

VERTICAL TIMES

The National Publication of the Access Fund
Fall 14/Volume 101
www.accessfund.org

ROCK Project takes on the flood of new climbers

page 8



COMMIT TO THE PACT 5

INSIDE SCOOP: HUECO TANKS 6

URBAN ROCK: GETTING CITIES AND TOWNS TO EMBRACE CLIMBING 13



“UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”—*The Lorax*

The growing popularity of climbing and subsequent impact on the crags, cliffs, and boulders has been a highly publicized topic in recent months. The discourse has run the spectrum from pointing fingers and blaming certain segments of the climbing community to a more optimistic message of “we are all in this together” that encourages all climbers to pitch in and take care of the climbing areas we love. I’ve had a number of conversations recently that confirm these varying perspectives, and despite the differences, most conversations ultimately lead to the question: If we know that climbing is increasing in popularity and that this increase comes with both threats and opportunities...what do we do about it?

Is education the answer?

At its best, education inspires, engages, and leads to action. At its worst, it feels preachy and disconnected, leading to discontent and blowback. Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound, said that “indoctrination is of the devil.” The last thing that climbers want is to feel preached at or overregulated. Yet each of us lives within the tension of freedom and regulation that exists to protect our most precious natural resources. So, how do we reach out to the growing community of climbers in a way that builds bridges, not walls, and inspires the community as a whole to take care of our climbing areas and engage our sense of personal responsibility?

The time is ripe to help shape what it means to be a “climber”—where the skills of movement, belaying, and safety go hand in hand with the skills needed to minimize our impact on climbing areas.

I was hired in August of this year to spearhead the Access Fund’s new education initiative, ROCK Project, in partnership with Black Diamond Equipment. Climber education is not new, and ROCK Project will stand on the shoulders of the great educational efforts that are already inspiring and engaging climbers as stewards and responsible users of our climbing resources.

ROCK Project aims to meet people where they are at—the climbing gyms, outdoor programs, events and competitions, retail stores, and our beloved crags, cliffs, and boulders—empowering climbers with the tools and knowledge to address our most pressing issues.

We can’t “auto correct” our impact when we go climbing, but we can help climbers better understand the reasons for regulation and the sensitive issues impacting the places we climb, so that we can all do our part to better care for the climbing areas we love.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Travis Herbert".

Travis Herbert
Education Director

ACCESS FUND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

President, Mark Baum, VA
Vice President, Kenji Haroutunian, CA
Treasurer, Ryan Gellert, Amsterdam
Secretary, Alex Kutches, WA

BOARD MEMBERS

Elaina Arenz, WV
 Lyn Barraza, CA
 Jeff Buhl, CO
 Matt Compton, OR
 Peter Croft, CA
 Ryan Gellert, UT
 Kenji Haroutunian, CA
 Jonah Harrison, WA
 Jamie McNally, TX
 Perry Norris, CA
 Mark Synnott, NH

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

Rick Accomazzo, CO
 Larry Gustafson, TX
 John Juraschek, NC
 Michael Kennedy, CO
 Armando Menocal, WY
 Dave Rosenstein, NJ
 Bill Supple, VT

ACCESS FUND STAFF

Mandy Bishop
Office Manager
 303.545.6772 x104
 mandy@accessfund.org

Jim Chase
Operations Director
 303.545.6772 x107
 jim@accessfund.org

Peter Dodge
Membership Manager
 303.545.6772 x103
 peter@accessfund.org

Leici Hendrix
Development Director
 303.545.6772 x106
 leici@accessfund.org

Travis Herbert
Education Director
 303.545.6772 x102
 travis@accessfund.org

Jason Keith
Sr. Policy Advisor
 303.818.2969
 jason@accessfund.org

Zachary Lesch-Huie
National Affiliate Director & Southeast Regional Director
 828.545.7362
 zachary@accessfund.org

Mike Morin
Conservation Specialist
 720.624.6051
 conservatiionteam@accessfund.org

Erik Murdock
Policy Director
 720.588.3512
 erik@accessfund.org

Amanda Peterson
Conservation Specialist
 720.624.6051
 conservatiionteam@accessfund.org

Brady Robinson
Executive Director
 303.545.6772 x101
 brady@accessfund.org

Joe Sambataro
National Access Director & Northwest Regional Director
 425.218.8234
 joe@accessfund.org

Curt Shannon
Arizona Policy Analyst
 480.382.1445
 curt@accessfund.org

Holly Smolenski
Communications & Marketing Director
 303.545.6772 x100
 holly@accessfund.org

Anneliese Thies
Development Associate
 303.545.6772 x114
 anneliese@accessfund.org

Ty Tyler
Stewardship Director
 303.545.6772 x105
 ty@accessfund.org

GENERAL COUNSEL

Chris Archer



LCO 101: Building Relationships with New Climbers

Bringing new climbers into the fold can make a tremendous difference in your local climbing organization's (LCO's) education and stewardship efforts. When climbers who are new to the sport understand access issues and challenges early on, they are much more likely to develop into access-conscious climbers as they progress in the sport. But it's not always easy to make those connections when age and experience levels vary so widely. Here are some tips to help you bridge the gaps and begin building relationships with new climbers.

- **Be welcoming.** Create messaging for your website, social media, and events that is welcoming to new climbers. Ask your volunteers and board members to assume an inclusive attitude when representing your LCO.
- **Connect at the source.** More often than not, new climbers are coming out of gyms and outdoor programs. Strike up partnerships with your local climbing gyms and college outdoor programs and ask for the time or space to engage with new climbers.
- **Offer an invitation.** Once you've made the initial connection, invite new climbers to your next Adopt a Crag, board meeting, or social event.

