to chat up to our friends and families this amazing thing we do. We want our social media to shine out amongst the crowd with our sport and passion. So we turn to photos and videos.

Many divers will find that they struggle with the camera on the dive or surface and be disappointed with their images or videos. Why is that? Can you do something different or better to improve your end results? Of course! Just as with any skill, there are things you can do that will improve your performance and end results.

START WITHOUT A CAMERA

I know, the thought running through your head right now is 'what?!' It sounds crazy, the one required piece of equipment for any type of photography is a camera. So why would I suggest starting without one?

The answer is simple: safety. Safety for you as a diver and consideration for the cave. It is incredibly easy to get lost behind a camera lens and forget about what your fins are doing or where that gold line is. You can get distracted when trying to position your dive buddy to make him or her look as cool as possible and breathe past your thirds or forget about decompression obligations.

So start without the camera. Do a dive with the person you are planning on photographing. Know that you are mentally setting up for a photograph.

Study the cave as you swim. Where are the interesting formations, colors, or tunnels? Find the spot you want to shoot, and stop.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

- **Is there flow?** If there is, you need to decide where each diver will be. Will the photographer or model be facing the current? It is much easier to hold position if you are swimming into the flow. It is usually easier for the photographer to move around and change positions than for the model. The ability to move around will give you an opportunity to capture a variety of angles as well.
- **What is the bottom made of?** This is a very important consideration. Gouging the bottom with fins, knees, and hands to steady yourself while trying to take a photo not only damages the cave but can be dangerous to you as a diver.

On this “no camera” dive, stop and try to write something in your wet notes. Can you hold position without hitting the bottom or needing to steady yourself? If the answer is no, you are not ready to take a photograph here. Spend time practicing your buoyancy control before adding a camera to the dive.

- **Can your model maintain position without disrupting a sensitive bottom?** If the answer is no, you need to reposition them. Silt in a photograph very rarely adds value to the image. Usually it ruins a shot. Practicing in the spot before taking the camera can eliminate accidental fin kicks or losses of buoyancy during the photoshoot.
- **What are your bubbles doing?** Small observations like this one help photographers to control all aspects of the scene. If there is flow, bubbles may be pulled closer to the camera and require the photographer to reposition. Caves without flow can collect bubbles on the ceiling and create an air pocket that may cause weird light reflections you hadn't anticipated.
- **How big is the cave, and what color is it?** The location's size and color are very important when



The Jug Hole Restriction. Diver is Josh Dillaman. © Jennifer Dillaman.

it comes to how much light is required to make it bright enough for a photograph. Large rooms need significantly more light than small phreatic tunnels.

Just as important as the size consideration of the cave is the color of the rocks. Black or dark rocks require much more light than white or light tan rocks. It is a simple enough concept when you break it down, but it is a very important consideration.

If you do not have enough light for a large and/or dark room, change locations. No matter how good your Photoshop™ is, your cave photograph won't turn out like you hoped if there is not enough light.

PRACTICE IN OPEN WATER FIRST

I know, this is now two steps for cave photography that haven't actually involved any cave photography. But practicing with your camera in open water before taking it into a cave is imperative.

Few divers realize how "tuned in" our buoyancy must be in order to operate a camera while maintaining

proper trim and breathing. Have a buddy go with you and watch your trim as you try to hold position. Swim through some hula hoops or buoyancy rings with the camera to figure out where your personal limits are. Learn how close you can get to the floor without disturbing it or how small of a space you can occupy without bumping into the walls, ceiling, or floor.

Even small cameras such as GoPros™ require extra control to operate. Don't discount the need to practice before taking a camera into a delicate environment such as an underwater cave. Remember, poor buoyancy can not only put you and your model/buddy in a dangerous situation, it will quickly ruin your shot.

START SMALL

Buying the largest and most expensive camera rig that is on the market will not guarantee you a good photograph. There is no question that higher-end technology is an important tool for cave photography. But jumping right into something large and complicated will usually turn out worse photos than if you start small and work your way up.

Cave diving photography is hard. You are combining an already technically difficult and mentally



Josh Dillaman hovers in tannic water. © Jennifer Dillaman.

demanding sport with another technically and artistically demanding task. Give yourself time to learn and develop. Starting small with something like a compact camera or GoPro-™ style/size-camera lets you overcome and adapt to different challenges that cave diving photography presents.

HOW DO I GET MY CAMERA INTO THE CAVE?

As cave and technical divers, we spend countless hours streamlining and fine tuning our rig. How can we get every last piece of equipment optimally placed so that it is both out of the way and easily accessible?

Now let's add a camera and lights to that! Cameras, trays, lights, cords, and all the accessories are not streamlined out of the box. We've all seen the new open-water divers with cameras dangling three feet below their bodies dragging in the sand as they swim along. This won't cut it for cave photography. We need to balance and secure our camera rigs so that we can still access all the important pieces of gear we so painstakingly learned to use during our cave diving courses.

We also have to also consider not damaging the camera. A cave photographer may need to go

through a restriction. You need to ensure your camera does not bang on or scrape off rocks.

Ideas for attaching your camera rig can include adding bolt snaps and bungees to your rig and clipping it off on a butt plate. Or you could attach it your side like you would a side mount or deco cylinder. The photographer should be able to easily clip and unclip the camera in case they need to swim through a restriction. Make sure you secure all of your lights so they don't accidentally drag or tangle in lines. Divvy up the equipment between the photographer and model (if they are willing) to help prevent one diver getting overwhelmed with so much extra. Try adding foam or solid floats to make your camera rig neutrally buoyant at your planned depth. This will also prevent dragging/tangling and help with streamlining.

CREATE A SCENE

Diving into a cave for the first time can be overwhelming. There are so many things to see and experience. Tunnels stretch endlessly in a captivating maze, speleothems decorate the ceilings or floors, clay banks illustrate eons of time.

Remember that with photography we are trying to tell a story. We want viewers to see our image and feel



Behind the Henkel . The diver is Cameron Mahaffey. © Jennifer Dillaman



Josh Dillaman swims “through the decor” in Cenote Chan Hol, Tulum, Mexico. © Jennifer Dillaman.

what we felt in that moment. Take your time to create a complete scene before taking the picture. Position your model to be an active part of the photograph instead of just showing their butt and fins swimming in front of the camera. (Let’s be honest, we’ve all taken unflattering shots of our dive buddies’ butts as they swim ahead of us).

Chose an exciting part of the cave to center your image around. Is the floor covered in scaly goethite? Is the tunnel dripping with stalactites? No matter what unique aspect you are trying to capture, be sure to set up the scene so that it is the focus. Be intentional with your photographs. Think about how each element interacts with each other, and plan out the scene you want to capture.

