

VERTICAL TIMES

NEWS FOR CLIMBING ADVOCATES

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As this issue of *Vertical Times* goes to press, hundreds of millions of Americans across the country are in lockdown from the coronavirus pandemic. This situation is unprecedented, and many people in our community are struggling right now with unique, personal challenges. From everyone here at Access Fund, we send our well wishes and warm thoughts. We are with you.

From the beginning, we have been thinking hard about how the climbing community and Access Fund can do our part to flatten the curve and protect public health. In mid-March, rural gateway communities like Moab, Utah, and Bishop, California, pleaded for visiting climbers to return home to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in these isolated communities. Many people helped to spread the word instead of the virus, and the situation improved as the climbing community came to grips with the new reality. These were the first of many climbing trips to be canceled or postponed. We understood the initial temptation to travel during spring break, but now is definitely not the time to hit the road. Keep it local.

These initial experiences spotlighted some of the issues associated with the explosive growth of climbing across the country. With our numbers growing so quickly, climbers need to think hard about what kind of impacts we want to have on small communities that serve as gateways to our climbing areas and public lands. We can be an economic force for good and a growing army of advocates for our public lands. On the flip side, with so many more climbers, our own individual behaviors may need to evolve to protect and respect these communities and the natural resources that sustain them.

Twenty years ago, there were hardly enough climbers in any one place to move the needle for an entire community. Now, it's common in rural areas across the country. When

you add in other outdoor pursuits, like hiking, mountain biking, backcountry skiing, and paddling—which many climbers also enjoy—you start to get a more complete picture of our shared responsibility to the broader communities where we live, work, and recreate.

I have no idea whether COVID-19 will be under control by the time this issue hits your mailbox. But if we are still under lockdown, please take it seriously and consider hanging up your shoes and chalk bag until the threat has passed, especially at popular crags, where you are more likely to run into other people and climb on popular routes.

Most importantly, let's continue to take care of each other. As climbers, we pull together in the face of adversity and rally when someone is in trouble. For generations, that spirit has helped to define who we are and what we stand for. We are facing this new threat at a time that our community is growing quickly, and it's more important than ever to live these ideals. We'll get through this together, even in a time of social distancing.

Meanwhile, our work to protect America's climbing continues. The lockdown has proven once again how much we all love access to the outdoors, which we sometimes take for granted. We have to fight to protect that access every day, even when staying home may be the best thing to do.

Sincerely,



Chris Winter
Executive Director



Become a Legacy Donor

Some of us may never develop a climbing route, put up a first ascent, write a guidebook, or climb 5.15. But there are other ways to contribute to the story of climbing in America. Making a planned gift to Access Fund is an easy way to establish your own legacy of climbing conservation and give back to the climbing experience. Planned giving is not just for the wealthy or financial planning experts. Learn more at www.accessfund.org/plannedgift.

THE FIGHT TO PROTECT BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT

DEC 2016

MILESTONE

President Obama declares Bears Ears—home to world-class climbing—a national monument, thereby protecting 1.3 million acres and including climbing as a valued activity.

DEC 2017

SETBACK

President Trump issues an executive order to reduce Bears Ears National Monument by 85%, diminishing protections for 40% of climbing areas in the Bears Ears landscape.

LEGAL ACTION

Access Fund and co-plaintiffs sue to protect Bears Ears, filing a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., asserting that Trump's order violates both the Antiquities Act and the U.S. Constitution.

JAN 2018

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

The Department of the Interior (DOI) attempts to institutionalize the Bears Ears' reduction by prematurely developing a Monument Management Plan for the reduced monument units, before the reduction is settled in court.

LEGAL PROCEDURE

The Department of Justice consolidates the multiple lawsuits on the Bears Ears' reduction to avoid redundancies and streamline litigation. Access Fund will still be able to argue individual claims and file individual appeals.

FEB 2018

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

The Trump administration releases new policies for oil and gas leasing on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, making it easier to get oil and gas leases and fast-track mineral development within the vastly reduced Bears Ears National Monument landscape.

APR 2018

LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS

Access Fund helps block H.R. 4532, a bill that would codify Trump's reduction of Bears Ears National Monument and weaken the integrity of the Antiquities Act.

NOV 2018

LEGAL PROCEDURE

Judge in Bears Ears lawsuit rules against the defense's motion to move the lawsuit to Utah, where the Trump Administration would likely get a more beneficial ruling. The case stays in Washington, D.C., a win for the plaintiffs and acknowledgment that it has national precedent.

DEC 2018

LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS

Access Fund helps block H.R. 3990, another bill attempting to institutionalize the Bears Ears' reduction and weaken the integrity of the Antiquities Act.

JUN 2019

CLIMBING ADVOCACY

Access Fund participates in the DOI's premature Monument Management Plan process, under protest, in order to protect Indian Creek and ensure things don't go from bad to worse for climbers.

NOV 2019

LEGAL PROCEDURE

Access Fund submits an updated legal complaint, outlining damages incurred in the past two years and updating declarations from climbers.

JAN 2020

LEGAL PROCEDURE

Access Fund moves to win the case, filing a motion for partial summary judgment, triggering a series of legal briefs that will be submitted to the court throughout the first half of 2020.

