IT Service Announcement

The IT Division is currently undertaking two large projects to overhaul our Membership Management software and redesign our public-facing web presence. As a part of these projects we are retiring a number of legacy systems, including a DOS-based database (NSSTrak) that currently supports our membership management software and a very old server supporting caves.org that is running in donated datacenter space. As you can imagine these involve complex and delicate processes and are being undertaken by a small team of volunteer members who are IT professionals.

Our new membership management system and web presence will afford many new benefits to the NSS. We are excited about the opportunity to use the membership management system as an organization and management tool for IOs. The system will also simplify the dues and renewal process. Because of the number of changes that are in flight we are reviewing the services that are offered by the IT division. We recognize that having a presence on the internet is key to recruiting and retaining members. Many IOs are now using Facebook or other social networking sites. Some IOs are leveraging commercial web hosting, while others want a managed service offered by the NSS.

In light of our move to a new datacenter and the new capabilities that we will soon be able to take advantage of we are announcing a few changes to the NSS' web hosting service. Because the rebuilding of the website involves moving to a new platform, the internal organizations (IOs – grottos, regions, sections, and surveys) who host their own websites on caves.org must also be relocated. Starting in January, IOs using the existing service on our old infrastructure were not billed for their renewals. This service will remain free and the sites running on it will remain online until that hardware is retired.

After the launch of the membership management software later this year we are going to revisit the IO hosting service. We intend to identify the new capabilities for the service and the new cost of the service. At that time IOs may choose to migrate to the new service or may move their sites to another hosting provider. IOs will be given ample warning of when their transition will occur and detailed guidance for how to populate the new accounts. IOs that choose not to migrate to the new service can continue to use the existing hosting service for free until we retire the hardware, no sooner than sometime in 2019.

All sites will be provided a subdomain URL (e.g.: *valleygrotto.caves.org*) which will direct viewers to their site, whether hosted on caves.org or elsewhere. Any IO can request a caves.org subdomain for their IO regardless of whether they are hosted by the NSS or by a third-party provider. More information about subdomains is available on the NSS Hosting page. For IOs that would like to use a commercial hosting provider, the IT Division is able to help and consult on finding an appropriate solution.

If you have any questions about this change please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Kind regards,

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