ENJOY YOURSELF, AND BE SAFE

Taking photographs and/or videos in a cave can be a uniquely challenging, but this secret underwater world has captivated us all. Remember to have fun and be safe behind the camera. The images and videos you produce will give non divers a chance to see into our sport and possibly inspire the next generation of divers. Take care to protect and preserve this fragile systems we are lucky enough to explore.

Jennifer Dillaman is a cave diver, an underwater photographer, and Secretary of the NSS-CDS Board of Directors.

CENOTES ON THE EDGE: LOCALS DECRY ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

Speaking out about environmental damage to the Yucatán Peninsula’s cenotes is a touchy subject locally. But rapid overdevelopment, including the Tren Maya (Mayan Train) is damaging the cenotes in a way that few non-divers ever will see. Stratis Kas convened a panel of local cave divers and environmentalists to discuss the damage to the ecosystem and the overall impact of the as the rush-to-profit. [Read it here.](#)

Who's Who ON THE 2025-2026 NSS-CDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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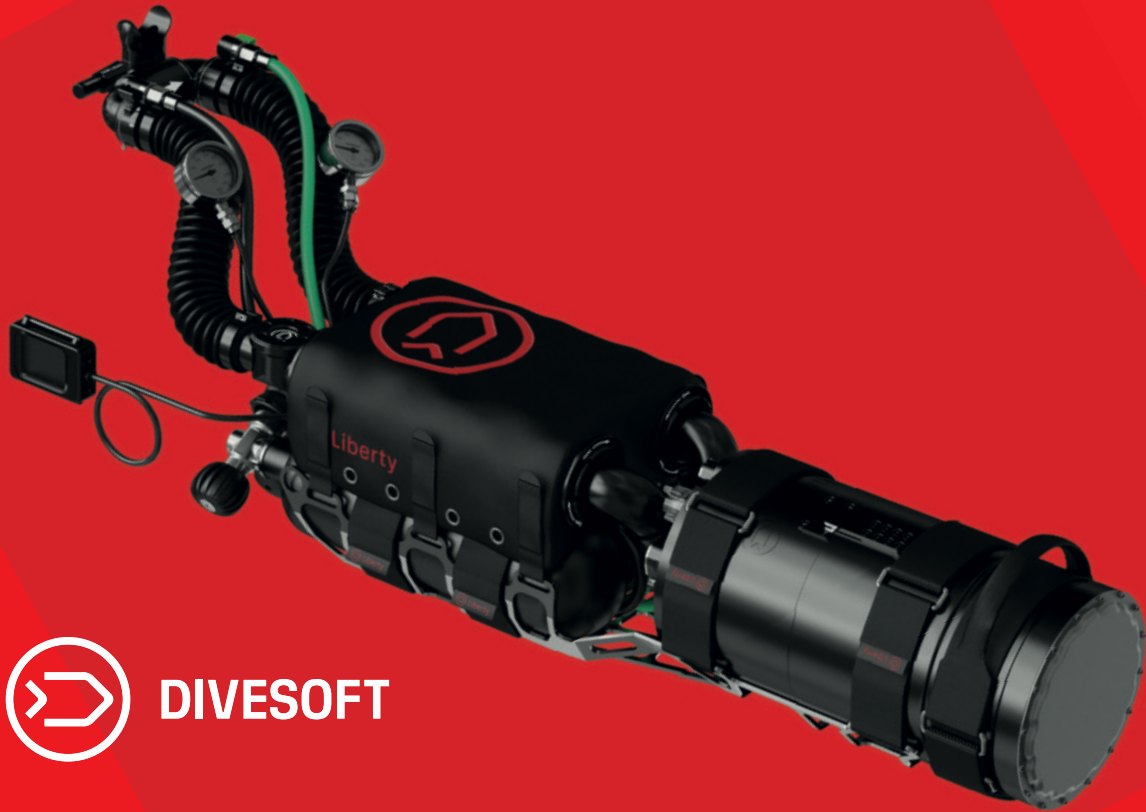
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The 2025-2026 NSS-CDS Board of Directors was seated at the 2025 annual meeting held at last month's International Conference. You can contact them by email using the links to their names on this page.

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VOLUNTEERISM

The Fuel That Powers the NSS-CDS

by Fred Stratton

The Latin root of the word volunteer is *voluntarius*, meaning willing, of one's own free will. Brave colonists in 18th century America stepped forward to form an army that defeated Great Britain and gained our independence. Tennessee is called the Volunteer State due to the large number of Tennesseans who stepped forward to serve in battle in the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848.

Dedicated cave divers stepped forward to create the Cave Diving Section in 1973, and volunteers have sustained and strengthened the organization these past fifty-two years. Through trials and tribulations, economic busts and booms, our volunteers have remained committed to our history, heritage, expansion, and prosperity.

It is due to this spirit of commitment to our community that, I believe, the Section's best days are yet to come. My belief is also grounded in accomplishments. Here are a few of many recent examples.

Edward's Spring. As many as 20 different volunteers and the landowner himself worked on signing a management agreement and building infrastructure so that members can enjoy Edward's Spring near Live Oak, Florida. A total of over 400 hours has been invested so far. A few more

refinements and some erosion control plantings will push this number closer to 500 hours.

Madison Blue. In the past two years, NSS-CDS volunteers have converged on the beloved Madison Blue Springs State Park near Lee, Florida. They have removed and replaced four diver benches, replaced dilapidated fencing, and installed new handrails. The latest project involved replacing three sets of stairs from the parking lot to the concrete path ringing the headspring and over 2,000 linear feet of 2' x 6' deck boards, all accomplished by volunteers and park staff in four days. Section volunteers have invested well over 700 hours at Madison Blue in the past two years.

Orange Grove. Replacing the lower set of stairs to Orange Grove Sink was a complex, seven-day project. Twelve volunteers worked this effort—some worked a day, a few worked all week. Complete demolition was followed by custom cutting nine 20-foot long stair stringers (several more than what we demolished) and resting them on beefy framing to support 2X deck boards and non-skid strips. At least 400 hours went into the design, demolition and reconstruction project.

Peacock Springs. Hurricane Idalia was unkind to Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park in the 2023 as she slammed into Suwannee County with a mighty



Boardwalk and stairs project at Madison Blue, June 2025. Photo by Tom Johnson.



Post-hurricane restoration project at Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park, January 2024. Photo by Peacock Park staff.



Cave divers and concerned citizens lobby Alachua City officials to cut back the Tara developments. Photo by Fred Stratton.

an enormous area and is directly linked to the Santa Fe River via Hornsby Springs six miles to the west.