FEB 2020

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

The Bureau of Land Management issues its final management plan for the drastically reduced Bears Ears landscape, which makes recreation management a lower priority and puts cultural resources and traditional values in the path of irreparable damage.

CREATING SPACE: AMGA WOMEN'S GUIDING COURSES

At Outdoor Retailer 2018, Monserrat Alvarez and several other prominent women of color in the outdoor space were invited to meet with industry leaders to discuss how the climbing industry could support their communities. For Alvarez, currently the membership and inclusion coordinator at the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA), the answer was clear: create professional opportunities for underrepresented groups that go beyond internships. Institutional support for women, people of color, and other underrepresented communities has to be embedded across the industry.

The AMGA has been a leader in training guides since the early '80s. Their standard-setting single-pitch instructor (SPI) course teaches fundamental skills every climbing educator must master. "The earliest genesis of the women's SPI course was a recognition that we had a diversity issue, both in the climbing community and the AMGA membership," says AMGA Executive Director Alex Kosseff. "We wanted to create more comfortable entry points into the AMGA."

"The earliest genesis of the women's SPI course was a recognition that we had a diversity issue, both in the climbing community and the AMGA membership."

Alvarez, a graduate of a traditional SPI course, remembers not feeling safe or heard during her course. Working with Brown Girls Climb, in early 2018 she became a part of the effort to create a women's SPI course. A few months later, the AMGA hired her, and she began to lead the initiative as part of her new position.

According to Alvarez, "the key focus of these courses is to create a positive learning environment." The students have to master a rigorous curriculum, but the courses also build in space for mentorship between people with shared identities, who have faced similar struggles in their paths within the guiding community. "The overriding goal of the courses is to make sure that folks feel that they're part of our membership."

The courses have been incredibly successful, with applicants far exceeding available spaces. "The women's rock guide course had some of the most qualified applicants



of any course we've ever run," Kosseff says. "We were able to encourage people who maybe didn't see guiding as a career path for them that this was an opportunity they could take part in."

The impact of the AMGA's affinity-based courses has been possible only because of deeper institutionalized changes around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) that the AMGA's staff and DEI committee, including Alvarez, have implemented. She credits the success of the courses to collaboration with the community, specifically with Flash Foxy and Brown Girls Climb, as well as foundational support from Eddie Bauer, The North Face, and Adidas Five Ten.

Reflecting on the history of women in guiding, Kosseff points out: "If you look at the first wave of women in the guiding industry, they were forced to adapt to the male-dominated norm. Now we've got a second or even third generation of women getting involved, who are setting their own cultural expectations and norms and pushing organizations to adapt."

Testimonials from graduates of the courses make this clear. As Andrea, a women's SPI alumna, states: "Although I still worry about not fitting the mold of the 'typical' climbing guide, this course reinforced that there is a place for guides of all ages, genders, colors, sizes, and abilities—because representation matters. Thanks to this course, I had the courage to push past my fear of failure and explore my true potential. I believe this experience was unique from other SPI courses because it facilitated a discussion on how to make climbing, with all its many benefits, accessible to all." ■



CALIFORNIA'S LOVER'S LEAP ON THE BRINK

Lover's Leap, near Lake Tahoe, California, has been deteriorating under a dramatic increase in climber traffic. This popular granite climbing area saw its first ascent in 1950 and is now home to more than 180 climbing routes, including Traveler Butte—one of the 50 classic climbs in America. The area draws droves of climbers from the San Francisco, Sacramento, and South Lake Tahoe climbing communities, who appreciate the many traditional, multipitch routes in a beautiful, forested setting. However, climber impacts are overwhelming the area.

“The lack of infrastructure and heavy use at Lover's Leap have led to impacts that are nearly beyond repair,” says Samantha Heacock, former executive director of Climbing Resource Advocates for Greater Sacramento (CRAGS). “The only way to get ahead of this situation is by bringing in professional trail crews.”

No formal trail system was ever developed for Lover's Leap, and visiting climbers have created an unstable web of access trails across

the mountainside, trampling sensitive vegetation and causing severe erosion in the loose granitic soils. Haphazard belay areas are also crumbling and becoming highly unstable. These issues not only threaten the ecosystem within the Eldorado National Forest, but they also frustrate visiting climbers and have potential to hinder emergency response teams who need quick, direct, and stable access to the area.

“The current conditions at Lover's Leap are critically unsustainable,” says Ty Tyler, Access Fund's stewardship director. “We've reached the tipping point, and we need to act now before these impacts are beyond repair.”

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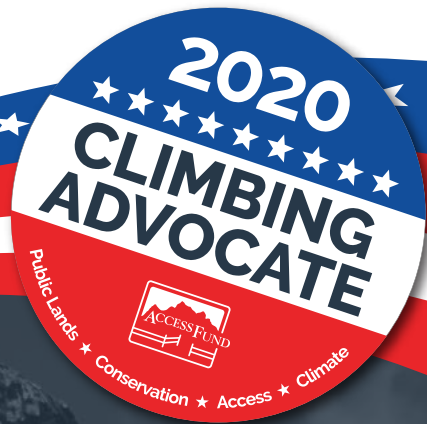
The restoration needs at Lover's Leap are extensive. The most pressing need is to establish a formalized and sustainable trail system, with hardened surfaces, retaining walls, stone steps, and erosion-control measures. Multiple sections of trail need to be

rerouted, and redundant “social” trails need to be closed and revegetated. Wayfinding signs need to be installed to keep climbers on trails and minimize the environmental impact. Belay areas also need to be reinforced, hardened, and stabilized to provide safe and sustainable access to the climbs.