Washington Climbers Step Up Wilderness Stewardship

In September, Washington Climbers Coalition (WCC), the Access Fund-Jeep Conservation Team, and the Mountaineers joined forces with the Darrington Ranger District for trail work at Three O'Clock Rock outside Darrington, Washington. Forest Service staff and climber volunteers constructed stone stairs, shored up a handful of drainage structures, and removed logs blocking the trail, which enters the Boulder River Wilderness a half mile from the trailhead. Keep up the great work WCC!



New LCOs in Montana and Pennsylvania



The Access Fund is excited to welcome Western Montana Climbers Coalition (WMCC) and Southwest Pennsylvania Climbers Coalition (SWPACC) to the national network of local climbing organizations. WMCC is a nonprofit supporting climbing access, safety, and conservation. They are currently working on stewardship and access at the Mill Creek area. SWPACC was initially formed to protect an access point to Coll's Cove, a popular sandstone bouldering area pictured here. The group is working on nonprofit incorporation and protecting access to other areas in southwest Pennsylvania.

Taking Care of Muir Valley in the Red River Gorge



This spring, landowners Rick and Liz Weber announced plans to gift Muir Valley to Friends of Muir Valley (FOMV). FOMV has been working hard to meet their fundraising goal of \$200,000 and is now over half way there with \$130,000 raised. FOMV also continues to ramp up maintenance, stewardship, and management of the

area. Their recent trail day rallied more than 130 volunteers to build and maintain new trails, remove invasive species, and build a new bridge. Donate at <http://friendsofmuirvalley.org/donate>.

Iowa Climbers Coalition Going Strong

It's time to plan a climbing trip to Iowa! That's right—Iowa offers great climbing at places like Hoot Bluff, Backbone State Park, and Pictured Rocks. These crags are looked after by the Iowa Climbers Coalition (ICC), a



local Access Fund Affiliate, which completed their annual Pictured Rocks Adopt a Crag. Two dozen volunteers built a trail to the Gumby Wall, constructed belay platforms at Ship Rock, and installed a climbers' kiosk at the trailhead. Nice work ICC! Learn more at www.iowaclimbers.org.



THE PACT

We are at a pivotal crossroads in climbing history—our sport is growing in popularity, and the sheer number of people climbing outside is having a tremendous impact on our climbing areas. The future of climbing access depends on us: the strong, passionate tribe of climbers who are committed to protecting the climbing areas we love. Join us and take responsibility for the places we climb.

Commit to the ROCK Project Pact...and challenge your climbing friends and partners to do the same.

I WILL

- **Respect** other users.
- **Dispose** of human waste properly.
- **Park** and camp in designated areas.
- **Stay** on established trails.
- **Place** gear and pads on durable surfaces.
- **Clean up** chalk and tick marks.
- **Keep** a low profile, minimizing group size and noise.
- **Pack out** all trash, crash pads, and gear.
- **Respect** closures.
- **Be** an upstander, not a bystander.

COMMIT TO PROTECTING CLIMBING ACCESS



THE INSIDE SCOOP: HUECO TANKS

If you're like most climbers, you pore over guidebooks for weeks or even months when planning a climbing trip. You educate yourself on routes, descents, gear, and camping. But what about the local ethics, issues, and challenges at your destination crag? Part of being a responsible climber is knowing how to tread lightly—both socially and environmentally. In the *Inside Scoop* series, we connect you with local climbing access leaders at some of the

country's top climbing destinations for valuable insight into local ethics and issues.

Destination: HUECO TANKS STATE PARK AND HISTORIC SITE, TEXAS

Local expert: SARAH MARTIN-ONTIVEROS, BOARD MEMBER OF HUECO TANKS COALITION

What challenges does the Hueco climbing community face right now? One of our biggest challenges is education. Hueco is a sensitive desert environment with some spectacular cultural resources in the form of petroglyphs and sacred sites. We see many climbers from all reaches of the globe, and we work hard to make sure everyone understands how to climb here responsibly.

What does the access situation look like at Hueco? A Public Use Plan was implemented in 1998, putting certain parameters around park access. Seventy-five percent of the park is accessible only through a guided tour, while the other 25 percent has a limited number of day-use slots. Climbers have to plan ahead to gain entry into the park.

Are there currently any threats to climbing access? Some local residents have voiced concern that they cannot gain access to the park because it is monopolized by climbers. There are groups who would like to limit all climbing in the park.

How do you address overcrowding? We help the park monitor impacts and manage traffic to certain areas.

Climbing tours tend to bottleneck in certain areas and cause too much impact. We became concerned with the overcrowding and proposed that the park break popular areas into zones and force the guides to be specific about which zones they were visiting. This allowed the park to better manage the traffic, lessen impacts, and create a more pleasant experience for visitors.

How is the relationship between climbers and the land managers? Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) manages the park. We have a lot of respect for them and keep the lines of communication open.

What are the local ethics at Hueco? We have a pretty clear code of ethics that we ask all climbers to follow:

- The desert is a fragile environment that does not recover from heavy traffic quickly. Do not place pads on plants and do not drag your pad over dirt areas. This increases erosion. Please pick your pad up and replace it.
- Leave artifacts untouched. Respect closures and avoid climbing at pictograph sites, even if a closure sign is not present.

