



NZSS Rules

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Rules or by-laws of the Society are shown in **bold typeface**

Other text in normal typeface is explanatory or advisory.

Introduction

The NZSS Constitution makes provision for “By-laws”, which are rules governing the Society that are not part of the actual Constitution. **Changes to the rules can be made by the Council** rather than at an AGM, and do not need to be notified to the Registrar of Societies, giving more flexibility over changes.

By-laws or rules provide detail on discretionary matters such as membership classes and some officer roles that are not legally required to be defined under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.

All legal requirements for the governance of the Society, such as meeting processes, requirements of officers, dispute resolution, and membership rights and obligations, are fully detailed in the Constitution.

These rules also list documents that the Society has in place to guide members in the practice of caving in New Zealand. **Two of these are “Codes of Behaviour” that members must comply with in order to protect the cave environment and relationships among members and other stakeholders.**

Also listed are nine “Guidelines”, which are policies or procedures to guide members toward best practice in various aspects of their caving activities.

These Rules also record formal arrangements that the Society has with other organisations via Memoranda of Understanding documents.

Classes of membership

The classes of membership are:

- Individual member.
- Joint member, adult (two adults with or without children, or one adult with children).
- Joint member, youth (17 years old or under).
- Youth member – an individual member who is 17 years old or under.
- Corporate member – an organisation member, with the rights of an individual member.
- Honorary life member – an individual member with honorary life membership status.

Also, there is a publications subscriber category, so that organisations can receive publications, but there are no associated membership rights. This category includes organisations with which NZSS exchanges publications, with no fees paid by either party.

Joint members are those living in the same household, and receiving only a single copy of publications (if they have opted for printed publications). Adults within a joint membership have equal privileges and rights.

Members are described as “eligible” if they are individual members, adult joint members, honorary life members, or corporate members. These are the members who are entitled to vote at NZSS Annual and Special General meetings.

Subscriptions and financial status

The current annual subscription rates are:

- | | |
|--|------|
| • Individual or Primary Family membership- | \$35 |
| • Secondary Family membership for adult partner and children | \$25 |
| • Youth membership (outside family situation) | \$20 |
| • Corporate / publications membership | \$35 |

Family membership is capped at \$60. Honorary life members pay no subscription. Subscriptions become due on 1st September. New members joining after 1st March pay half rates.

Club membership fees are additional to NZSS membership.

Subscription rates are set by the Council preceding the Annual General Meeting for the following year. (The last subscription increase was in 1992).

Financial status of members may lapse if subscriptions are unpaid. If a member’s subscription lapses, NZSS is not obliged to supply any publications that have been missed because of the lapse.

Affiliated groups

The groups affiliated to NZSS in May 2026 and their main population centres are:

<u>Auckland</u>	Auckland Speleo Group	www.asg.org.nz
<u>Hamilton</u>	Hamilton Tomo Group	www.htg.org.nz
<u>Palmerston North</u>	Manawatū Speleological Group	www.caves.org.nz/msg
<u>Wellington</u>	Wellington Caving Group	www.caving.org.nz/pmwiki/pmwiki.php
<u>Nelson</u>	Nelson Speleological Group	www.nsg.org.nz
<u>Christchurch</u>	Canterbury Caving Group	http://ccg.50webs.com

Other groups may become affiliated if they comprise five or more NZSS members.

Council officers

The Society is governed by a “Council” of seven to eleven members, which meets about four times a year to consider Society business. These meetings are a mix of face-to-face and online meetings.

Society officers required by the Constitution are: President, Secretary, Treasurer, and CaveSAR Coordinator.

Discretionary Council officer positions are:

**Research Coordinator;
Information Coordinator;
Membership Coordinator;
Training Coordinator;
Safety Coordinator;
Publications Coordinator;
Conservation Coordinator.**

These discretionary Council roles may be amalgamated or re-defined if required. Two roles may be held by a single officer. Various combinations of roles have been used in the past. There are also several non-Council officer roles, including Maps Officer(s), Bulletin Editor, Tomo Times Editor, and Webmaster.

The roles of all officers are outlined at the end of this document, and described fully in the NZSS Handbook (2026 edition, in preparation)

NZSS codes of behaviour

The Society's codes of behaviour are:

- **NZSS Minimum Impact Code** www.caves.org.nz/cave-conservation (Click on internal link)
- **NZSS Code of Conduct** In preparation.

Infractions of these requirements can have a negative effect on a cave and/or karst environment, a person's wellbeing, or landowner relationships, and therefore infringements may result in a complaint which the Council must investigate under the Constitution, possibly resulting in disciplinary action against a member or members.