Access Fund and CRAGS created a detailed stewardship plan to address the critical issues at Lover's Leap and have been working with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to secure necessary environmental clearances through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, a requirement on all federally managed lands. The USFS approved this restoration plan in fall 2019.

Access Fund will be investing significant resources starting this year to address critical stability concerns at Lover's Leap. The Access Fund–Jeep Conservation Team will lead the initiative to restore trails and staging areas, working closely with the USFS and CRAGS. But we need climbers' help. ■

THE ROUTE TO 2020



1 FEBRUARY – JUNE 2020

THE PRIMARIES & CAUCUSES



MARCH 3, 2020

The day when the greatest number of states hold primary elections and caucuses, representing a candidate's first test of national electability. Candidates must do well on this day to help secure their party's nomination.

- ★ CHECK your voter registration.
- ★ VOTE in your state's primary election or caucus.

2 AUGUST 2020

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS



★ RESEARCH candidates and issues.

3 SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2020

PRESIDENTIAL & VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

1ST SEPTEMBER 29
Presidential Debate

2ND OCTOBER 7
Vice Presidential Debate

3RD OCTOBER 15
Presidential Debate

4TH OCTOBER 22
Presidential Debate

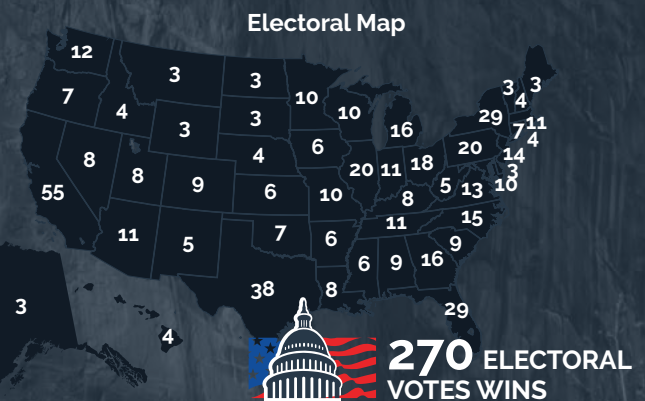
★ **OCTOBER 3 – VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** Voter registration deadlines vary by state, but all allow you to register online within 30 days of the general election.

4 NOVEMBER 3, 2020

GENERAL ELECTION

- Your vote determines the votes of state electors.
- Each state gets a certain number of elector votes, based on its representation in Congress.

★ **ABSENTEE AND EARLY VOTING:** Many states have early voting or mail-in ballots.



TAKE THE 2020 CLIMBING ADVOCATE PLEDGE TODAY: ACCESSFUND.ORG/2020PLEDGE

CLIMBERS PERMANENTLY PROTECT HELL'S KITCHEN

The Hell's Kitchen bouldering area outside Chattanooga, Tennessee, is now permanently protected as part of Cumberland Trail State Park. Access Fund bought the undeveloped bouldering area in 2018 to secure the property for climbing, after the private land went up for sale, and we just finished a two-year effort to protect this outstanding climbing resource by transferring it to the state of Tennessee for long-term climber-friendly management.

Hell's Kitchen features a densely concentrated boulder field with quality sandstone, varied terrain, and striking lines. This prized new climbing area is comparable to the bouldering at nearby Stone Fort and Rocktown.

Before transferring the property, Access Fund partnered with Southeastern Climbers Coalition (SCC) to establish access to this remote, new climbing area, located at the top of a steep ridge, high above the Cumberland Trail. With initial help from the Access Fund–Jeep Conservation Team, SCC volunteers and Cumberland Trail staff built two miles of new trail across difficult terrain to connect Hell's Kitchen to the main Cumberland Trail.

“The Southeastern Climbers Coalition led a remarkable, multiphased volunteer effort to build a sustainable, contoured trail up the mountain to allow climbers to access this remote bouldering area,” says Access Fund Southeast Regional Director Zachary Lesch-Huie.



Bouldering at Hell's Kitchen, ancestral lands of Tsalaguwetiyi (Cherokee, East) Photo: © Shannon Millsaps

“The significant distance and elevation gain from the Cumberland Trail to the climbing area presented a monumental challenge to build a sustainable trail to access the boulders,” says SCC Executive Director Andrea Hassler. “We worked with over 100 volunteers during the summer of 2018 to complete the trail construction, including rock structures for retaining walls, talus crossings, and steps.”

Access Fund and SCC will maintain a strong partnership with Cumberland Trail managers to support climbing management and stewardship at Hell's Kitchen. The state park is already home to many excellent climbing and bouldering areas, including Black Mountain, Laurel Falls, Buzzard Point, Laurel Snow bouldering, Dogwood

Boulders, Big Soddy, Deep Creek, and the Cumberland Boulders.

“The sites add two brilliant galleries to the Cumberland Trail, and we're mighty grateful for Access Fund and the climbers who support their work,” says Cumberland Trail Park Manager Bob Fulcher. “Adventurers do great things, because they can't stop at 'ordinary.' These will be a couple of exclamation points along the Cumberland Trail.”