OAW members' testimony before the High Springs city commission led to that body's filing for affected party status with the City of Alachua and the Alachua Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in Gainesville, FL. The Alachua BOCC subsequently filed for interested party status with the City of Alachua.

Although two Tara projects are underway, the others face increased scrutiny by OAW's many constituent organizations and elected officials in the City and Country of Alachua and High Springs. The latter's water supply is downstream of Mill Creek Sink, which has been confirmed by two well-documented dye trace studies. The battle continues to raise awareness that leads to action. The Section's Science Committee, specifically the Conservation subcommittee, has been deeply involved in this volunteer work. A conservative estimate is 650 hours. CDS members Bryan Buescher and Vicki Bashor

temper. No less than 38 volunteers swarmed both Orange Grove and Peacock for a weekend in January to build and install eight new diver benches, repair a picnic table, replace over 250 linear feet of two-rail fencing, set bent support posts upright, reset concrete vehicle stops, reset a BBQ grill, and plant a handicap parking sign. Total hours invested amounted to nearly 500. Dive Outpost and Big Guy Scuba contributed hot beverages and lunch, energizing volunteers to knock out a huge amount of work.

Our own **Cow Springs** endured Idalia's wrath. Along with general cleanup, volunteers added a concrete paver floor to the two changing rooms, refurbished the lone diver bench, and installed two new diver benches. Then in September 2024, Hurricane Helene hurtled into Florida's Big Bend region on her way to North Carolina via Suwannee County. The property looked like a giant Jenga tower had collapsed onto it, smashing one of the diver benches and blocking access to the changing rooms and the spring itself.

Nearly 20 volunteers converged on Cow for a day to rebuild the diver bench and then fired up six chain saws to cut up and remove downed and bent trees. Based on local rates for tree cutting services, we estimate this volunteer effort saved the Section well north of \$5,000. Our stalwart supporters at [Dive Outpost](#) not only donated a new front gate to replace one karate chopped in the middle by a giant tree, they installed it without being asked.

Mill Creek (Alachua) Sink. [Our Alachua Water](#) is an organization that sprang from concern for the threats that the Tara group of construction projects pose to Mill Creek Sink. The sink is a swallow hole that drains



RB Havens and Tom Johnson install stringers during the May 2025 project to replace the lower set of stairs at Orange Grove. Photo by Fred Stratton.

earned the NSS-CDS 2025 Conservation Award for spearheading much of the work.

Training. The release of the Section’s first online course in early June 2025 marked a milestone. This comprehensive overhead training curriculum was developed for roughly 20% of the cost had we contracted out all the work. The lead developer is an NSS-CDS member who was more than fair with her hourly rate. She even volunteered to perform additional work to see the project through to fruition. Proofreading, editing, and additional content including high-quality videos and still photographs were all volunteer efforts for which ten members received the NSS-CDS Outstanding Service Award. This massive effort involved close to 2,000 hours.

NFSA. Let’s tip our hats to the [North Florida Springs Alliance](#). They led the Orange Grove stairs project in May 2025. As a citizen support organization (CSO) they buy lumber and hardware for many of the projects in state parks. Thank you, NFSA!

2025 International Cave Diving Conference. In the “leave it better than you found it” department, this shoutout is to Courtney and Ian Parrish, the dynamic duo who coordinated the 2025 International Cave Diving Conference. We recruited them at the 2024 Conference, and they unleashed a torrent of energy that washed over everything in their path.

On top of the event’s tremendous success, they created a “Conference in a Box,” their term for a systematic approach to organizing and accessing conference related documents and materials to



Volunteer lumberjacks during the October 2024 post Hurricane Helene cleanup at Cow Springs. Photo by Fred Stratton.

be used to plan and execute future events. Their investment in the 2025 Conference was well in excess of 800 hours.



Board members and CAVENGERS share a light moment while setting up the 2025 International Conference. Photo by Nicole Alarid.



Courtney and Ian Parrish spent more than 800 hours planning and organizing the 2025 Winter Workshop. Selfie by Ian.

The CAVENGERS. A tremendous amount of effort is required to set up, support, and break down each NSS-CDS event. A group of dedicated people works from dawn to dusk, synchronizing efforts with Section leadership and event sponsors.

They wear red CAVENGERS shirts to be visible to anyone requiring assistance. When event coordinators put out the call “Cavengers, it’s time to assemble” these energetic volunteers jump into action and don’t rest until the job is done, donating between 200 and 300 hours per event.



Led by Renée Power, the Mighty CAVENGERS wrap up the 2024 International Conference.

This sampler platter of projects highlights the difference that motivated people can make in confronting destructive development, improving the quality of visitors' experiences in state parks, or adding to our community in a dozen different ways. Our conferences and workshops would not exist at all were it not for energetic volunteers working behind the scenes and even in front of the microphone to present useful, engaging information.

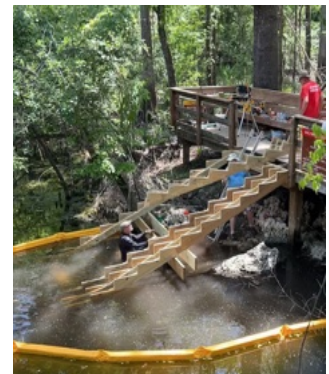
We always have openings for sustained commitment to a committee and short-term, *ad hoc* projects that regularly arise. Contact me at chairman@nsscds.org to express your interest or to learn more.



The new stairs and walkway at Madison Blue State Park. Photo by Fred Stratton.



Volunteers at work on the Madison project. Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.



Workers install stair stringers at Orange Grove. Photo by Fred Stratton.



The Cow Springs gate before and after the cleanup. Photo by Fred Stratton.



— Fred Stratton

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INDEPTH
GET DEEPER INTO DIVING

“Mother of All Cenotes” Keeps Growing

Checking in from Tulum, Robbie Schmittner reported another successful major cenote connection. He, Phillip Lehman, Patrick Widmann, and Rosso Rivera connected the “Mother of All Cenotes” with Sistema Koox Baal on June 22, 2025.

Robbie reports: “To achieve this, we had to find a navigable passage between the two systems, which are approximately 1.5 km (just under a mile) apart as the crow flies. And we did! We laid over 8 km/5 miles of guideline to bridge the gap and establish the connection. [The final] dive lasted 425 minutes, during which we used Sidewinder rebreathers, Seacraft scooters, and mmo mapping tools to navigate and document the newly linked sections.

