



# County of Los Alamos

Los Alamos, NM 87544  
www.losalamosnm.us

## Council Meeting Staff Report

August 8, 2019

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**Agenda No.:** A.  
**Indexes (Council Goals):**  
**Presenters:** Harry Burgess  
**Legislative File:** 12189-19

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### Title

White Rock Cliff Cave - Hell's Hole Gate Project

### Body

Hell's Hole Project  
Parks and Recreation Board Meeting  
August 8, 2019  
(summary provided by Harry Burgess)

### Current Plans:

The Southwestern Region of the National Speleological Society plans to host its fall conference in White Rock this year, over the weekend of September 6-8. This conference will be hosted by the local Pajarito Grotto and the weekend's activities are focused on the construction of the wall to block access to the southern exit of the cave. Other planned activities for the event's participants include cleanup of litter/debris within the cave, potential removal of graffiti both within the cave and at its various entrances, and hiking area trails. A permit for group camping at Rover Park has been applied for as this location is closest to the area of the group's planned activities. Although there is no official registration to rely upon, based upon past conferences it is anticipated that there will be 30-40 individuals participating.

There are several cavers attending the conference with experience in constructing similar walls/gates to preclude access. These individuals sketched/surveyed/photographed the entrance during an earlier visit to the cave and based upon their assessment they have provided a list of materials necessary for the construction. The County will provide these materials, which consist of construction tools (shovels, hammer drill, wood for forms) as well as the materials that will be part of the "wall" (cement, rebar, native rocks).

The Los Alamos Fire Department has been involved in discussions regarding the provision of water for the construction activities as well as for possible assistance in transporting the necessary materials to the cave entrance. There is an on-site assessment scheduled for August 9 during which the potential for these supporting activities will be evaluated, however initial plans are for the FD to provide a mini-pumper with wildland lines extended to the cave entrance for water needs, and transportation of materials may be accomplished as an exercise for their tactical rescue team (lowering materials to the site utilizing rope rescue techniques).

During the construction activities, access to the site will be limited in order to maintain safety. It is anticipated that the walking access to the entrance(s) will be limited to the personnel working on the project, and the cliff face above the project area will be flagged off to prevent people from hovering over the area where construction is occurring - both to prevent errant rocks from being launched but also to prevent anyone from falling while straining to view the activities. The cul-de-sac at the end of

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Kimberly Lane will be utilized for staging/parking, and likely will not accommodate other vehicles during the weekend. The FD mini-pumper will be located off the pavement and closer to the cave entrance in order to facilitate the provision of water. All participating personnel will be required to sign the County's standard "volunteer waiver" regarding liability.

I apologize for being unable to attend this evening's meeting in person (other duties require me to be out of town), however I will be calling in to the meeting and will therefore be able to answer any questions that the Board may have.