Special thanks to REI Chattanooga for providing funding for trail work at Hell's Kitchen, as well as to SCC, Riverview Foundation, the state of Tennessee, and the individual donors and volunteers who helped secure this property and build out a sustainable network of trails and staging areas for future generations to enjoy. ■



OUR PUBLIC LANDS

It is hard to deny the intangible draw of the great outdoors. Whether you're climbing, hunting, hiking, fishing, paddling, picnicking, OHVing, or partaking in one of hundreds of other activities—adventuring in great open spaces is core to the human experience. Today, roughly 80% of Americans live in urban areas, and our public lands provide one of the last remaining refuges—wild spaces, available to all, where we can still experience adventure and connect to the natural world. These lands help keep us physically and mentally healthy. And they must be protected.

At Access Fund, we envision a rich tapestry of protected landscapes that:

- Provide opportunities for recreation and adventure
- Contribute to the health and wellness of all Americans
- Help drive a strong and resilient economy
- Preserve our unique human history
- Allow diverse wildlife and ecology to thrive

This vision calls for a strong democracy—for the consideration of all the myriad values and stakeholders of our public lands, and for thoughtful allowance of appropriate activities in appropriate places.

We believe this vision is attainable. Although some forces seek to exploit our public lands for political gain, our

overwhelming love for America's public lands unites us, despite these times of political turmoil. According to the 2020 State of the Rockies Project, two-thirds of voters across eight Western states support conservation of public lands for recreation over extraction, regardless of political affiliation. It also shows that three-quarters of voters expressed concern that land managers have enough resources to properly maintain our public lands.

At Access Fund, we're inspired to see climbers joining forces with hunters, hikers partnering with OHVers, native tribes working with recreation groups—because protecting public lands is a nonpartisan passion, and there's a lot at stake. We are coming together—across aisles and across pursuits—to defend our wild places.

Here's how we get there:

BALANCED MANAGEMENT OF OUR PUBLIC LANDS

America's public lands are home to a vast and diverse array of resources and values. Native American cultural sites, water rights and supply, wildlife habitat, and climate resiliency are critically important. Recreation opportunities like climbing, hunting, hiking, biking, and winter sports are also among those values. And so are oil, gas, and mineral extraction. All of these are important, but they must be carefully balanced to protect our treasured landscapes and to prevent conflicts and unintended harm.



LANDS UNITE US

There is more competition than ever for the scarce resources our public lands provide, but responsible and balanced development can be achieved through transparent, stakeholder-driven processes and decision-making. At Access Fund, we advocate for responsible climbing access and conservation, but we also value other uses of public lands, such as protection of wildlife, water supply, cultural values, and climate-resilient landscapes. We are not opposed to oil, gas, and mineral extraction, as long as they are done responsibly, with minimal impact to cultural resources, the environment, wildlife, climate, and our area of focus—climbing.

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC LANDS

Our public lands cannot protect themselves. As more stakeholders vie for access to the resources and values on these lands, we must invest in the infrastructure to support these activities and minimize damage to the environment.

Our public lands are worth the investment. Not only do they provide irreplaceable recreation opportunities, but they also contribute to our health and wellness, they preserve native culture, they sustain diverse species and ecosystems, they provide America with renewable and nonrenewable natural resources, and they contribute to a more resilient economy. Recreation activities like climbing, hiking, and mountain biking significantly enhance the U.S. economy—at 2.2% of the gross domestic product (GDP), outdoor recreation is one of the nation's fastest-growing

industries, and it sustains 7.6 million jobs each year. And the best part? Recreation on our public lands is a sustainable and renewable resource. It is not subject to the boom-and-bust cycles of oil and gas extraction, which can leave rural communities in crisis.

Adequate, long-term funding for federal land management agencies is absolutely critical to protect the integrity and values of our nation's public lands and to help us fully realize their economic potential. At Access Fund, we believe in building strong land management agencies by investing in and supporting our land managers and public servants.

HEALTHY AND TRANSPARENT DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

A healthy democracy is a prerequisite to healthy and accessible public lands, and it is one of our best tools for protecting these lands and their outstanding climbing and recreation values. America's public lands belong to all U.S. citizens, and the democratic process ensures that we all have a voice in how they are managed.

There are two critically important laws that underpin a healthy and transparent democratic process for our public lands, and they are essential to Access Fund's work to protect America's climbing.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a federal law that requires our government officials to openly and thoroughly evaluate the environmental, social, and



economic effects of their proposed actions for managing public lands. This process provides opportunities for the public—that’s you and Access Fund and others—to review and express support or objections. Second, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) gives Americans the right to request access to records from any federal agency, providing transparency into government decisions and keeping our government officials accountable.

There are often debates about how we can improve these bedrock democratic laws, and Access Fund has often supported careful and targeted adjustments. But the underlying values of transparency and public involvement are critical to the future of our public lands.

Our democratic process also includes checks and balances on the officials appointed to lead our federal land management agencies. The American public elects the office of the President; the President appoints leaders for our land management agencies; the Senate confirms those appointed leaders to ensure America’s public lands are managed responsibly and not used for political gain.