NZSS guidelines

Among its documentation the Society also has guidelines to advise on many aspects of caving. These are, with links through the NZSS website:

- Cave Conservation Guidelines
- Karst Management Guidelines www.caves.org.nz/cave-conservation (Click on internal link)
- Trip leader guidelines www.caves.org.nz/safe-caving (Click on internal link)
- Overseas expedition guidelines
- Dissemination of information guidelines
- Bolting guidelines
- Mt Owen guidelines www.caves.org.nz/cave-conservation (Click on internal link)
- Private land access guidelines www.caves.org.nz (Click on link in footer)
- Cave Maps Procedure
- Life Membership Guidelines
- Technical Competencies

If website links are not provided, the document can be found through the website in the NZSS Repository. Other guidelines may be introduced from time to time.

NZSS Festival of Caving and Annual General Meeting

The NZSS Festival of Caving is a three-day event normally held during Labour weekend at the end of October. and running across the entire weekend, incorporating the Annual General Meeting, annual dinner, various social events, and caving trips.

The Annual General Meeting is a major focus of the Festival of Caving. Usually the meeting is held at 5pm on the Saturday of the weekend, and is followed by the annual dinner.

The President summarises the achievements of the previous year, and other officers present their reports to the Society membership, including the financial report. Officers' reports should have been previously distributed to the NZSS membership three days before the Festival, to enable members to study them and prepare questions.

Council members are elected or reappointed for the coming year. The incoming Council usually has a meeting on the Monday morning, before the Festival wraps up.

A major feature of the Festival weekend is the judging of competitions and the award of trophies. The competitions are:

- The Photographic Competition, with four sections and an overall award;
- The Literary Competition, for the best NZS Bulletin or Tomo Times article;
- The Lipyeat Award, for the best club newsletter;
- The Survey Award, for the best cave map.

The photographic, literary, and newsletter competition judges are appointed by the club hosting the Festival. The survey competition is judged by the NZSS Council from a shortlist of the year's maps, selected by the Maps Officer(s).

An annual grant may also be awarded to NZSS members who have submitted a worthwhile project to the Council for consideration.

NZSS Cave Access & Conservation Trust

NZSS is the parent organisation of the Cave Access & Conservation Trust (CCAT, www.cavecat.nz), a charitable organisation which engages with projects that involve conservation of and/or access to caves. The NZSS Council appoints the trustees of CCAT.

The objectives of the Trust are to purchase and manage land for “the conservation of caves and karst environments, and the management of access to caves for recreational and other purposes”.

The Trust is managed by a Trust Board of currently four trustees, and owns a 21 ha area of land on Tākaka Hill.

Approved Cave Leader Scheme

The Approved Cave Leader scheme is an agreement between NZSS and the Department of Conservation over access for NZSS members to restricted-entry caves. Every year clubs can nominate members to be given *Approved Cave Leader* status for a particular cave, enabling them to lead a trip to that cave.

The nominations are reviewed by the NZSS Council before the list for the following year is sent to the relevant DOC offices. There are generally no more than about six approved leaders in one club for any particular cave.

Restricted entry caves

Society members must adhere to the Department of Conservation rules on restricted entry caves, which are only accessible with a permit from the Department of Conservation (DOC). Requests for a permit should allow two weeks for the DOC office to provide the permit.

Not all permit caves require an Approved Cave Leader.

The restricted caves, with the relevant DOC offices are:

Hollow Hill	Waitomo	DOC Te Kuiti office
Puketiti Flower Cave	Puketiti	DOC Te Kuiti office
Grand Canyon Cave	Puketiti	DOC Te Kuiti office
Council Cave	Pōhara	DOC Tākaka office
Honeycomb Hill Cave	Karamea	DOC Karamea office
Megamania/Beyond Words	Heaphy Valley	DOC Karamea office
Hollywood Cave	Charleston	DOC Westport office
Bamboo Cave	Charleston	DOC Westport office
The Metro (Te Ananui)	Charleston	DOC Westport office
Babylon Cave (beyond Ishtar Gate)	Fox River	DOC Westport office
Aurora Cave	Te Anau	Doc Te Anau office.

Different provisions including party size and the number of NZSS members apply to each cave.

There are also a few caves to which entry is not available, except under a special permit for approved scientific research or monitoring work.

Memoranda of Understanding

The Society maintains Memoranda of Understanding with several organisations, which have interests overlapping with those of NZSS.

Currently these are:

Department of Conservation

Establishes the shared responsibility of managing caves on DOC estate.

Australian Speleological Federation Cave Rescue Commission, 2020

Provides for co-operation and reciprocal participation in training and exercises.

Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association, 2023

Establishes an understanding around the management of caves and karst areas.

