



Protect America's Climbing



February 28, 2023

West Virginia Speaker of the House Roger Hanshaw
Room 228M, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

Representative Hanshaw,

I have recently been informed of Delegate Gary Howell's bill, H.B. 3560, that would update the Recreational Use Statutes in West Virginia to include certain activities such as rock climbing. On behalf of the Access Fund and the millions of climbers we represent locally and across the country, I want to express our support for this legislation and the update of the Recreational Use Statutes.

West Virginia contains some of the most treasured landscapes for rock climbing in the eastern part of the country. From the world renowned New River Gorge region, to the unique resources at Seneca Rocks and Coopers Rock State Forest, the state has much to offer rock climbers. In addition to the existing rock climbing resources, there is also a staggering amount of potential for expanded access on private property across the state. Updating the Recreational Use Statutes to include rock climbing greatly improves our ability to work with private landowners to open their land for recreational use, and responsibly manage rock climbing activities¹. Rock climbing, and outdoor recreation more broadly, are major economic drivers for West Virginia bringing in an estimated \$12.1 million annually to the greater New River Gorge area². As West Virginia continues to embrace outdoor recreation and tourism as a new economic driver, Access Fund, Local Climbing Organizations—like the New River Alliance of Climbers—and local climbers need support from the state legislature to be successful in creating an environment for improved and sustainable climbing access.

I offer my full support for West Virginia H.B 3560 for the updates to the Recreational Use Statutes and hope to see this effort move forward this week.

¹ https://d1w9vyym276tvm.cloudfront.net/assets/AccessFund_ClimbingOnYourLand_Spread.pdf

² <https://d1w9vyym276tvm.cloudfront.net/assets/Maples-and-associates-2019-New-River-Gorge-study.pdf>

Sincerely,



Daniel Dunn

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The Access Fund

The Access Fund is a national advocacy organization that leads and inspires the climbing community toward sustainable access and conservation of the climbing environment.

A 501c(3) nonprofit and accredited land trust representing millions of climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing—rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering—the Access Fund is a US climbing advocacy organization with over 20,000 members and over 150 local affiliates. Access Fund provides climbing management expertise, stewardship, project specific funding, and educational outreach. For more information about the Access Fund, visit www.accessfund.org.

New River Alliance of Climbers

The New River Alliance of Climbers (NRAC) is a 501c(3) nonprofit with a mission to preserve and promote climbing access in the New River Gorge and surrounding areas and to conserve climbing resources. NRAC mobilizes local climbers to engage in stewardship, conservation, advocacy, and community building efforts in their region.

Cc:

Zachary Lesch-Huie, Access Fund VP of Programs and Acquisitions

Matt Carpenter, New River Alliance of Climbers Board President