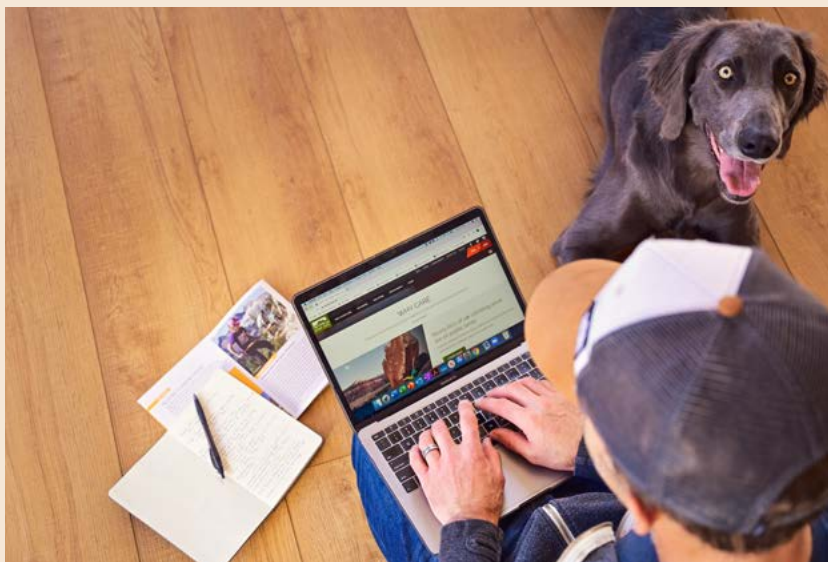
These laws and procedures can be cumbersome—and we do not always “win” when we participate in these public processes—but they are essential to a healthy democracy, and their integrity must be upheld.

A VISION WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Each generation is obligated to protect America’s amazing legacy of public lands, which have inspired and challenged climbers and other outdoor recreationists for generations. From the seaside cliffs of Acadia to the towering walls of Yosemite, these spectacular and remote landscapes offer a lifetime of adventure and exploration that enrich the human experience.

No matter where you sit on the political spectrum, no matter which candidates you support in the upcoming election, we hope you will champion the causes and values that protect our great American public lands. Although our growing community of climbers and outdoor adventurers holds a broad spectrum of ideologies and viewpoints, our love of the outdoors unites us.

Join us in protecting America’s climbing and public lands for generations to come. ■



8 WAYS

To Be a Climbing Advocate While Under Quarantine

For our community of outdoor adventurers, being stuck in self-quarantine is likely more daunting than trying to climb 5.15. But we can stay plugged into the climbing community and use some of our copious amounts of free time to advance the sport we love. Here are a few ways to further the climbing advocacy cause while you're stuck at home.

1. Enjoy the outdoors, but stay local and check closures. We can't emphasize this enough. Rural and gateway communities are at higher risk of having their health-care systems overrun. We encourage you to get outside for fresh air, but don't travel. Check with land managers and local climbing organizations for the latest news.

2. Influence climbing policy. Now is a good time to get informed about local and national climbing policy. There are a number of active bills and forest plans where you can make a difference by submitting comments to government officials through our easy letter-writing tool. We even provide talking points to guide your advocacy. Check out Current Campaigns for the latest advocacy opportunities. Even if you don't see alerts for your state, your voice still matters on all public

land issues and plans. Visit www.accessfund.org/campaigns to take action.

3. Donate the gas money from that cancelled road trip to support the Access Fund Conservation Teams.

We have three crews still out there, working solo to keep safe, but they are hard at work improving our climbing areas. Every little bit helps. Visit www.accessfund.org/donate to chip in.

4. Set up AmazonSmile to send donations to Access Fund. We're all flocking to Amazon to secure the essentials for life under quarantine. Did you know that Amazon has a program that donates a percentage of your purchases to the charity of your choice? It's easy to set up and provides a revenue stream to help Access Fund through this uncertain time. Visit www.accessfund.org/amazon to set it up.

5. Go a little deeper on The Climber's Pact. The Climber's Pact is a commitment we make to each other to adjust our climbing practices to protect the landscapes we love. It's an easy commitment to make online, and now is a good time to read up on each of The Climber's Pact principles. Go deep at www.accessfund.org/theclimberspact.

6. Research candidates and issues in the upcoming election. Now is a good time to do some research in advance of the 2020 election. Learn where candidates stand on public land issues, the top issues facing our public lands, why a healthy democracy is critical for public lands, and more. Visit www.accessfund.org/2020climbingadvocate to learn more.

7. Build your climbing advocate tool kit. Our staff and advocacy partners have curated a list of essentials to help you build a climbing advocacy tool kit. Visit www.accessfund.org/toolkit to get started.

8. Help your local indoor climbing gym stay afloat. This is going to be a rough time for our indoor climbing gyms, most of which have made the very hard but responsible decision to close their doors to slow the spread of COVID-19. If you can afford it, consider buying an online gift certificate for a friend, which helps your local gym get through this difficult time. Once it's safe for them to open their doors again, you can introduce someone new to our amazing sport.

Follow Access Fund on social media for the latest tips and updates. ■



CLIMBING ADVOCATE AWARDS

We're proud to announce the recipients of the 2019 Climbing Advocate Awards. For over 20 years, Access Fund has been recognizing the outstanding work of climbing advocates across the country. Among this year's honorees are rock-star community builders, local climbing organizations, bolt warriors, climbing stewards, grassroots organizers, and visionary leaders. These individuals and organizations stand out in their commitment to the American climbing community.