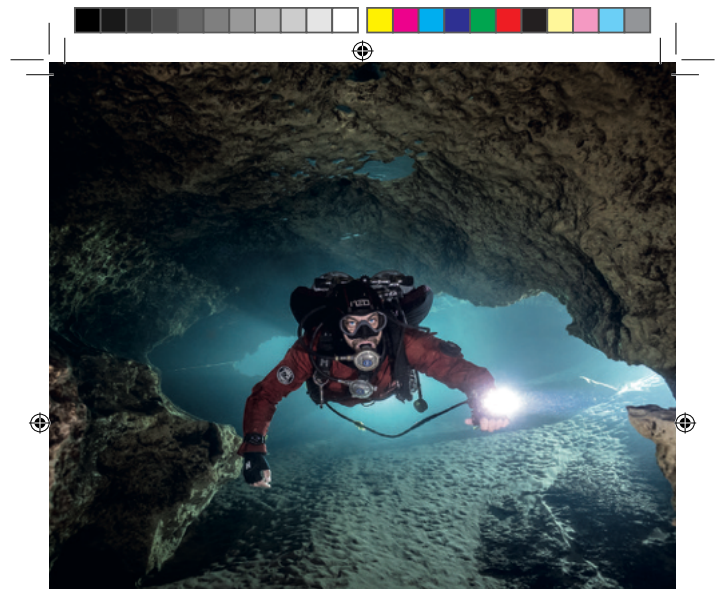


The white section is the newly laid line (8km). The big red system to the right is Koox Baal. The red system to the left is The Mother of All Cenotes.

With this connection, the total length of the Koox Baal system has now reached 123 km/76.5 miles. This marks a significant milestone in the exploration of the Yucatán’s vast underwater cave networks.”



Philip Lehman, Patrick Widmann, and Robbie Schmittner.



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At lunch break, we gathered outside for a drone photo. Courtesy of Cameron Mahaffey.

CAVE DIVING CONFERENCE WAS THE BEST YET

by Barbara Dwyer

The 2025 International Cave Diving Conference, held over the weekend of May 30-31, has entered the CDS books as a smashing success. Three hundred and ten people attended, making it our organization's best-attended event to date. We had an outstanding venue, a stellar speaker lineup, and a congenial and upbeat crowd that made the event a blast.

Courtney and Ian Parrish bravely took up the challenge of planning, coordinating, and executing this year's event. They signed up after attending the 2024 conference and being taken with the sense of fun, community, and excitement. In addition to their day jobs, Courtney and Ian spent an estimated 1000 hours organizing this conference. They brought an exciting and personal touch, meeting with sponsors, making personal calls and visits, and following through on the details. The result was an event that appeared seamless. To say that they've done an extraordinary job in every way is an understatement.

One excellent upgrade was the new venue. [The Barn at Rembert Farms](#) in Alachua, FL, hosted us this year. This casually elegant barn and conference area were perfect for our group.

What struck me immediately was the care taken to prepare the hall and grounds. Courtney, Ian, and the Cavengers created a festive, upbeat ambiance by hanging balloons, giant cave arrows, and banners. The barn's warmth contrasted nicely with our old Armory venue, which is functional but utilitarian. Well done, everyone!

We kicked off the weekend with our traditional Friday night social featuring [First Magnitude Brewing Company's](#) delicious craft beers. It gave everyone a chance to catch up with old friends, make new ones, and swap some tall tales. The "old timers" were well represented—I chatted with Mark Long, Woody



Paul Heinerth (center) served as our emcee extraordinaire. Ian (left) and Courtney (right) Parrish organized the conference and developed a template to be used for future events. Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.



Joerg Hess is an engineer, NSS-CDS instructor, and diver with Karst Underwater Research (KUR). Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.

Jasper, Tom Morris, Paul Heinerth, Guy Bryant, Rick Crawford, and Wayne Kinard, to mention a few. It was a pleasure to meet some of our newer members and to catch up with folks whom I don't see too often thanks to my living in exile in San Francisco. It's especially good to see so many women joining us.

The Cavengers came through as always. They had worked through the hot, steamy day filling goodie bags and setting up the hall so that they'd be there to welcome us with big smiles. They are unquestionably the unsung heroes of every NSS-CDS event.

We reconvened the next morning to hear a top-tier lineup of speakers, introduced by our faithful and outstanding MC, veteran explorer Paul Heinerth.

First up was engineer, NSS-CDS instructor, and [KUR](#) diver [Joerg Hess](#). Joerg discussed the respiratory factors and physiology that affect rebreather scrubber

performance in real-world conditions. He broke down what actually happens inside the scrubber. Diver behavior, conditions, and rebreather configuration can dramatically impact CO₂ absorption, he says.

Explorer Joe Firkaly-Paciera regaled us with his account of his Cross Creek Exploration Project near Sewanee, Tennessee. This ambitious effort combined technical dry caving, sump exploration, and dye tracing to map unknown cave connections. His exploration included three sumps and, most notably, Payne Spring, where the team extended the known underwater passage from a few hundred feet to over a mile.



Joe Firkaly-Paciera shows the Cross Creek Project's rugged terrain. Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.

[Stratis Kas](#),* an internationally renowned cave diving instructor and explorer, flew in from Greece to speak at our event. Stratis is the author of two books: [Close Calls](#) and [Cave Diving: Everything You](#)

Stratis Kas, explorer, photographer, author, and cave and technical diving instructor.



* Stratis is recovering from a severe DCS Type II hit following a cave dive in Tulum in April. Read his excellent first-person account and case analysis [here](#). Stratis will have his newly diagnosed PFO repaired shortly. —Editor

[Ever Wanted to Know](#). He discussed gas planning, reminding us that the gold-standard “rule of thirds” sometimes falls short given the dynamic nature of dives and that our high-tech equipment may foster overconfidence. Stratis encouraged us to constantly reevaluate our skills and equipment and to think more deeply about our decisions, techniques, and approach to exploration.

Matt Hardman discussed his team’s development of the [Diver’s Atlas](#) - A Community Platform for Underwater Exploration.” The Atlas is “a living repository where divers can contribute anything and everything diving related,” from photos of the site, maps, descriptions, cave survey data, water quality data, and more.

This information is integrated into an interactive database, enabling divers to access usable data. Matt invited us all to be part of his beta testing by visiting [Diver’s Atlas](#) (enter the code EXPLORE) and to enjoy access to the Atlas’s first rendition. Contact Matt at main@diveratlas.org.

Milestone Cave Diving Awards Presented

Interspersed with the discussions were presentations of the Abe Davis and Sheck Exley awards (photos Page 37)..



Diver’s Atlas map. Courtesy of Diver’s Atlas

2025 Outstanding Service Awards

- These NSS-CDS members were honored for outstanding service for contributing to our online learning platform.

Ted McCoy	Joerg Hess
Renee Power	Steve Dalcher
Josh Dillaman	Autumn Jefferson
Jenny Dillaman	Timmy Young
Jim Wyatt	

and Adam to Hughes for his ongoing support.



