

Minutes of the 2026 NSS Vertical Section Meeting

The 2026 NSS Vertical Section Meeting was held on **Thursday, July 9, 2026**, at the high school in Corydon, Indiana.

Executive Board Members Present:

Chair: Carl Hietemeyer; At-Large Executive Member: Peter Welles; Contest Coordinator: Mark Skove; Education Liaison: Jessica Van Ord; Discover Vertical Caving Coordinator: Mark Chai

The meeting was called to order at 1:16 PM by Chair Carl Hietemeyer.

Announcements

- The Vertical Section now has a Chase bank account operating as a subaccount of the NSS.
- Insurance is now provided through the NSS following the dissolution of the Vertical Section's separate LLC at the end of June. The transition took approximately six months (January–June) to complete.
- Discover Vertical Caving had a successful year, with 44 participants, approximately 50% more than the previous year.
- Participants currently have both 9 mm and 11 mm rope options available for the competition and workshop.
- The event registration fee remains \$30, which serves as the Vertical Section's primary fundraiser.
- Participants are introduced to:
 - Three different rappel devices.
 - At least two climbing systems, including Frog and one of the following: Rope Walker, Mitchell, or Texas.
- Discussion was held on whether to reduce the number of climbing system options if certain systems continue to see little use.
 - Ron Miller noted renewed interest in the Mitchell System.
 - Rachel Saker suggested the decline in use of some systems utilizing double rollers may be due to limited equipment availability.
- Recent purchases include a Micro Rack 6 with Hyper Bars, new Vertical Section stickers to distribute during Discover Vertical Caving and vertical training sessions, and additional instructor shirts have been purchased.
- The new edition of Nylon Highway is expected to be released by Jan 2027.
- Mitch was recognized for efficiently handling convention reimbursements immediately following the New York convention.
- Members were encouraged to submit videos for the Vertical Video of the Month. Videos should be 20–120 seconds long.
- Concerns were expressed that the Vertical Section website is difficult to navigate.
- Older Vertical Section videos may be reused during months when no new submissions are received.

Ray Sira Memorial Fund

- As of the meeting, \$920 had been raised since the fund launched on Monday.
- Established to help students attend convention.

New Business

Motion 1

A motion was made to move any competitor using a foot ascender into the Mechanical Division.

Vote: Aye: 4; Nay: 12.

Motion failed.

Motion 2

A motion was approved recommending that the Vertical Competition Rules be amended to clarify the use of foot ascenders (e.g., the Pantin) in the Sit-Stand category. The approved language is to be incorporated into the official Vertical Competition Rules in accordance with Section 5(C) of the Vertical Section Bylaws.

Motion by: Mark Skove; Seconded by: Bill B.

Discussion included:

- Rachel Saker requested clarification of the motion.
- Peter Hertl discussed the history and tradition of the competition.
- Jessica Van Ord noted that a foot ascender still requires the climber to unweight the foot to release it.
- Ron Miller stated this distinction was largely a moot point because the rope remains tensioned if desired.
- Discussion also centered on asymmetric motion as the distinguishing characteristic between sit-stand climbing systems and mechanical systems.

Amended Motion:

“The climbing contest rules shall be amended to address competitors using a foot ascender (such as a Pantin) during the climbing contest. Competitors may use a foot ascender in the Sit-Stand category only if they maintain a sit-stand climbing motion. A competitor must complete the standing movement with both feet driving simultaneously. If weight transfer occurs through separate leg drives, the climb will be classified as a Frog Walker system, and the competitor's time will be recorded in the Mechanical category rather than the Sit-Stand category. The Vertical Section instructor serving as Climbing Contest Coordinator will make this determination and notify both the record keeper and the competitor when submitting the competitor's time.”

Procedural Motions:

- Ron Miller moved to vote on the amended motion; seconded by Cathy.
- Ron Miller moved to end discussion; seconded by Tim White.

Vote: Aye: 16; Nay: 0.

Motion passed unanimously.

Awards

- Peter Hertl — Set a new 70–79 Age Group Record in the 30 m Mechanical event with a time of 0:36.0. Awarded a 300 ft rope.
- Ben Dau — Won the 30 m Standard (30–39) event with a time of 1:22.7. Awarded a 100 ft rope.
- Georgia Schneider — Won the PPG Mechanical (30–39) event with a time of 2:08.5. Awarded a 100 ft rope through Jessica Van Ord.
- Sophia Remhof — Won the 100 ft Standard (20–29) event with a time of 1:32.2. Recognized for her accomplishment.
- Chelsea Dau — Set a World Record in the 120 m Mechanical (30–39) event with a time of 8:07.3. Awarded a 100 ft rope.
- Suzanna Bauer — Won the 120 m Standard (50–59) event with a time of 26:43.4. Awarded a 100 ft rope.
- Matt Covington — Won the 120 m Standard (40–49) event with a time of 11:34.2. Awarded a 100 ft rope.

Elections

- John Bowling is serving until a new Secretary/Treasurer is elected and was nominated for an At-Large position.
- Emily Hanigan was nominated. (Additional details not recorded.)
- Peter Welles was up for re-election and accepted the nomination.
- Amy Burn was up for re-election but was not present.
- John D. is no longer interested in serving.
- Carl Hietemeyer was nominated by Tim White for Secretary/Treasurer.
- A. Gracie Cornish was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

A motion to proceed with the election passed by acclamation.

Volunteer Needs

Volunteers are needed for the 2027 NSS Convention in Texas:

Discover Vertical Caving

- Tuesday and Wednesday mornings.
- Replacement needed for **Mark Chai** as Discover coordinator.

Vertical Competition

- Monday and Tuesday afternoons.

Trailer Transport

A volunteer was secured to transport the Vertical Section trailer to Texas>> Lydia Hernandez

Meeting adjourned. (*Adjournment time was not recorded.*)