KAREEMAH BATTS Community Builder, Advocate, and Mentor

We are thrilled to recognize Kareemah Batts for her dedicated leadership and advocacy on behalf of the adaptive climbing community. Batts founded the Adaptive Climbing Group to give people with disabilities opportunities to participate in the sport of climbing. The group now has more than 1,000 adaptive participants nationwide, and Batts continues to develop adaptive programs at gyms and outdoor crags. She is deeply and fiercely passionate about fostering diverse and inclusive climbing initiatives. She has made the climbing experience more open and accessible to underrepresented climbers, while also improving how Access Fund and other climbing advocates approach conservation and advocacy. "True access is more than a day or a week; it is constant and sustainable," Batts says. Thank you, Kareemah, for your amazing work!



JULIE GEISLER Bebie Leadership Award

We are proud to recognize Julia Geisler for her dedication to protecting climbing in and around Utah's Wasatch Range. As executive director of the Salt Lake Climbers Alliance, Geisler's work spans advocacy, stewardship, local organizing, access, and climber education. She spearheaded a partnership with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to legitimize decades of climbing access at the popular Gate Buttress crag. She has also led several large-scale stewardship initiatives in Little Cottonwood Canyon and Joe's Valley. A seasoned public lands advocate, Geisler has also been a regular participant at our Climb the Hill advocacy event. Also, her leadership of the Wasatch Anchor Replacement Initiative sets a high standard for bolt replacement work.



IAN KIRK Rebolting Warrior and Advocate

Access Fund is excited to recognize Ian Kirk, director of the Red River Gorge Fixed Gear Initiative (RRGFI), with a Climbing Advocate Award for his stewardship of one of America's premier climbing destinations. Under Kirk's leadership, RRGFI is providing critical support for rebolting efforts, new route development, and permadraw replacement across the Red River Gorge, and incentivizing the use of best-in-class stainless-steel hardware. Kirk has worked with Access Fund to secure annual Anchor Replacement Fund grants and develop partnerships with the American Safe Climbing Association and ClimbTech. We're pleased to recognize Kirk as a Rebolting Warrior.



HOWARD SCHOOL INTERNS, LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN CONSERVANCY

Stewards and Youth Leaders

Access Fund is honored to recognize Lookout Mountain Conservancy (LMC) and its Howard School interns for their critical role in opening The Boulders on Old Wauhatchie Pike in Chattanooga, Tennessee. With support and training from Access Fund–Jeep Conservation Teams, the Howard School interns led a four-year stewardship initiative to build trails, construct landing zones, install signs, and clear vegetation—helping to open a brand-new urban bouldering park. In addition to managing the day-to-day stewardship of this new bouldering park, the interns also discovered and unearthed a number of brand-new boulders that were completely hidden by vegetation, adding more quality bouldering opportunities to the park. Thanks to LMC and the interns, the boulder field is now the most accessible climbing area in Chattanooga, free and open for the public to enjoy.



DR. JAMES MAPLES Researcher and Educator

Access Fund is thrilled to recognize Dr. James Maples for his commitment to researching the economic impacts of climbing, helping to advance Access Fund’s understanding of the positive economic impact that climbing is having in rural communities across the country. Maples’ work has confirmed that climbing is an economic force for good and is helping to create a sustainable outdoor recreation economy—especially in economically distressed regions like rural Appalachia. This work has strengthened Access Fund’s advocacy, helping policy makers and land managers understand the critical importance of the outdoor recreation economy. Maples has been an outstanding partner and collaborator, and his research has helped change the conversation around climbing. Thank you, Dr. Maples!



JULIE REED Steward, Advocate and Leader

Access Fund is happy to recognize Julie Reed with a Climbing Advocate Award for her support and leadership in the Southeastern climbing community. Reed has dedicated well over a decade of service to climbing access in the Southeast. She served on the board of the Southeastern Climbers Coalition (SCC) for seven years, including a stint as board president. Reed’s support was critical in the acquisition of Hell’s Kitchen and Dogwood West, which permanently protected these bouldering areas. Reed has also logged thousands of volunteer hours at trail days and fundraising events, and offered pro bono legal services to SCC. Reed’s community recognizes her as an exemplary advocate, steward, and volunteer. She always shows up, digs in, and leads by example. Thank you, Julie!



DENNIS NELMS Local Leader and Organizer

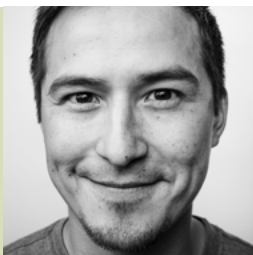
Access Fund is honored to recognize Dennis Nelms for his leadership within the Arkansas climbing community. As a long-standing board member of the Arkansas Climbers Coalition, Nelms has helped strengthen the organization, expand community outreach, and recruit new volunteers and board members. Nelms has also given considerable time and support toward rebolting efforts in the region, as well as advocating for climbing with both state and federal policy makers and local business owners. During the recent 24 Hours of Horseshoe Hell event, Nelms took U.S. Representative Bruce Westerman climbing and showed him firsthand the great economic benefits of rock climbing in Arkansas. The outing left a lasting impression with the congressman and helped to raise the profile of Arkansas climbing with policy makers. Thank you, Dennis!



