



Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving on the NSS Board of Governors (BOG) these past three years; it has been an honor to represent the NSS membership. I have enjoyed serving and want to continue my work as a director to establish the policies of the NSS with direct input and feedback from the NSS membership.

During my first term on the BOG, I was appointed chair of the newly re-established NSS Landowner Relations Network Committee (LRNC), whose principal goal is interacting with and supporting private landowners, as well as working with grottos and NSS members to provide support for questions and inquiries that private landowners have about their caves. I also served on the NSS Acquisitions Committee and helped to re-establish a relationship between the NSS and the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCi), as well as established a new relationship with the Land Trust of North Alabama (LTNA) through the development of an MOU. I have worked with cave conservancies who request grants, and advocated for support of their acquisitions. In addition, I currently serve as the NSS representative to the Land Trust of North Alabama Resource Advisory Committee.

I think landowners are an integral component to cave access, but an equally important component is the education of cavers and the general public. In this regard, there are landowners and cavers who do not understand the mission of the NSS and therefore we are missing an opportunity to grow the NSS membership, continue the scientific study and protection of caves, and promote responsible cave exploration and fellowship among those interested in caves. Working with NSS members from Alabama, as well as a Huntsville landowner, we were able to expand the Shelta Cave Preserve through a life estate with the only cost being taxes. This work continues with my participation on the Shelta Cave Open House Committee, as well as volunteering with regional grottos. My work on the NSS Acquisitions Committee has also led to the purchase of Secret Cave (TN), as I negotiated this contract with NSS member Albert Ogden, to ensure perpetual protection and access to this and other caves for NSS members. As a BOG Member, I have attended regional caving events and grotto meetings, community events, and Earth Day festivals to represent the NSS through discussion with our members and engaged the community in understanding the need to protect and conserve the fragile underground environment.

Whether a caver is a past, current, or future member of the NSS, they have something to contribute to the society and we need to network with these individuals in our community. My current service as a BOG member, serving previously as the Chair of the 2014 NSS Convention and the Chair of the NSS Convention Ad Hoc Committee, have reinforced my belief that NSS members are incredibly loyal to the advancement of their society with inclusion of new cavers and members of the community. However, we must also focus on the future of our Society, specifically the younger members, who need to be encouraged to attend and participate in activities at NSS Conventions and regional events, while keeping them accessible and affordable. We also need to improve our recognition and appreciation of our volunteers and continue to make our NSS HQ and its vast holdings in the library and archives accessible to all members. I would be honored to continue my participation in the negotiation of issues that are facing the NSS today and bring new issues forward from the membership. I want to hear from members about how the NSS can improve and what suggestions you want to share. Please contact me at jschenck.director@caves.org or 256-599-2211.

Thank you for your support!