- Always respect the plant life and under no circumstances remove or prune plant life, even if it gets in the way of a boulder problem.
- No colored chalk, rosins, or pof.
- Leave no trace. Erase tick marks and pack out all trash, especially climbing tape.
- Stick to established trails.
- While on backcountry tours, listen to your guide. Their knowledge of the park and climbing problems is an important link in the climber and park relationship.
- Do not modify holds. Hueco is a huge park; a better problem is right around the corner.
- Respect park staff. Make sure you are outside the park gate or in the campground by closing. That means packing up to leave a half hour before the park closes.

Any words of wisdom for folks visiting Hueco for the first time? Set aside the "send and crush" mentality, and take a step back and look around. Hueco is an amazing place! Remember to appreciate your environment and treat it with respect. ■

CLIMBING IN WILDERNESS

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and celebrate climbers' connection to wild places.

CLIMBERS HAVE PLAYED A CRITICAL ROLE IN WILDERNESS AND CONSERVATION HISTORY

JOHN MUIR



In the late 1800s, pioneer climber and second American Alpine Club president John Muir fought for the conservation of America's wild places and was a key player in establishing the National Park system.

DAVID BROWER



Prolific climber David Brower was instrumental in the 1964 signing of the Wilderness Act while he was the executive director of the Sierra Club. He also placed what is believed to be the first climbing bolt in the US, in 1938.

YVON CHOUINARD



Yvon Chouinard, groundbreaking climber and founder of Patagonia, helped develop environmentally friendly climbing techniques and gear. A dedicated conservationist, Chouinard has helped conserve many of America's wild places.



THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OFFICIALLY LEGITIMIZED WILDERNESS CLIMBING IN 2013.

"Climbing is a legitimate and appropriate use of wilderness."

—National Park Service Director's Order #41, Section 7.2, 2013

THE WILDERNESS CLIMBING LANDSCAPE

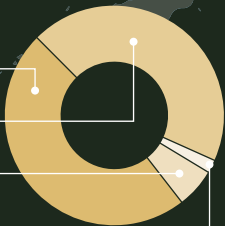
WHICH FEDERAL AGENCIES MANAGE WILDERNESS CLIMBING?

48% National Park Service

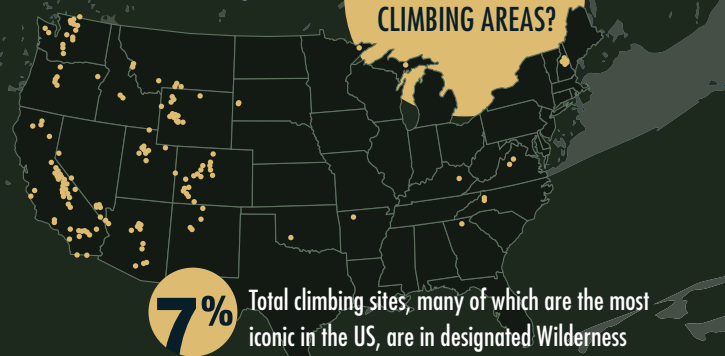
44% National Forest Service

6% Bureau of Land Management

2% Fish and Wildlife Service



WHERE ARE WILDERNESS CLIMBING AREAS?



7%

Total climbing sites, many of which are the most iconic in the US, are in designated Wilderness

ALL CLIMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO FOLLOW THE WILDERNESS CLIMBING ETHIC:



- 1. Be inspired!** It is a privilege to climb in these beautiful, wild places.
- 2. Be aware** of and respect Wilderness climbing regulations, restrictions, and closures.
- 3. Use removable climbing protection** whenever possible.
- 4. Get appropriate authorizations** from land managers before placing a fixed anchor.
- 5. Understand that bolts are used as a last resort** and must be placed by hand.
- 6. Tread lightly** to minimize impacts. Adopt Leave No Trace principles and climbing practices.

We're all in it TOGETHER

ROCK Project takes on the flood of new climbers

By Laura Snider



In January 1987, Rich Johnston was hunkered down in a tent on the flanks of Aconcagua—hostage to a relentless wind—when the idea that would help transform the sport of climbing came to him. What if climbers had a place to go in the winter? What if there was a refuge for after-work training or for escaping the dismal weather?

Later that year, in a grim Seattle warehouse that abutted the train tracks, Johnston and Dan Cauthorn, his partner on Aconcagua, glued chunks of rocks to the walls and, with that, opened the country's first climbing gym.

"A lot of people in the climbing community thought it was a stupid idea to bring climbing indoors," said Johnston, president of Vertical World,

which today operates three gyms in Washington State. "It was really crude; it was just a little climber-rat gym—a place to hang out in winter and in bad weather."

It didn't make any money, either, and Johnston didn't quit his day job. But the next year, Metolius began manufacturing plastic holds. By the early 1990s, other gyms were beginning to open their doors across the country, and Vertical World started turning a profit. The climbing gym revolution had begun.

Today, there are more than 1,400 climbing gyms in North America serving an estimated 4,300 new climbers each day. Some of those climbers inevitably journey from plastic holds to real rock, where they join the ranks of other new climbers entering the sport through outdoor education courses, guide services, and school programs. The sheer sum of people now visiting climbing areas from Yosemite Valley to the Red River Gorge—including older climbers—has become one of the greatest access challenges of recent years.

This fall, the Access Fund announced plans to address this challenge head on with a new program called ROCK Project. The education initiative aims to shift the collective climbing culture to include basic tenets of behavior that reduce our impact on the land.