SCOTT UNDERWOOD Rebolt Warrior and Educator

Access Fund is pleased to honor Scott Underwood for his leadership in the sustainable replacement of fixed anchors in Washington state. Underwood has played a critical role in expanding the Washington Anchor Replacement Project, which provides quality hardware and educates volunteers on best practices for sustainable rebolting throughout Washington. In 2019 alone, Underwood helped organize 10 “Ground Schools” that educated more than 80 students in the art of anchor replacement, in collaboration with local gyms and partners.

Underwood was also instrumental in securing sponsors to replace bad hardware at 17 crags across the state—from the Olympic Peninsula to Spokane. Underwood also volunteers on the Washington Climbers Coalition board and founded the Olympic Peninsula Climbers, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the peninsula’s valuable climbing areas. Thanks for the inspiration, Scott!



AARON MIKE Reese Martin Regional Coordinator Award

We are thrilled to honor Aaron Mike for his work as Access Fund’s Native Lands Coordinator and his dedication to amplifying the native voice within outdoor recreation advocacy. Mike has worked alongside Access Fund since 2014, building partnerships between climbers and tribes to protect native lands and cultural resources. A member of the Navajo Nation, Mike also works closely with NativesOutdoors, an outdoor company that empowers indigenous communities through its products and storytelling for a sustainable world. Mike has testified

on behalf of climbers and the Navajo community on the importance of protecting Bears Ears National Monument. He also works to promote climbing to Navajo youth in Mentmore, New Mexico, and shares low-impact climbing practices in collaboration with The North Face.



ILLINOIS CLIMBERS ASSOCIATION Land Conservation Award

Access Fund is thrilled to honor Illinois Climbers Association (ICA) for completing a multiyear effort to permanently protect the Holy Boulders in Southern Illinois. During the Final Testament bouldering competition last year, ICA made the final payment on the Holy Boulders property, which Access Fund purchased in 2012 to prevent the climbing area from being lost in private sale. ICA took ownership of the Holy Boulders in 2016 to ensure long-term climber-friendly management. Access Fund looks forward to supporting ICA’s

permanent stewardship of the area and their growing leadership in local conservation and climbing access.



OMAZE Corporate Responsibility

Access Fund is pleased to recognize Omaze with a Climbing Advocate Award for its investment in the future of our climbing areas. Using its unique fundraising platform and digital outreach campaigns, Omaze gave its growing audience the opportunity to win the Sprinter van of their dreams and support Access Fund’s work in the process. The organization reached more than 100,000 people through these unique campaigns, expanded awareness of Access Fund’s mission to protect America’s climbing and raising

a significant amount of money to support the cause. ■

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

Tennessee's Black Mountain Gets Revitalized

East Tennessee climbers and Cumberland Trail State Park have teamed up for a long-term effort to revitalize the Black Mountain climbing area.

With park approval, East Tennessee Climbers Coalition volunteers have replaced bolts and top anchors on routes, improving access and eliminating impacts to cliff-top trees. The effort is breathing new life into this once popular sandstone area that offers bouldering, trad, sport, and top roping for groups. In 2001, Access Fund gave a \$5,000 grant to help secure and conserve this area.



Oregon's Emigrant Lake Gets an Overhaul

Southwest Oregon Climbers Coalition (SWOCC) gave Emigrant crag a major overhaul, teaming up with Emigrant Lake County Park for a successful Adopt a Crag this past December. Volunteers removed poison oak, closed social trails, and built stone stairs to three of the area's popular walls. They also fixed up an erosion-prone entrance trail with new gravel, to better handle increasing climber traffic.

Layin' Waste to the Poop Problem in Arkansas

As climbing advocates, poop isn't the legacy we want to leave for our crags. Arkansas Climbers Coalition teamed up with the U.S. Forest Service to tackle the human-waste problem at two popular areas, Fountain Red and Cave Creek. Thanks in part to an Access Fund grant, the coalition installed two poop-bag stations, complete with educational signs. Climbers can now grab a bag for free, do their business, and pack it out.



LCO 101: SUPPORTING RAPTOR MANAGEMENT

Seasonal raptor closures are a regular part of the climbing calendar. Here are a few tips on how your local climbing organization (LCO) can work with land managers and your local climbing community to protect nesting raptors and ensure fair, science-based closures.

PRIVATE BENEFIT. Your work must be for tax-exempt purposes, for the benefit of the public. Any activity that substantially benefits private interests or individuals jeopardizes your nonprofit status.

COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL LAND MANAGERS. LCOs are more successful at protecting both climbing access and birds when they build strong relationships with land management agencies and work with land managers and wildlife biologists.

ADVOCATE FOR SCIENTIFIC, ADAPTIVE CLOSURES. The thinking around raptor closures has evolved in recent years. Blanket closures are becoming less common, and

wildlife biologists and climbers are working together to institute closure areas that cover a specific section of cliff, based on real, on-the-ground conditions and data.

VOLUNTEER FOR RAPTOR MONITORING. See if there is a volunteer monitoring program that local climbers can participate in. If there isn't, work with your land manager to start one. These programs are good for both climbers and birds: Gathering strong data is essential not only to keep tabs on how the nests are doing, but also for ensuring that closures are the shortest possible length and are limited to a reasonable area.

EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY. Update Mountain Project pages, post notices in local gear shops and at the crag, and send out information via email lists and social media to make sure climbers understand the importance of seasonal closures and don't unintentionally trespass in a closed area. ■



PROVIDES CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATION TEAMS

Access Fund is proud to highlight Mountain Hardwear's support of the Access Fund–Jeep® Conservation Team program. Our three traveling conservation teams spend 10 months on the road each year, traveling to different climbing areas to perform critical stewardship work. This work helps to restore deteriorating climbing areas, preserve access, and show land managers that the climbing community is committed to responsible and sustainable outdoor recreation. Mountain Hardwear's support helps to keep these teams on the road and provide them with comfortable tents to live in while traveling. Mountain Hardwear's outdoor gear and apparel has been at the cutting edge of the industry for more than three decades. And the company believes they have an important role to play in creating a future where the needs of the present can be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.



GIVES CONSERVATION TEAM A MOBILE HABITAT

We're also pleased to recognize Taxa Outdoors, the official camper sponsor of the Access Fund–Jeep® Conservation Team. Based in Houston, Texas, Taxa builds mobile human habitats purposefully designed to inspire the journey toward and into nature. The Taxa Outdoors Cricket provides a comfortable mobile living space for our Conservation Team National Crew, so that they are better rested and able to put their best efforts toward conservation. Supporting conservation and stewardship of public lands is a continuation of Taxa's ethos that "outside is in."



SUPPORTS STEWARDSHIP IN COLORADO

Access Fund would like to recognize the dedicated volunteer work of the Rock & Resole staff in Boulder, Colorado. This small climber-run gear shop and shoe-resole company has a legendary footprint in the industry. They've been resoling shoes for more than three decades, with a mission to help the community reduce waste by keeping shoes going long after the initial sole is worn out. They have a strong community presence and believe in supporting and inspiring the community to be involved with stewardship of their local areas. This team leads by example, and the owners and staff of Rock & Resole are routinely out at stewardship days with their local climbing organization, rebolting and performing other conservation work. ■

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 Access Fund and you. We encourage you to support them!

ABOVE THE CLOUDS - \$100,000+

Jeep® Brand/Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, LLC

TITANIUM - \$50,000+

Recreational Equipment, Inc (REI)

DIAMOND PLUS - \$40,000+

Black Diamond Equipment
Outdoor Research

DIAMOND - \$25,000+

Archer Law Offices
Clif Bar
Earth Treks/Planet Granite
La Sportiva
The North Face
The Vansmith
Touchstone Climbing
Vultaggio Studios

PLATINUM PLUS - \$15,000+

Adidas Five Ten
Adidas Terrex
New Belgium Brewing Co.
Petzl
Therm-a-Rest

PLATINUM - \$10,000+

Akaso Tech, LLC
Evo Rock + Fitness
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Jason Keith Consulting, LLC
Mountain Hardwear
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The Spot Bouldering Gyms
Sterling Rope Company
Taxa Outdoors
Yakima
Yeti

GOLD - \$5,000+

Allez Outdoor
Ascent Studio Climbing & Fitness
Austin Bouldering Project
Avery Brewing Company
Brooklyn Boulders
Louder Than Eleven
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Mountain Gear
Olympia Brewing Company
Osprey
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SILVER - \$2,500+

ABC Kids Climbing
Arcana
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MAJOR - \$1,000+

Alliant
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Tension Climbing
The Quarry
The Warrior's Way
Trublue Auto Belay by Head Rush Technologies
Urban Ascent
Vertical Adventures Ohio
Vital Climbing Gym



Clockwise, from top left: Jenn Flemming, New Horizon, River Wall, Lyons, Colorado | Rannveig Aamodt, Tabula Rasa, The Monastery, Colorado | Tee Kuoch, Binge and Purge, Supercrack Buttress, Bears Ears, Utah | Photos: © Nathan Welton

Nathan Welton

Based in Estes Park, Colorado, Nathan Welton has been behind the camera capturing adventures for 20 years. His work has appeared in countless newspapers, magazines, and books, including the *New York Post*, *HuffPost*, *Backpacker*, *Climbing*, *Rock and Ice*, and many more. “We have one life. It’s so very short, and there’s so much to explore. Hopefully my pictures will inspire someone to be more present, to spend more time doing what they love, to feel what makes them tick, to embrace life to the very core,” Welton says. When he’s not shooting adventure sport, Welton is busy documenting the weddings of super-cool couples, a pursuit that has won him numerous awards. To learn more about Welton’s work, visit nathanweltonphoto.com. ■

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ADVOCATE SPOTLIGHT

IRENE YEE

As a professional photographer, Yee focuses her incredible talents on showcasing women, people of color, and the average climber. Her beautiful imagery has earned her a substantial social media following, and she consistently uses her influencer status to promote inclusivity in the climbing industry and share responsible outdoor ethics with her fellow climbers. Yee is a tireless crusader for responsible disposal of human and dog waste at her home crag of Red Rock Canyon in Nevada, and it's not uncommon to see her out at the crag, picking up poop or handing out wag bags. ■



Photo: © Irene Yee