The 2025 Conference was the best-attended CDS event to date. Photo by Tom “TJ” Johnson.

2025 Recognition Award Recipients

- Conservation - Bryan Buesher and Vicki Bashor
- Explorer of the Year - Matt Hansen
- Volunteer of the Year- Joerg Hess
- Lifetime Achievement - Lee Ann and Lamar Hires (not pictured. See interview Page 28).

2025 Recognition Awards



Vickie Bashor and Bryan Beuscher :Conservation Award. Presented by James Chandler (L) and Gayle Hall (R). Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.

Joerg Hess, Volunteer of the Year. Presented by James Chandler (L) and Gayle Hall (R). Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.



Matt Hansen, 2025 Explorer of the Year. Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.



Adam Hughes, Outstanding Service Award. Presented by James Chandler (L) and Gayle Hall (R). Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.

Raffle Prizes

Thanks to our sponsors' generosity, we had an abundance of raffle prizes large and small. Paul kept busy between speakers handing out everything from rebreathers to tee shirts.

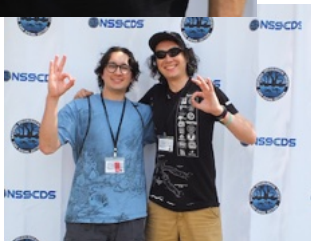
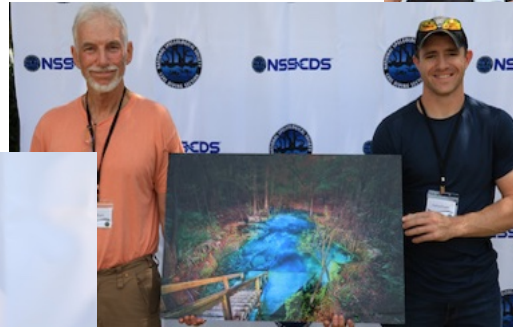
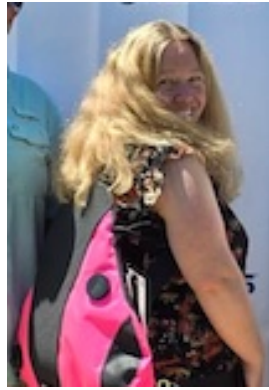
The Grand Prize winners were:

- Bob Dankert, who took home a [Divesoft](#) Liberty Sidemount closed circuit rebreather (CCR) and Mod One training package. (Bob was not present so we'll have his photo in the next issue).
- Marcos Rosado, who won a custom-tailored [SF Tech](#) drysuit, and
- Sean McCarthy, the winner of a [Dive Rite](#) O2ptima CM "Choptima" and Mod One training package.



MORE PRIZE WINNERS

Photos by Tom "TJ" Johnson



MORE PHOTOS ON PAGES 38-39.

Old Timers' Lunch

and the birth of a new book

by Guy Bryant



Standing left to right are Court Smith, Tex Chalkley, Lewis Henkel, Dave Manor, Bill Main, and Dale Sweet. Kneeling in front from left to right are John Harper, me, Steve Forman, and Lamar English.

A bunch of us old-timer cave divers met for lunch in June at The Branford Gathering in Branford, Florida. We meet periodically for lunch and to catch up with each other. Paul Heinerth was supposed to be there today, but he couldn't make it.

There is a lot of cave diving history between us all, and I'm going to attempt to write another book titled *Cave Diving: Back in the Day* from the different stories and milestones from our early days of diving. If you were diving in the 60s, 70s, and 80s and would like to contribute to the book, please message or email me at brya1659@bellsouth.net

Guy is the author of *The Education of a Cave Diver* and *Illuminated Springs*, both available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).



3 LAMPS, 2 COMPUTERS, 2 MASKS, 4 TANKS
ONE DRYSUIT!
MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE!
HEAVY DUTY
SF TECH DRYSUIT
HANDCRAFTED IN SWITZERLAND  

LEE ANN AND LAMAR HIRES

by Rachael McCarthy

The NSS-CDS Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes significant contributions to exploration, conservation, education, and safety. It honors people who have made important achievements in exploration, innovation, refinement of protocols, documentation, writing, and contributions to cave-related science while exhibiting a history of leadership and service.

Lee Ann and Lamar Hires exemplify these contributions and are legendary in their generosity and community support. For more than 40 years, they have pioneered “equipment for serious divers.” They have supported cave diving exploration and education while embodying the CDS’s core values of conservation, safety, and mentorship. Rachael McCarthy sat down with them for a look back at their accomplishments and forward to the future.
—Editor’s note

Lamar and Lee Ann, congratulations on your Lifetime Achievement Award. Tell me how each of you first got involved in diving and cave diving specifically.

Lamar: I began diving in 1979 alongside a coworker, Mike Chapman. Mike and I met Wes Skiles in 1979 at Pro Dive in Jacksonville. Wes had just returned from the islands and moved into our apartment complex, and we soon became friends. Mike and I were Wes’s first Full Cave students, and it shaped my lifelong path in cave exploration.



Lamar’s rig in 1982. Courtesy of Lamar Hires.

Lee Ann: I had always wanted to dive and decided to take training at a local dive shop in 1986. Lamar happened to be my Open Water instructor. When people ask if it was love at first sight, I laugh and say, “It was lust at first sight!” After I finished my Full Cave Course in January of 1987 in Mexico, Lamar asked me to marry him. We were married at Devil’s Eye in Ginnie Springs on August 1, 1987, in front of about 125 guests. The owners of Ginnie closed the Turkey Roost site for the event and graciously waived all guest fees.

How did you come to start Dive Rite? What vision did you have for the company when it began?

Lamar: In the early days, dive equipment companies didn’t cater to cave divers. Most of our equipment was home built or adapted from other industries. In 1984, North Florida had a major flood. I was working at the Branford Dive Shop (then located at Ivy Park), which got submerged under nearly four feet of water. For weeks we could only reach it by canoe. We used dive weights to prevent the cabinets from floating away.

Mark Leonard and I used this forced down time to began brainstorming. We both were avid cave explorers and saw the need for high-quality gear that was tailored to technical and cave diving. When Dive Rite opened, our product line included just 13 items - an aluminum backplate and harness; primary, safety, and jump reels; a canister light, hardware (clips, D-rings, and slides), and a slate. The other six were lead weights. This was enough to get a cave diver started.



LeeAnn: After I sold my own business in 1997, Lamar and I bought out Mark Leonard and became sole owners of Dive Rite. Our vision has remained the same: to design rugged, reliable equipment capable of “going where no one has gone before.”

Dive Rite has been at the forefront of diving equipment innovation for decades. What products or technologies are you are most proud of developing?

