



VIA EMAIL

October 22, 2008

Pinnacles National Monument GMP
5000 Hwy 146
Paicines, CA 95043
pinn_gmp@nps.gov

Re: Access Fund Comments Pinnacles National Monument General Management Plan

Dear Pinnacles N.M. Planning staff:

The Access Fund welcomes the opportunity to provide comments to the preliminary alternatives for the Pinnacles National Monument (PNM) General Management Plan (GMP). Please consider these comments when planning for climbing access at the monument and feel free to contact us anytime for assistance with information on established best climbing management polices used on federal and state public lands around the country.

The Access Fund

The Access Fund is the only national advocacy organization whose mission keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. A 501(c)3 non-profit supporting and representing over 1.6 million climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing—rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering—the Access Fund is the largest US climbing organization with over 15,000 members and affiliates. The Access Fund assists land agencies around the country with climbing management issues.

The Access Fund promotes the responsible use and sound management of climbing resources by working in cooperation with climbers, other recreational users, public land managers and private land owners. We encourage an ethic of personal responsibility, self-regulation, strong conservation values and minimum impact practices among climbers. Working towards a future in which climbing and access to climbing resources are viewed as legitimate, valued, and positive uses of the land, the Access Fund advocates to federal, state and local legislators concerning public lands legislation; works closely with federal and state land managers and other

interest groups in planning and implementing public lands management and policy; provides funding for conservation and resource management projects; develops, produces and distributes climber education materials and programs; and assists in the acquisition and management of climbing resources. For more information about the Access Fund, visit www.accessfund.org.

Many of our members climb and live in California and have a direct interest in recreational access at Pinnacles. The Access Fund has a long history of cooperative assistance at Pinnacles National Monument. In 1992 we partnered with the National Park Service and Friends of Pinnacles (<http://www.pinnacles.org>) on a brochure that promotes conservation and safe climbing practices at Pinnacles (See http://www.pinnacles.org/climbing_info/brochure.pdf). In 2000 the Access Fund provided a \$3,000 climbing preservation grant to Pinnacles National Monument for raptor monitoring at 17 sites (also in partnership with Friends of Pinnacles). We continue to communicate with the Friends of Pinnacles to explore cooperative ways the Access Fund can support our mission of climbing access and conservation at Pinnacles.

Pinnacles National Monument General Management Plan

As you know, climbing has a long tradition at Pinnacles National Monument that began in the 1930s, and the area continues to be popular and an important regional attraction for climbers. Through this history, climbers have consistently worked cooperatively with the National Park Service at Pinnacles on climbing access and conservation initiatives. When considering the scope of the GMP, the NPS should consider how it can build further on the successful relationship that the agency has with the climbing community, in particular the Friends of Pinnacles organization, to ensure future access and conservation at Pinnacles.

When considering the scope of the GMP, the NPS should also consider specific climbing provisions or even a stand-alone climbing management plan. The Access Fund is the leader in compiling climbing management plan information and documenting “climbing management practices that work.” See our recent publication “Climbing Management: A Guide to Climbing Issues and the Development of a Climbing Management Plan.” The second edition of this 72-page booklet is available for free on our website at <http://www.accessfund.org/pdf/CM-web.pdf>. In addition, last year the Access Fund hosted and organized the National Climbing Management Summit in Golden, Colorado that attracted dozens of federal and state land managers from across the country. Management surveys and other in-depth information on established climbing management practices were highlighted at this conference and can also be found on our website at <http://www.accessfund.org/resources/ncms.php>

We encourage the NPS to strive to manage for the fact that the climbing in PNM provides the public with unique recreations opportunities which should be preserved. For this reason the

Access Fund generally supports preliminary Alternative D (Expanded Visitor Experience) because of its emphasis on offering a wider range of recreational opportunities and learning experiences. We also support Alternative D's focus on providing opportunities for visitor involvement in science and stewardship projects, and the protection of natural resources. While there are positive elements to Alternatives B and C, the NPS can provide educational and research opportunities, as well as a range of high quality backcountry experiences (including solitude, quiet, and views of natural settings) without restricting or de-emphasizing opportunities for low-impact recreational activities such as rock climbing.

It is the Access Fund's experience that virtually all potential threats or actual impacts to natural and cultural resources associated with climbing can be eliminated or reduced to acceptable levels through a combination of education, cooperation with the climbing community, and site-specific prescriptions, including rerouting of trails or crag access advisories. The Access Fund's grant program regularly provides funding for management initiatives that raise awareness about climber responsibilities and agency management obligations.

As noted above, PNM received \$3000 from the Access Fund in 2000 for raptor monitoring. Additional examples of conservation grants that the Access Fund regularly awards to maintain climbing access and preserve the climbing environment include:

- Boise Climbers Alliance, Black Cliffs, ID – cliff nesting raptor signage & brochure.
- Colorado Division of Wildlife, Boulder Canyon, CO – cliff nesting raptor signage.
- Joshua Tree National Park, CA – vegetation surveys, and GPS location of climbing areas in relation to Threatened & Endangered species sites.
- North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, NC – peregrine falcon monitoring and outreach.

The Access Fund and the climbing community have an exemplary record with regards to supporting natural resource protection. In general, climbers are strong supporters of open space and conservation, have a vested interest in protecting the environment, and understand the balance between conservation and access. When formalizing the GMP alternatives at PNM, the Access Fund urges the NPS to reaffirm the positive role that climbing has traditionally had at the Monument, and ensure that both climbing access and the climbing environment are maintained intact.

* * *

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 303-545-6772 x102 if you have any questions or comments.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason Keith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Jason Keith
Access Fund Policy Director

Cc: Brady Robinson, Access Fund Executive Director
Paul Minault, Access Fund California Regional Coordinator
Friends of Pinnacles
Larry Arthur, Mountain Tools