The goal is to reach out to new climbers who are just venturing into the outdoors, as well as experienced climbers whose behaviors at the crag—like using social trails or camping in undesignated areas—may have been fine when our collective numbers were fewer but may now cause issues as the pressure on the land continues to rise.

"We're all in this together, whether we're new to climbing or seasoned veterans," said Travis Herbert, who joined the Access Fund earlier this year to spearhead the project. "We want to help support the creation of positive habits for all climbers—just like we pack our packs or rack our gear—to act in ethical ways that protect access."

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

The launch of ROCK Project is a logical next step for the Access Fund—and it builds on the organization's decades of work. The Access Fund's basic undertaking from its founding has been to protect access in the most direct form: purchasing climbing areas outright and working with land managers to craft regulations that allow climbers to actually show up and climb.

But in recent years, the Access Fund, and especially the Conservation Team, has been working hard

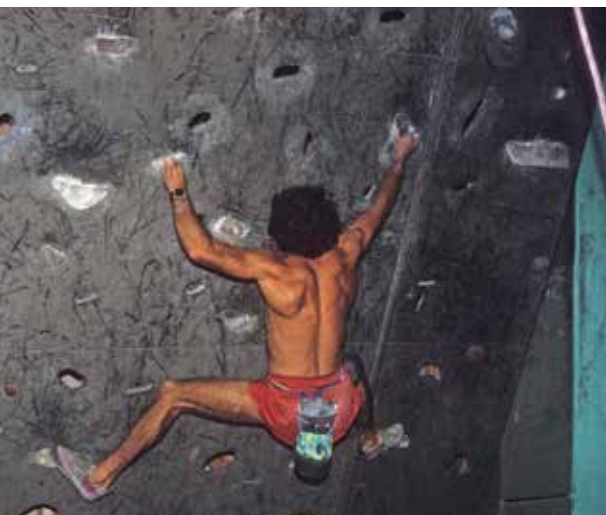


Photo courtesy of Rich Johnston

to improve climbing areas, by building, maintaining, and upgrading infrastructure—from trails to outhouses to parking areas—to help diffuse the pressure put on those areas by the increasing number of climbers. Now, with ROCK Project, the Access Fund is targeting the behavior of the climbers themselves.

But turning ideas into reality requires resources, and that's where Black Diamond comes in. The gear-manufacturing company has agreed to throw vital support to the new program over the next three years.

Black Diamond's decision to come on board reflects the company's long history of involvement in the

community; we're all out there climbing together."

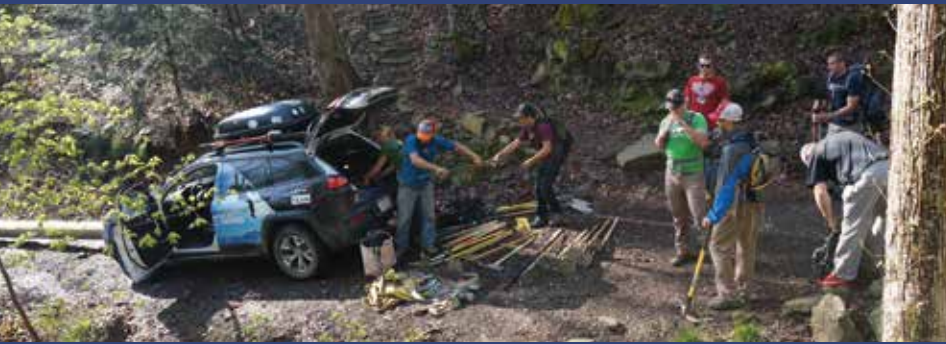
THE PACT

Since Education Director Travis Herbert showed up at the Access Fund's offices in late summer, he's been busy working on the details of the project. What are the nuts and bolts behind a program that inspires? A program that feels inclusive, that's effective, and that will have staying power for years to come?

There are a lot of answers—from a web-based toolbox to in-person clinics—but it starts with the fundamentals. The first part of the project, rolled out in November, is The Pact, a call to the climbing community to commit to 10 ethical climbing behaviors that protect climbing access and to hold each other accountable. The behaviors are:

- Respect other users.
- Dispose of human waste properly.
- Park and camp in designated areas.
- Stay on established trails.
- Place gear and pads on durable surfaces.
- Keep a low profile, minimizing group size and noise.
- Clean up chalk and tick marks.
- Pack out all trash, crash pads, and gear.
- Respect closures.
- Be an upstander, not a bystander.

The tenets are simple—for many, they won't come as a surprise—but that's by design. The idea is for the behaviors to be easy to remember and understand, so people can easily incorporate them into the routines of the way they go climbing.



"The Conservation Team has been preparing the land for the people to show up," said Access Fund Executive Director Brady Robinson. "Now we're trying to prepare the people to show up to the land. The two go hand in hand."

The fact that more and more climbers are showing up at the crags—bringing with them the issues inherent to crowds, from loud noise to trampled vegetation—does not come as a surprise to anyone who's visited their favorite climbing area recently. "When we talk to people about our work, as soon as the explosion of climbing gym development comes up, people tell us how worried they are about all these people going outside," Robinson said. "ROCK Project is an idea whose time has come."

The Conservation Team has been preparing the land for the people to show up. Now we're trying to prepare the people to show up to the land.

climbing community as well as an acknowledgement of how climbing culture is changing, said Jonathan Thesenga, global sports marketing manager at Black Diamond.

"We're a company of climbers, and we want to support the things we care deeply about: preservation of climbing access and the climbing culture," said Thesenga, who's been climbing since the mid-1980s, and

who has seen the ritual of how new climbers learn the ropes change.

