



Protect America's Climbing



June 26, 2017

Justin Fleury, Lead Park Planner
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, TX 78744

Submitted via email: Justin.fleury@tpwd.texas.gov

RE: Public comment to Chinati Mountains State Natural Area public use plan.

The Access Fund and Texas Climbers Coalition (TCC) appreciate the opportunity to provide public comment to Texas Parks and Wildlife's (TPWD) proposed public use plan for Chinati Mountains State Natural Area (CMSNA). TPWD manages some of the most unique resources in the State, some of which have become world-renowned for recreational rock climbing. The West Texas region is the most promising area for rock climbing within the state parks system.

Comments

We request that rock climbing be recognized and incorporated into the Chinati Mountains State Natural Area public use plan. This would maintain consistency with TPWD's current management of rock climbing at another Texas state natural area with significant rock climbing resources (i.e., Enchanted Rock SNA). It would also strengthen the partnership between TPWD and rock climbers to conserve and steward the natural resources within state parks.

Access Fund and Texas Climbers Coalition have reviewed the initial planning concepts developed by TPWD for CMSNA and commend your efforts in analyzing and planning for such a large and rugged area. Our evaluation of TPWD's report, combined with first-hand experience of the surrounding area, reveals the presence of high-quality rock climbing resources within the Chinati Mountains. Furthermore, TPWD's photo analysis of the park reveals fantastic climbing resources within multiple sectors of the park (i.e., Indian Springs, San Antonio Canyon, Tinaja Prieta Canyon, and Orona, at a minimum).

We also appreciate the delicate balance that TPWD must strike in allowing recreation while conserving the natural environment. Our organizations can help in this effort by:

- Creating an inventory of available climbing resources; and
- Assisting TPWD with trail building, education, and other stewardship efforts.

Finally, we feel that Concept 2 of the proposed public use plan (“Solitude”) strikes the appropriate balance between recreational opportunities and conservation. Concept 2 has a high number of primitive campsites and over 90 miles of diverse trails. This design will allow for multiple recreational uses while minimizing potential user conflicts. It also provides ample front country facilities which do not appear to encroach on the natural aesthetic of the park.

Access Fund and Texas Climbers Coalition

The Access Fund is a national advocacy organization and accredited land trust whose mission is to keep climbing areas open and conserve the climbing environment. Access Fund is the largest climbing advocacy organization in the U.S. with over 15,000 members and over 100 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. The Texas Climbers Coalition is an affiliate of Access Fund with over 30 years of experience protecting rock climbing on public and private lands through stewardship projects, community engagement, and advocacy.

Access Fund and TCC look forward to a continued relationship with TPWD as the planning for CMSNA moves forward. We greatly appreciate the efforts of TPWD in managing and developing the precious public lands that we have in Texas. Please feel free to contact me at 720-588-3512 or at erik@accessfund.org or you may contact our Texas liaison, Brian Tickle, at 512-965-5193 or r.brian.tickle@gmail.com, if we can provide any further comment or future assistance.

Sincerely,



Erik Murdock
Access Fund Policy Director



Adam Mitchell
TCC President

Cc: Kevin Good, TPWD, Special Assistant to the Director
Nathanael Gold, TPWD, Complex Manager
Brady Robinson, Access Fund, Executive Director
Katie Goodwin, Policy Associate
Joe Sambataro, Access Director
Brian Tickle, Legislative Liaison