Lee Ann: The single-tank adaptor (STA) is one of our most-recognized inventions. Lamar originally developed it for me in 1986 so I could continue using my beloved blue-and-pink BCD.

Lamar: In 1992, I collaborated with Seiko to create the “Bridge,” which was the first user-programmable nitrox computer. It was user adjustable in 1% increments from 21% to 50% oxygen. The only other nitrox computer available was limited to one mix—32%—so this was a big thing! Divers could dial in partial-pressure blends that came out at 28% or 34%. It also introduced the oxygen-tracking functionality that remains standard in dive computers today.

We tested the Bridge during the Madison exploration. We had been averaging the depths and calling it a 100-foot/30m dive for 90-minutes. Using the US Navy tables, our deco would be three minutes at 30ft/9m, 23 minutes at 20 ft/6m and 57 minutes at 10 ft/3m. I programmed the Bridge at 28% for the lower level, which gave me only an hour of deco for a two-hour dive. I loved it. We later developed the Nitex3, which could track three gases that divers could switch underwater.

From there, I went on to develop the TransPac Harness in 1995. During the Shigawatawi (Japan) exploration, we needed to switch from doubles to



The Bridge was the first programmable nitrox computer.



The 1995-96 Japan exploration prompted development of the TransPac, which would accommodate single, double, or sidemount tanks or a rebreather as conditions demanded. Courtesy of Lamar Hires.

side mount using different size tanks. We laid over a mile of line and went through five sumps to do so. The frustration with switching tanks resulted in the birth of the TransPac, which allows divers to switch between single tanks, doubles, sidemount, and rebreathers.

The O2ptima CM (“Choptima”) rebreather system also was born in response to the Cow Springs exploration. I wanted to do more exploration chest-mounted, but I just couldn’t get to doing all of the multiple stage dives and everything required to get through the restrictions and high flow. The idea was to make the rebreather adaptable and easy to use. The Choptima is fully compatible with sidemount, back-mounted doubles, or even single tanks. You don’t need to change everything, you just need to add a few D rings to your harness, clip the unit on, and go diving. It’s about not being committed to always being on the rebreather. For example, if you’re traveling and have any problem with the rebreather, you can just leave it behind, and dive open circuit.

The Choptima has supported exploration efforts around the world. For us, innovation is always rooted in practical application. The gear must enhance diver safety and performance, especially in demanding conditions.

What significant challenges have you faced as a team in this field?

Lamar: Much of our work has involved navigating the tension between innovation, risk, and responsibility. As early pioneers, we had to build trust in a

community that was still defining itself. Developing new techniques and equipment meant confronting norms and enduring scrutiny. One of our biggest ongoing challenges has been balancing the demands of running Dive Rite while having time for exploration and training. Building and maintaining a business in a niche high-risk industry requires constant balance and alignment.

Lee Ann: My operational oversight and Lamar's technical leadership helped us weather shifts in the market, regulatory changes, and evolving diver needs. As Lamar puts it, "We have done it longer than anyone else, and trying to stay innovative is difficult with the growth of the market." What has sustained us is mutual respect, a shared purpose, and the support of a tight-knit community.

What's your view on how technical progress has affected cave conservation?

Lamar: Equipment that enables longer and deeper dives can also increase environmental impact if divers don't use it responsibly. Many of our products were born out of needs that arose during real cave expeditions. But we're acutely aware that not every diver uses gear with the same level of restraint.



Lamar and son Jared diving at Ginnie Springs in their TransPacs. Courtesy of Lamar Hires.

Take the Cornflakes [in Devil's Eye/Ear], for example. Once-pristine formations like it have been damaged over time by careless finning and DPV use. The answer is not restricting access, but instead instilling a greater sense of diver responsibility and respect through proper training and mentorship.

What exploration project stands out as most meaningful or memorable in your career?

Lamar: For years, the upstream section of Cow Spring was a hidden gem. It was accessible only to sidemount divers and only to those who knew exactly where to look. That changed unexpectedly. While leading a class at Cow, I happened to overhear a pair of open-water divers talking about reaching depths that shouldn't have been possible given their equipment and training.

Curious, I struck up a conversation and soon realized they had unknowingly discovered an alternate entrance to upstream Cow, large enough to accommodate back-mounted cylinders. This was a major find, one that had remained hidden from even the most seasoned cave explorers for years. It was exciting because it opened access for trained cave divers to a breathtaking, exceptionally beautiful passage that had seen little disturbance.

But with that access came vulnerability. The upstream section's untouched clay banks and fragile geological features, once protected because they were not accessible, were now at greater risk. We quickly recognized the potential for harm. During the exploration, Woody Jasper and I installed the hand line to limit contact in the fragile areas. Woody calls it "the poor man's scooter." The community has maintained this line since 1986.

Over the years, we've seen damage that's avoidable. One diver left visible hand and fin prints in a delicate stratified clay bank, an area that had stood pristine for decades. Another diver carved his initials into the clay bank. This required a labor-intensive repair, and the community came together for the effort.

Because of incidents like these, we have remained intentionally discreet about lesser-known caves. We believe that access to such fragile environments should be limited to divers who demonstrate not just certification, but also restraint, awareness, and respect.

In teaching and by example, we've championed a culture of conservation. Revealing the back-mount entrance to Cow Spring wasn't just about exploration. It was about instilling a deeper ethic of care and responsibility for Florida's most sensitive underwater spaces.

How has your work with NSS-CDS shaped your approach to diver education, safety protocols, and mentorship?

Lamar: I served as the Training Director for the NSS-CDS from 1987 to 1992. This was a pivotal era in cave diving. At that point, I had already written the first sidemount specialty course for the CDS back in 1985 and was working as an Instructor Trainer and serving on the Training Committee. Taking on the role of Training Director just felt like the next step in helping formalize and improve safety standards across the board.

During my tenure, I spearheaded several advancements in cave diving training. We were trying to address the core issues that led to fatalities, things like poor gas management and configuration. When Tekna introduced the pull-behind DPV, it changed cave diving. Divers went further on less gas, and our training had to address it. So as Training Director, I spearheaded the DPV course and standardized the seven-foot hose for gas sharing on DPV.

I also helped shape the organization's overall approach to diver training and certification. As chair of the Training Committee, I helped to rewrite a lot of the standards and sharpened instructor requirements. We wanted a system that emphasized both competence and conservation. The safety impact of these changes was significant. Back in the '70s, Florida was seeing more than two dozen cave diving fatalities a year. When we implemented many of these improvements, those numbers dropped to fewer than five annually.

Looking back, my role wasn't just about technical advancement. For me, it was about helping the community grow smarter, safer, and more respectful of the environment. That's what cave diving should be about. I've personally certified over 700 divers.