"A lot of people are climbing in gyms now without a lot of mentorship for climbing outside—it's something we see at the crags all the time," he said. "We want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. We want to help develop this project to educate and inspire climbers. These are people who are part of the climbing

“Unless we engage in our daily climbing routines intentionally and mindfully, it’s difficult to shift our behaviors,” said Herbert, a 20-year climbing veteran who notes that The Pact is not just directed at new climbers. In fact, the participation of old hands in the climbing community is vital. Experienced climbers are role models, but also, as the number of people who show up at the crags increases, climbing behaviors that used be acceptable by virtue of so few people climbing could now endanger access.

“We need our members, the people who are already part of our tribe, to help launch The Pact and help us spread the word,” Herbert said.



Photo Courtesy of College Outside

MEETING THE CLIMBERS WHERE THEY'RE AT

In the coming months, ROCK Project programs will also be on the ground meeting new climbers where they're at. The Access Fund is partnering with gyms, especially those in large urban areas where members have easy access to nearby rock, to put on multiday events that incorporate The Pact into their fabric. The details are still being hammered out, but the events will likely include indoor

clinics, outdoor climbing, participation in an Adopt a Crag service project, possibly campfires or other tried-and-true climber-style parties, and the presence of some of Black Diamond's professional athletes.

Unless we engage in our daily climbing routines intentionally and mindfully, it's difficult to shift our behaviors.

“We'll all climb together. We'll all take care of the crag together,” Thesenga said of the vision for the events. “People will have the opportunity to climb with world-famous athletes and learn the tricks of the trade from them in a relaxed, peer-to-peer environment.”

One of the urban areas where the Access Fund is excited to build partnerships is the San Francisco area, where the climbers are plentiful and so is the outdoor rock. And gyms in the area—including local powerhouses Planet Granite and Touchstone Climbing and Fitness—are excited about having the Access Fund provide another resource for their members.

Planet Granite, which operates three facilities in the San Francisco area, has long supported the Access Fund and had recently asked for help educating their new climbers, who have a choice of some of the country's best climbing areas when they start to head outside.

The program fits with Planet Granite's core mission to serve climbers with a holistic approach, said Cris Valerio, the gym's knowledge manager. When the gym first opened about two decades ago, being holistic meant offering yoga and other fitness classes to complement training on the rock wall. But today, giving members an opportunity to learn how to climb outside responsibly is part of what holistic means.

“We're really excited about having an entity that can educate and

set standards for people to work towards,” Valerio said. “It's another place where people can aspire towards something.”

Similarly, Touchstone Climbing and Fitness, which operates multiple gyms in the greater San Francisco area, is ecstatic to be working with the Access Fund on this important issue.

“These days, so many climbers are born on the walls of our indoor gym,” said Lauryn Claassen, director of marketing at Touchstone. “We feel a responsibility to help ‘raise them right’ and make sure they're the best climbing ambassadors they can possibly be, should they choose to venture outside. By inspiring and educating our members on access issues and giving them the information and skills to address their impacts, we are giving them the tools to fully embrace the sport.”

The Access Fund hopes to roll out six major events in 2015 at gyms like Planet Granite and Touchstone Climbing and Fitness. And Herbert is hoping to reach out to other types of organizations that introduce people to climbing, like outdoor education groups and guide services.

“The partnerships are key to creating a sustaining program that can live on,” said Herbert. “Our partners know what resonates with their own communities.”

To be successful, the Access Fund needs your help—the committed members—to get ROCK Project off the ground. As climbers who have demonstrated that you care about access, and as mentors in the community, please commit to The Pact and encourage your climbing partners to do the same. To commit, visit

www.accessfund.org/the Pact. ■

UNAWEEP CANYON: A 25-YEAR HISTORY OF CONSERVATION AND CLIMBING ACCESS

The recent acquisition of Television Wall and Lower Mother's Buttress marks the culmination of a quarter century of climbers taking action to protect UnawEEP Canyon in western Colorado. As many volunteers and local climbing organizations know firsthand, climbing an overhanging offwidth is typically easier than a land protection project. But commitment, perseverance, and a healthy dose of patience can take a crag from closed to forever open.

UnawEEP Canyon's stunning beauty and towering granite cliffs were the "secret" of western Colorado climbers through the 1980s. However, developers began to purchase and subdivide the valley, cutting off access to the cliffs. In 1991, the Access Fund collaborated with local climbers to purchase Sunday, Fortress, and Hidden Valley Walls from private landowners in the canyon. The project involved two separate acquisitions, trail work, subdivision, and numerous stages to complete over the course of three years.

While the Access Fund's lands provided a stronghold of conservation and public access along this portion of the UnawEEP-Tabeguache Scenic Byway, much of the canyon remained privately held and closed to climbing.