Waitomo Museum Society Trust, 2025 (in draft)

Defines the relationship with the Waitomo Museum.

Outline of officers' roles

The roles are described here in an abbreviated form, outlining the main responsibilities of each officer. Fully detailed descriptions can be found in the NZSS Handbook (2026 version, in preparation). **The first four roles (in bold) are prescribed by the Constitution, and the other roles operate at the Council's discretion.**

An officer may hold two roles, and from time to time two roles may be combined into a single title, such as "Safety and Training", at the discretion of the Council, depending on the preferences of the Council officers.

The President has oversight of the Council and represents the Society to land owners, government agencies, cave managers, and other organisations. The President chairs Council and Society meetings, supports Council members in their roles, and attends to general matters affecting caving in New Zealand.

The Secretary deals with the day-to-day administration of the Society. The Secretary manages NZSS correspondence, arranges Council meetings, and records and circulates the minutes at all NZSS Council and general meetings. The Secretary notifies members of Society meetings and forthcoming Council vacancies and elections, and arranges for an election if required (as set out in the constitution).

The Treasurer manages the Society's finances, including dealing with payments, maintaining cash books and budgeting for Society expenses. The Treasurer presents the annual accounts at the AGM.

The CaveSAR Coordinator maintains liaison with Police National Headquarters and Land SAR, and represents NZSS on the National Land SAR committee. The CaveSAR Coordinator chairs the Underground Sub-committee, ensures that local groups maintain effective callout systems, oversees funding of SAR equipment, and ensures that training courses and exercises take place.

The Membership Coordinator maintains the membership database and distribution lists of Society members, and arranges the renewal of subscriptions. The Membership Coordinator contacts new members with information about the Society, and issues membership cards.

The Publications Co-ordinator oversees the production and distribution of the Society's published material, particularly the NZS Bulletin, and the Tomo Times, as well as occasional publications on various topics. The Publications Coordinator guides a team, including the Bulletin Editor and Tomo Times editor.

The Research Coordinator usually has a sound understanding of a least one aspect of speleology. The role of this officer is to encourage, record, and report any aspect of speleological research in New Zealand caves.

The Research Coordinator is a bridge between researchers and institutions conducting scientific research across the country and the caving community.

The Conservation Coordinator represents the Society in the conservation and preservation of New Zealand caves and karst, by liaising with Department of Conservation offices, commercial operators, and local

authorities, etc. The Conservation Coordinator also monitors resource consent applications and regional and district plans and DOC management plans and strategies that impact on karst areas or caves, promotes awareness of cave conservation amongst the NZSS membership, and provides information on conservation issues in Society publications.

The Information Coordinator is responsible for collection, management, and storage of the Society's records, and liaises with the Waitomo Museum of Caves for storage of the Society's library and physical archives. The Information Officer maintains the NZSS website, NZSS archives, the online Repository, and keeps records of New Zealand cave statistics and NZSS competition award winners.

The Training oversees training courses nationally and assists local groups with their training, including courses on SRT, cave rigging, etc. The Training officer can provide training materials, keeps up with technical developments, and monitors training standards.

The Safety Coordinator is a conduit for safe caving practices, and liaises with other organisations involved in the safe practice of caving. The Safety Coordinator develops and promotes the Society's safety standards, and maintains accident and incident reports, keeps abreast of new caving practices and equipment, and communicates safety issues to members.

Non-Council officers

Four or five non-Council officers have important roles managing the Society's information and publications. A Council officer may hold one of these positions.

The Maps Officer maintains the Society's collection of cave surveys, and assists the Information Coordinator to make them available to members. The role may be split between North Island and South Island officers.

The Bulletin editor produces the NZS Bulletin twice-yearly.

The Tomo Times editor produces the newsletter Tomo Times four times a year.

The Webmaster maintains the NZSS website.

Other members may be appointed informally or formally to maintain social media connections between members.

Appointment of officers

The 2025 NZSS Constitution provides a detailed process for the election of officers at an Annual or Special General Meeting. However, elections for positions are rare, and typically those standing for office need to be persuaded into the role and are elected unopposed.

For the appointment of officers where an election is unlikely to take place, the following process is applied.

Prior to the Council meeting before the AGM, each Council members declares their preference from three options for the AGM and the following year.

- 1. They may opt to retain their position (unless there is a contending candidate, in which case an election must be held);**
- 2.,They may step down from the role, requiring a replacement to be found, or;**
- 3. They may "stand aside". This option enables a member who desires the position but does not want to contend an election to take the role unopposed.**

If there is no other contender and an officer opts to retain their position, (or if they have stood aside), the officer is automatically re-appointed to the position.