What shifts have you seen in the cave diving community over the years in terms of safety culture?

Lamar: We've witnessed a profound transformation in the cave diving community, both in its approach to safety and in cave system access. In the early days, cave diving was an uncertain and often dangerous endeavor. Training was inconsistent, equipment was largely improvised, and fatal accidents were all too common. There was little standardization and even less community wide accountability.

That began to change as training organizations like the NSS-CDS matured, and I was at the forefront of watching that evolution. I contributed directly to the development of core safety standards, including formalized gas management, team diving protocols, and the use of redundant systems. My role in promoting long-hose configurations, S-drills, and the introduction of gold lines to mark primary passages helped bring structure to a previously disjointed discipline.

A pivotal moment came early in my diving career. I ran out of air at Peacock. I took my last reath 20 feet from the warning sign and did a free ascent from there. Back in 1979, an alternate air source was an option for open-water divers. Mike and I didn't have one.

We saw Wes at the dive shop, and he asked what we were doing. And I said, oh we're going back to Orange Grove again. Wes just looked at us and said, "you're going into the cave?" We said, well, yeah, the basin is kind of boring.



Wes Skiles and Lamar at Devil's Ear, 1983. Courtesy of Lamar Hires.



Lamar and Jared Hires at the Lips in Devil's Ear. © Fan Ping.

Wes pulled Sheck Exley's [*Blueprint for Survival*](#) down off the wall and said, here, take this and read it. And I said, "Next time, Wes. We've only got money for gas and beer." And Wes said "No, I'm giving it to you guys." Mike was driving that day, so I started reading the book aloud. We learned that a guy had died on the dive we had done yesterday. It got our attention.

Sheck wrote the book in response to a wave of cave diving fatalities. He laid out the fundamental safety principles that would shape the sport's future. It wasn't just a manual; it was a wake-up call. The message of personal responsibility, preparedness, and respect for the environment left a lasting impact on me. It solidified my commitment not just to dive, but to teach and to lead by example.

Access to caves is now significantly easier. In the past, many sites were hard to find and physically difficult to enter. Today, divers can drive to sites with well-maintained stairs and platforms.

Improved logistics and the rise of social media have made Florida's caves more reachable than ever. This all has allowed more people to experience the beauty of underwater caves, but it increases the likelihood of damage to delicate formations and sensitive systems.

We're strong advocates for responsible diving. Broader access is a positive step, but it must be coupled with a deeper understanding of cave conservation and safety. Mentorship is key to pass down not just technical skills but the values that keep both divers and the environment safe. The lessons from *Blueprint for Survival* still guide us today: cave diving is not just about reaching new places, but doing so with humility, discipline, and care.

What excites you most about the future of cave diving?

Lamar: We're excited by the role technology continues to play in making cave diving more accessible and increasingly safe. Tools such as

advanced rebreathers, dive computers, and durable gear are expanding the limits of exploration while lowering the risk for trained divers. Coupled with stronger training standards and a growing culture of mentorship, these innovations are creating opportunities for a new generation of divers who are both capable and conservation-minded.

How do you maintain balance between your business, exploration, and personal lives?

Lee Ann: For us, the lines between work, exploration, and personal life have always been fluid. Dive Rite is not just a company, it's a family legacy shaped by passion, curiosity, and shared goals. Our relationship has thrived on the overlap between business and personal pursuits.

A key part of that balance was our son, [Jared](#), who played a vital role in Dive Rite's growth. He contributed to product development and brought fresh perspective to the company's direction. His passing was a profound loss that rippled through the entire diving community. Jared's legacy lives on in the innovations he helped champion and the values he carried forward. Honoring his memory continues to be a driving force in our lives and work.

What do you think is the most misunderstood aspect of cave diving by the general public?

Lamar: One misunderstood aspect is the perception that cave diving is sinister or inherently dangerous. The idea of swimming through dark, enclosed underwater spaces can seem extreme or even foolhardy to most people. But in reality, properly done cave diving, is built on discipline, training, and methodical planning. It's not about thrill-seeking. It's about precision, respect for the environment, and a deep commitment to safety.

What many people don't see is the extensive preparation that goes into each dive: redundant systems, practiced emergency protocols, team communication, and risk assessment. We emphasize that trained cave divers are some of the most safety conscious people in the sport. The real spirit of cave diving is one of exploration, responsibility, and stewardship, not danger for danger's sake.

What does receiving the NSS-CDS Lifetime Achievement Award mean to each of you personally and professionally?

Lamar: Receiving the NSS-CDS Lifetime Achievement Award is a deeply meaningful honor for both of us. For me, it recognizes a lifetime spent advancing the safety, education, and exploration of underwater caves. From developing early sidemount techniques to serving as NSS-CDS Training Director during a pivotal era, my contributions have helped shape the modern standards of cave diving. The award is a professional affirmation of those efforts, as well as a personal acknowledgment from a community I have long supported and helped to guide.

Lee Ann: For me, the award is a testament to the shared journey Lamar and I have taken, one that spans exploration, business development, and community involvement. As co-owner of Dive Rite, I have been instrumental in the design and distribution of high-quality equipment that supports divers around the world. My behind-the-scenes leadership has played a key role in the company's success and reputation for innovation and reliability. I also played an active role in the NSS-CDS, including serving as Treasurer from 1987 to 1991. The recognition honors my contributions and also the strength of our partnership and shared dedication.

Together, the award represents a celebration of our joint legacy, built through decades of collaboration, mentorship, and service to the cave diving world.

Going forward, are there any projects, exploration, conservation, or gear development that you're hoping to pursue?

Lamar: Innovation remains a driving force at Dive Rite. Our team is continually engaged in developing new products and refining existing gear to better serve the evolving needs of divers. Our focus remains on enhancing safety, improving performance, and streamlining functionality to keep pace with advances in the field.

At age 68, I'm transitioning from active cave exploration to supporting the next generation of explorers. I find purpose in mentoring, sharing my knowledge, and contributing resources to projects that continue to push the boundaries of cave diving.

Lee Ann: Meanwhile, I am deeply involved in conservation, particularly coral reef restoration. What began in Key Largo has expanded to Bonaire, where I helped establish a coral garden and tree in memory of our son, Jared. For both of us, staying engaged in the diving community means evolving with it, fostering innovation, supporting exploration, and empowering others to carry the torch forward.

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TRAINING UPDATES

NSS-CDS Online Learning is Now Live

by Chris Brock



The Cave Diving Section's Training Committee is pleased to announce that our very first online training course is live and available in the [Store](#). This year-long effort is just the beginning of a major initiative to update our training procedures and standards and to fully support them with high-quality training materials.