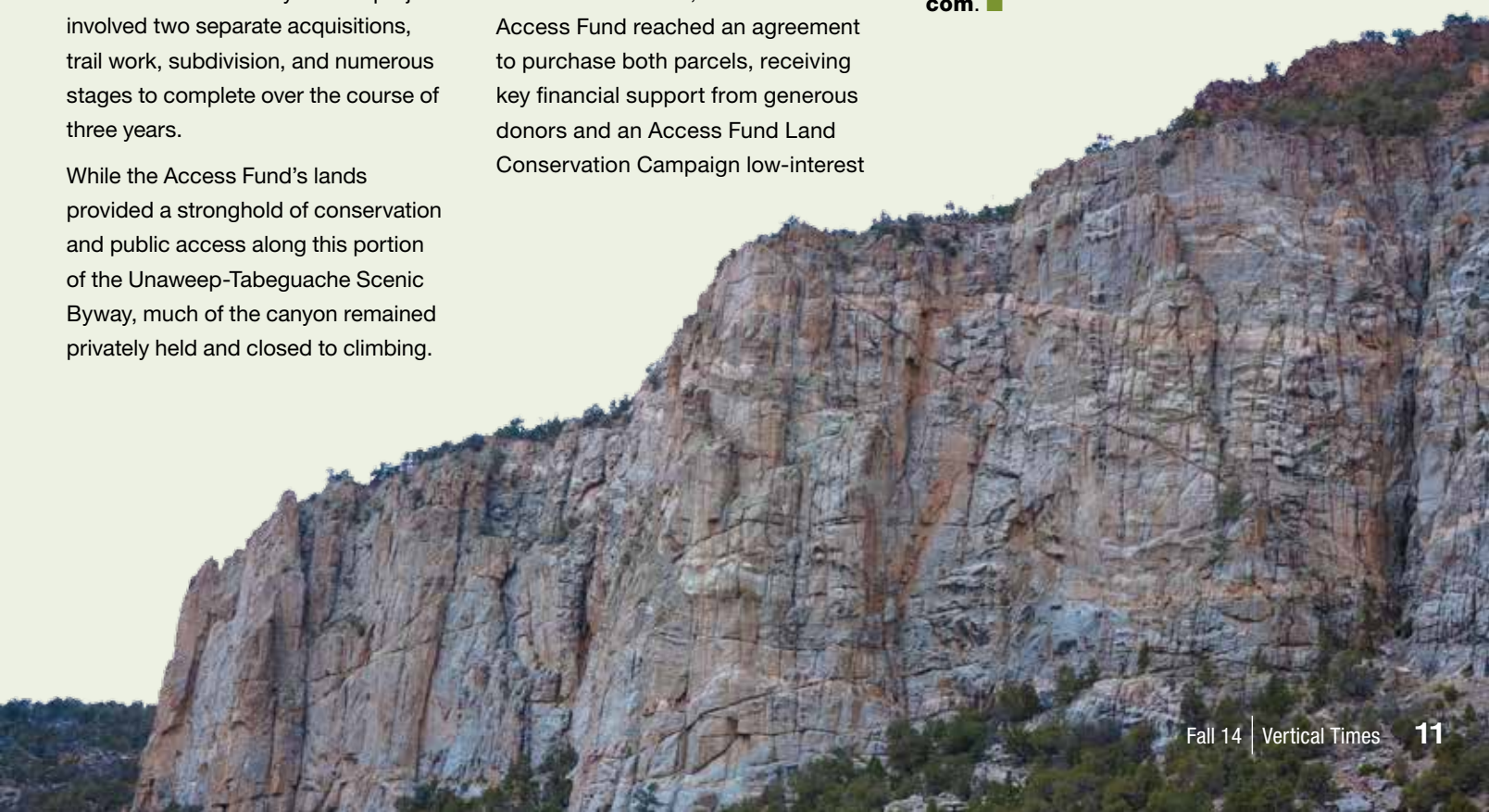
In 2007, local climbers of Grand Junction formed Western Colorado Climbers' Coalition (WCCC) to further protect and steward the region's rock and ice. WCCC set their eyes on the Upper Mother's Buttress property, initiating a purchase and subdivision in partnership with local climbers John and Marti Peterson in 2008. In 2010, WCCC completed the subdivision and trailhead construction of another great climbing venue just a quarter mile east of the Access Fund properties.

For a number of decades, the lower portion of Mother's Buttress and Television Wall were open to climbing. However, the property owner posted no trespassing signs and sought to sell the property three years ago. With a successful acquisition under their belt, WCCC recognized the need to regain access to the parcels. After two years of negotiations to purchase or lease the cliffline, WCCC and the Access Fund reached an agreement to purchase both parcels, receiving key financial support from generous donors and an Access Fund Land Conservation Campaign low-interest

loan of \$134,200 to secure the threatened climbing area.

With this 2014 acquisition complete, the Access Fund and WCCC have consolidated free public access to the major cliffs of UnawEEP Canyon, adding 40 acres of land and around 50 high-quality granite climbing routes to previously protected lands. But as with any conservation project, the work is far from over. The Access Fund and WCCC have applied for a significant grant from Great Outdoors Colorado, a lottery-funded open space grant program. If WCCC is unable to raise sufficient funds from grants or private donors, they will pursue an alternative plan to subdivide the cliffs from the road frontage and sell two home sites, while preserving the cliffs in perpetuity.

Please support this important conservation effort at westernslopeclimbers.blogspot.com. ■





HIDDEN VALLEY REOPENED!

The 2001 guide to Virginia rock climbing made brief mention of a then little-known sandstone climbing area: “In extreme Southwestern Virginia, near the town of Abingdon, is what may be Virginia’s best sport climbing area,” stated author Eric Hörst. Though he didn’t know it at the time, the area was soon to be closed.

The long sandstone cliffline of Hidden Valley sits high on the southern crest of Brumley Mountain. The south facing crag overlooks the spiny ridge of Clinch Mountain, which zigzags southwest to Knoxville, Tennessee. From the top of any of the area’s hundreds of routes, climbers are treated to one of the best views in Virginia, with the distant peaks of the Blue Ridge and Cumberland Plateau on the horizon.

The privately owned Hidden Valley was a popular southeastern and mid-Atlantic climbing destination in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, it was closed in 2004 due to vandalism and management concerns. The area remained closed despite efforts from local climbers and volunteers.

In April of last year, landowners approached the Access Fund with an interest in selling a portion of their property that would provide public access to the nearly one mile of cliffline that abuts their land. After kicking off discussions with the landowners, the Access Fund reached out to nearby local climbing organizations to see if one of them would be willing to acquire and hold the property for long-term management and conservation. Carolina Climbers Coalition (CCC) was immediately interested.

“Our board quickly recognized the need for a local group to step up and conserve this historic climbing area.” explained Brian Payst, CCC president.

CCC has a strong track record in securing access to privately owned climbing areas. They successfully acquired Laurel Knob in 2005, opening access to the largest cliff face in the East. In 2009, with major support from the Access Fund Land Conservation Campaign, they acquired a 6-acre portion of the Rumbling Bald boulderfield, protecting the area’s boulders from private development.

CCC also maintains climbing access to Asheboro Boulders and Sauratown through recreational leases with these areas’ respective landowners. Hidden Valley makes their third successful climbing area acquisition.

Access Fund southeastern staff have been working in partnership with the CCC for the past year and a half to complete the initial survey and due diligence, and finalize negotiations with the landowners. The Access Fund Land Conservation Campaign provided a loan to the CCC for \$30,000 to bridge the gap between available funds and the \$45,000 price tag. The CCC closed on the 21-acre property at the end of September, putting down \$15,000 of its own funds and covering the due diligence and transaction costs necessary to secure access to almost half of the Hidden Valley climbing area.

“The Access Fund is proud to be a part of protecting the Hidden Valley climbing area,” said Executive Director Brady Robinson. “We are also proud of our partnership with Carolina Climbers Coalition, who stepped up to purchase and steward this important area.”

This acquisition reopens access to almost half of the routes at the Hidden Valley climbing area. It also ensures that climbers have a permanent entry point to the entire area from Hidden Valley Road. The Access Fund, CCC, and nearby Southwest Virginia Climbers Coalition are continuing to work together to secure access to the remaining portion of Hidden Valley’s cliffline.

To donate to the project and learn more about the upcoming opening date, work days, and ways you can help, visit www.carolinaclimbers.org. ■

URBAN ROCK: GETTING CITIES AND TOWNS TO EMBRACE CLIMBING

When you daydream about your next climbing adventure, you may conjure images of high mountain peaks, extreme conditions, and natural settings far from the cities and towns where most of us live. And that's often the point: to escape to a more pristine, natural environment and get away from the burdens of our busy lives.

But a growing number of us are escaping much closer to home. There are vital climbing environments popping up near the cities and towns where many of us live, work, and play. For many climbers, urban rock is a valuable resource for training and local adventure.

Urban climbing has been going on in small pockets for decades. Early American mountaineers and the stonemasters of Yosemite honed their craft at Indian Rock in Berkeley and Stony Point in Los Angeles. DC climbers have been finding refuge at Great Falls and Carderock outside our nation's capital for years. And phenom Ashima Shiraishi learned to climb at Rat Rock in New York City's Central Park, which remains a training ground for the Gunks and an urban climbing area in its own right.

Over the last decade, a growing number of towns and cities have welcomed climbing in their parks and greenways as a use of community open space. Local climbing organizations and the Access Fund regularly work with city and town officials to encourage climbing access and support stewardship and management.

While a new norm seems to be emerging, many municipal land managers or authorities still don't accept climbing as a welcome recreational activity. More often than not, their concerns fall into one of three categories: 1) potential liability in the event of an accident, 2) unacceptable impacts to natural resources or other park users, or 3) lack of resources to manage another recreational use.

These are legitimate concerns, but they can be overcome with some smart advocacy efforts and a bit of help from your local climbing organization and the Access Fund.

OVERCOMING LIABILITY CONCERNS. Climbing is perceived as an extremely high risk sport, and land owners are often concerned with exposing themselves to liability in the event of an accident. But there are various layers of liability protection, including state recreational use statutes, case law, waiver systems, access agreements, and other basic strategies that could easily alleviate liability concerns.

ADDRESSING IMPACTS. Any time people (climbers or otherwise) interact with the natural world, there are impacts. But a smart climbing management plan and ongoing stewardship efforts from committed local climbers can mitigate these impacts.

LENDING RESOURCES. Many city and town governments are plagued by budget cuts and a lack of resources. This is where a trusted local climbing organization can step up to help. There are numerous examples of urban crags across the country that are managed, at least in part, by local climbing organizations who volunteer their time or resources to staff entrance gates, manage trash services, or oversee waiver systems.

BOOSTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Towns with climbing nearby almost always see a positive flow of dollars to their community. Whether filling up their gas tanks, grabbing dinner at a nearby restaurant, crashing at a local hotel, or grabbing last-minute necessities from local outdoor gear shops, climbing visitors are spending.

INCREASING PUBLIC HEALTH. And there's no arguing the public health benefits of getting people outside and engaged in an active pursuit. ■

Corporate Partners

Black Diamond, a global innovator in climbing, skiing, mountain sports equipment, and apparel since 1957, has recently taken its focus on climbing to new heights by supporting ROCK Project, the Access Fund's new climber education program. ROCK Project is a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to inspire climbers to protect the places they climb through responsible, low-impact climbing behaviors. Black Diamond shares these values, and we're thrilled to partner with them on this important initiative. We thank Black Diamond for their commitment to the climbing community.