The Training Committee collaborated with an educator and software developer (also a professional educator) to compose content that reflects modern cave diving configurations, protocols, and techniques. The course remains grounded in the CDS tradition of conducting uncompromisingly high quality overhead training, an educational ethos that has worked for decades.

This course covers the academic portion of the NSS-CDS Apprentice Cave Diver and Full Cave Diver ratings. The course features stunning photography of our cave systems as well as tutorial videos. It is easy to sign up for the course. You can access the course anytime, 24 hours a day, and work at your own pace. Your work will be saved upon exiting. Each of the 11 chapters contains a quiz of between 10 and 20 questions. A final exam tests your overall comprehension of the material. Upon completion your instructor will be notified and will meet with you to review the material and plan your dives.

The Cave Diver Course is a significant piece of your training, but no course content can fill the shoes of our instructors. Their breadth and depth of experience can't be condensed into a digitized format. Only a great instructor can serve up the secret sauce that turns divers with a stack of C cards into qualified cave divers. Well-written material and a great instructor together are a winning combination.

The Cave Diver Course serves another purpose. If it's been a while since you earned your full cave rating and want to refresh and update your knowledge, this is an effective, economical way to do so. Completing the course also sets the stage for advanced CDS courses such as DVP Cave and Stage Cave diver.

Get started today at <https://nsscds.org/product-category/training-e-learning/>.

Chris Brock is the NSS-CDS Training Director.



Cave Diving Safety Milestones

Congratulations to our members who recently achieved milestone safety awards. It's exciting to recognize the following award winners. Congratulate them when you see them around the dive sites.

The Abe Davis Award: 100 safe cave dives

James Chandler

Tiffany Parisi

Bill Foley

Erin Westgate

Isabelle Gegoux



Awards Coordinator Gayle Hall (left) presents Abe Davis Awards (L to R:) James Chandler Bill Foley, Tiffany Parisi, and Erin Westgate, Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.



Awards Coordinator Gayle Hall (right) presents Sheck Exley Awards L to R: Bryan Beuscher, Chris Brock, Steve Dalcher, Joerg Hess, Max Kuznetsov, Ted McCoy. Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.

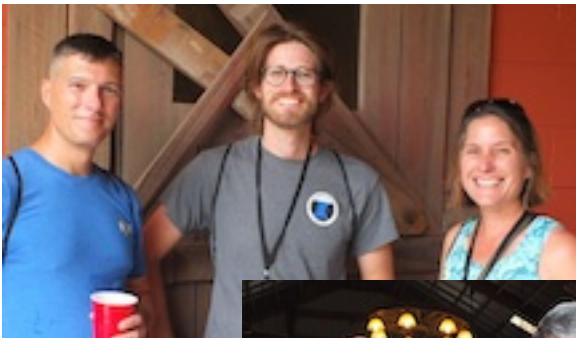
The Sheck Exley Award: 1000 safe cave dives

Chris Brock
Bryan Buescher
Steve Dalcher
Joerg Hess

Max Kuznetsov
Ted McCoy
Ken Sallot
Timmy Young



Nothing much happens without the CAVENGERS. Photo by Tom "TJ" Johnson.



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Stratis Kas



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ADVERTISE IN UNDERWATER SPELEOLOGY

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- Four 1/4 page color ads in four consecutive issues of UWS
- 10% discount on any additional advertising in UWS
- Listing as a CDS Supporter in UWS and the website
- Prices adjusted for larger ads:
- 1/2 page \$550/year
- Full page \$750/year
- 1/4 page on inside front or back cover \$450/year
- 1/2 page on inside front or back cover \$700/year
- Full page on inside front or back cover \$950/year

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- \$350 per issue for a full page ad on the inside front or back cover

CDS Instructor Ads:

- \$100 per year for a 1/4 page ad

For specs and more information, please contact UWS's Ad Manager [Nancy Winfree](#).

NSS-CDS Committees Need Members

There's always plenty to do at NSS-CDS. One great way to become more involved with the Section is to sign up for one of the committees or subcommittees listed below. Share your special skills, meet other cave divers, and possibly gain a dive buddy or two.

If you're interested or want more information, please contact [Fred Stratton](#).

COMMITTEES AND SUBCOMMITTEES

Communications

- a) IT Subcommittee: [Jennifer Dillaman](#), Coordinator
- b) Website Subcommittee: TBD
- c) Social Media Subcommittee: TJ Mueller, Coordinator
- d) Underwater Speleology: [Barbara Dwyer](#), Coordinator

Membership

- a) Awards Subcommittee: PENDING
- b) Elections Subcommittee: Kelly Jessop
- c) Workshop/Conference Subcommittee: *ad hoc*
- d) Fundraising Subcommittee: VACANT

Safety

- a) Accident Analysis Subcommittee: Charlie Roberson, Coordinator. Doug Ebersole, Lamar Hires, Frauke Tillmans, Larry Meyer, Vince Ferris
- b) Line/Markers Subcommittee: Ken Sallot, Coordinator. Michael Kutnya, Kyle Martin, Justin Judd, Chris Brock, Jim Wyatt.

Science

- a) Geology Subcommittee: Pati Spellman, PhD, Coordinator
- b) Biology Subcommittee: Thomas Sawicki, PhD, Coordinator. Marin Hawk.
- c) Conservation Subcommittee: Chelsea Dinon, Coordinator, Marin Hawk Patricia Spellman, PhD, Emily Sustarich, John Sustarich, Angela Teal.
- d) Cave Cartography Subcommittee: Jason Richards, Coordinator, Alex Brett.

Training: [Chris Brock](#), Training Director

Cave Access

- a) Properties Subcommittee: [Steve Dalcher](#), Coordinator
- b) Landowner Relations Subcommittee: Ian Parrish

Property Managers

- a) Cow Springs LLC: Cameron Mahaffey
- b) School Sink LLC: Bob Beckner
- c) Mill Creek Sink: Andy Pitkin, Charlie Roberson





Why should I join the NSS-CDS?

The benefits of membership include:

- Being part of the largest cave diving organization in the United States.
- Helping to shape cave diving's future by electing leaders to represent your interests.
- Receiving discounts on store merchandise and meeting registration fees.
- Accessing members-only content on nsscds.org.
- Receiving Underwater Speleology magazine in your mailbox - 4 issues annually.
- Diving admission at members-only sites (Cow Springs, School Sink, Mill Creek/Alachua Sink) AND,
- Getting invited to work parties and picnics. Join your fellow divers to improve parks and dive areas! (Membership is not required for work parties).

Join on the web site: <https://nsscds.org>.

Cave Diving Section of the
National Speleological Society, Inc.
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