Black Diamond™

These partners are businesses that put their money where their mouth is to support the future of climbing. Please consider the important contribution these partners make to your climbing future. They support the Access Fund and you. We encourage you to support them!

ABOVE THE CLOUDS - \$100,000+

Jeep® Brand/Chrysler Group, LLC

TITANIUM - \$50,000+

Black Diamond Equipment, LTD
CLIF Bar & Company
Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI)

DIAMOND - \$25,000+

The North Face
Planet Granite
Touchstone Climbing, Inc.

PLATINUM PLUS - \$15,000+

Archer Law Offices, P.C.
Mountain Hardwear
Osprey
Outdoor Research
Patagonia
Petzl

PLATINUM - \$10,000+

eGrips Climbing Holds
GORE-TEX® Products
Jason Keith Consulting
La Sportiva
Mountain Project
prAna
SCARPA North America
Stanley
Stonewear Designs
Trango

GOLD PLUS - \$7,500+

Mountain Gear
Rock/Creek
Sterling Rope Company

GOLD - \$5,000+

Sender Films
The Spot Bouldering Gym

SILVER - \$2,500+

Adidas Outdoor
Arc'teryx
Avery Brewing Company
BlueWater Ropes
Falcon Guides
Liberty Mountain Climbing
Mad Rock
Mammut
Marmot
Metolius
Outdoor Retailer
Portland Rock Gym
Rock'n Jam'n
SuperTopo.com

MAJOR - \$1,000+

Backwoods
Call of the Wild Adventures
CAMP USA
Climb Max Mountaineering
The Crash Pad
Drive Current
Evolve Sports
Fixed Pin Publishing
High Point Climbing and Fitness
Louder Than 11
Moosejaw
Mountain Khakis
New Belgium Brewing Company
Pacific Edge Climbing Gym
SMAC Climbing, LLC
Thermarest
Treasure Mountain Inn
Upslope Brewing Company
Wildland Trekking Company

CONTRIBUTING - \$500+

Aiguille Rock Climbing Center
Alpine Ascents International
Alpine Endeavors
Armaid
Desert Rock Sports
DMM Excalibur
Earth Treks Climbing Centers

Eldorado Climbing Walls
Green Peak Promotions
Gregory Packs
International Alpine Guides
Julbo
KNS Reps, Inc.
Tom K. Michael, DDS, PS
Mountain Tools
Red Chili
SealGrinder PT
Stone Age Climbing Gym
Tahoe Oral Surgery & Implant Center
Trailspace.com
Travel Country Outdoors
TRUBLUE Auto Belays
Verde PR & Consulting
Vertical Dreams
Vertical Endeavors
Wes & Gold
Xcellence

SUPPORTING - \$250+

Amarillo Rock Climbing House
Cadillac Mountain Sports
Climb Nashville
DRY ICE Tools
Forest Oil Corporation
Forte Creative Media
The Gravity Vault Indoor Rock Gyms
Law Firm for Non-Profits
Mesa Rim Climbing & Fitness Center
The Mountaineer
Redefining Balance
Rock Fitness
Schneider Management Group, Inc.
Sunrift Adventures
Ute Mountaineer
Wahl Clipper Corporation

IN-KIND PARTNERS

Alpinist Magazine
Belaggles
Climbing Magazine
ClimbingWeather.com
Dead Point Magazine
Rakkup
Rock & Ice Magazine
Omega Pacific
Schoeller



Clockwise from the left: Danika Gilbert on Whorehouse Ice Hose, Eureka, CO | Danika Gilbert on a delicate ice pillar on the Gazebo Wall, Ouray Ice Park, Ouray, CO. | Dave Penney on M-Possible, Stump Wall, Ouray Ice Park, Ouray, CO | © Kennan Harvey

Kennan Harvey

For over 20 years, Kennan has been traipsing the hills like a mountain goat, searching for the perfect adventure photo. He's still looking. His career as a photographer has provided many amazing highlights, including a lasting mentorship with master nature photographer Pat O'Hara, first ascents on 1,500-meter granite spires, and the cover of *American Photographer* during his first year in business. He's also had his share of bad weather and narrow escapes, but says he feels blessed by the incredibly talented people who define the outdoor industry.

Kennan now lives off the grid with his wife and daughter in a self-built, solar-powered home in the foothills of Colorado's San Juan Mountains. "As the revolving seasons etch deeper lines in my face, I begin to better understand the importance of simplicity and stewardship," says Kennan. "I can only wonder at where and how this will manifest artistically." You can see more of Kennan's work at www.kennanharvey.com. ■



Protect America's Climbing

The Access Fund
207 Canyon Blvd., Suite 201S
Boulder, Colorado 80302



HOLIDAY ITEMS NOW AVAILABLE IN THE STORE!

This year we're offering more holiday items than ever before!

Half Dome Hoodies

The Access Fund pullover hoodie is a cozy poly/cotton blend with a kangaroo pocket in the front and a custom black and white print of Half Dome on the back. This soft but durable hoodie's comfortable fit is ideal for steep sport climbs, bold runouts, or just hanging out.



El Cupitan

What do El Capitan and El Cupitan have in common? They're both giant! El Cupitan is 20 ounces of dishwasher safe ceramic perfection for those cold mornings when you need some joe to help you rally out of your sleeping bag.

Gift Memberships Galore!

Some of your favorite Access Fund swag can now be paired with a gift membership to make the perfect present for the climbers in your life.

Visit www.accessfund.org/shop and check out our exciting new line of products.