

The Access Fund's Efforts to Keep You Climbing in 2003

The Access Fund's mission is to keep climbing areas open and to conserve the climbing environment. Below is a list of actions we took in 2003 to support our mission.

Public Policy Program

Continued work towards obtaining a favorable climbing policy for the use, replacement and placement of fixed anchors in Wilderness through Congressional support letters, meetings with agency officials, and networking with environmental, recreation, and industry groups. Drafted and produced an advocacy letter signed by over 30 members of the outdoor industry, climbing advocacy groups, wilderness advocacy groups in support of a NPS fixed anchor policy. Obtained letters from the US Senate and House of Representatives in support of our position on a NPS fixed anchor policy.

Successful advocacy work that helped lift the fixed anchor moratorium at the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge, the only USFW jurisdiction with significant wilderness climbing utilizing fixed anchors.

Made a presentation regarding fixed anchors and climbing to wilderness Officials from the federal land management agencies at an Arthur Carhart Regional Stewardship Wilderness Training conference.

Opened Castle Rock State Park, ID. Climbing access to this outstanding area is the result of several years of advocacy and political lobbying by the Access Fund and others. Attended opening ceremony, official attendees also included Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne and US Senator Larry Craig.

Worked with human-powered recreation organizations to urge Congress to support increased funding levels for federal public land agencies regarding land management and recreation/resource protection.

Worked with cultural resource consultants to find positive solutions to protect archaeological and historical values at Red River Gorge (KY), Natural Bridge (CA), Cave Rock (NV), Happy Boulders (CA), Castle Rock Ranch (ID), and other climbing areas.

Hosted the inaugural "Climbers for Political Action" event in Washington, DC to improve the connections between climbers and government, and galvanize climber activism in support of legislation and regulatory initiatives that benefit climbing in the United States. Six members of Congress and a high-ranking land agency official spoke at Climbers for Political Action to address federal land management and climbing issues in particular.

Negotiated with the US Forest Service in Washington, DC and entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that would develop and expand a framework for a cooperative working relationship between the USFS and the Access Fund for planning and accomplishing mutually beneficial programs, projects, and climbing activities at the national, regional, and local level. Obtained initial support for the BLM on a similar MOU.

Opposed USFS climbing ban at Cave Rock. Successful advocacy work extended the public comment period on the Cave Rock closure through March 2003. Obtained significant Congressional support for our work to keep Cave Rock open; obtained Congressional support letters from the NV delegation inquiring into the Cave Rock issue. Rallied many members of the climbing community in support of AF's efforts to keep Cave Rock open. Obtained initial indication from members of Congress that they will support oversight hearings looking into public land closures based on sacred site conflicts. Filed an administrative appeal urging the Forest Service to reconsider their management actions. Filed a lawsuit with Nevada Federal Court to reverse unconstitutional actions by the US Forest Service.

Negotiated with the Navajo Nation regarding opening up limited portions of Monument Valley Tribal Park to permitted climbing.

Areas Where Our Work Continues

Advocacy work to preserve climbing opportunities and promote stewardship efforts and conservation management at various southern Utah areas: Indian Creek, Castleton Tower, the Mystery Towers, and the Moab and Monticello Resource Management Areas.

Adirondack State Park, NY. Working with local climbers and park officials to oppose a fixed anchor ban.

Boulder Canyon, CO. Working with local climbers and the city of Boulder to preserve ice climbing opportunities in Boulder Canyon.

Grand Ledge, MI. Working with local climbers to oppose a potential closure of their only climbing resource.

Castle Valley, UT. Attended roundtable discussions to identify management issues and alternatives, and support land protection options for newly acquired property at the base of Castleton Tower.

Flatirons, CO. Working with local climbers and the City of Boulder to prevent arbitrary closures to climbing and bouldering areas in the Flatirons currently being considered in a new Visitor Plan.

Hueco Tanks, TX. Continued to offer support to Hueco Tanks State Historical Park (HTSHP) for resource protection, trail improvements, and climber education. Provided support for Climbers of Hueco Tanks staff to attend crucial management meetings, and obtained recognition from HTSHP that Hueco is one of the world's premier bouldering sites which is unique and should be preserved.

Land Management and Planning

New River Gorge, WV. Helped to finalize the details of the New River Gorge climbing management plan which eventually became much more climber-friendly than the original NPS proposal that included blanket closures.

Drafted administrative comments and related advocacy work on management plans for various public land units across the country, including Denali National Park and Preserve (AK), BLM Monticello and Moab Field Offices (UT), Yosemite National Park (CA), North Cascades National Park (WA), Red Rocks National Conservation Area (NV), New River Gorge National River (WV), Natural Bridge (CA), Castle Rocks State Park (ID), Giant and Dix Wilderness Areas (NY).

Castle Rock State Park, ID. Facilitated a workshop with state park officials, federal agencies and regional climbers and provided comments and other support to develop a climbing management plan for this newly-opened climbing area adjacent to the City of Rocks National Reserve.

Grandfather Mountain Corridor, NC. Awarded a \$2,000 grant to conduct a survey of rock climbing in the Grandfather Mountain Corridor of North Carolina. The goal of the project is to assist the Park Service in the development of a Blue Ridge Parkway Climbing Management Plan.

Happy and Sad Boulders, CA. Worked with the Bishop Field Office of the BLM on climbing related issues on the Volcanic Tableland. Attended an interagency meeting in Bishop to provide input on bouldering management issues.

Joshua Tree, CA. Awarded a \$3,000 research grant for a wilderness rock climbing study. Using predictive simulation, the purpose of the study is to assess the merit of the Park's proposed fixed anchor permitting process.

Conservation Program

Supported over 70 Adopt-a-Crag events across the county. The stewardship projects involved thousands of volunteers giving back to their local climbing areas with clean-ups, and trail and impact mitigation projects.

Provided a listing of all 2003 wildlife closures on Access Fund website and in membership newsletter; provided regular updating of this information on Access Fund website through the spring raptor-nesting season.

Indian Creek, UT. Awarded a \$4,500 grant to the Rocky Mountain Field Institute for trail building and erosion control work on the Bridger Jack trail. Organized a "Save Indian Creek" coalition to mitigate ongoing resource impacts.

Farley Ledge, MA. Awarded a \$2,000 grant to the Western Massachusetts Climbers Coalition to conduct a natural resource survey of the Farley Ledge climbing area. The information gathered will be used to develop a climbing management plan.

Provided \$13,500 in grants for trail and impact mitigation projects at Indian Creek, UT; Square Ledge, NH; Flatirons, CO; and Enchanted Tower, NM.

Human waste management projects received \$11,500 to support toilet installation or maintenance at the Pleasant Valley climber's campground, CA; and North Table Mountain, CO.

Support for Grassroots Advocacy and Climber Education

Organized a national conference on climbing activism. The three-day conference focused on strategies for preserving access and featured workshops and presentations from leading activists from around the country.

Hired a full-time grassroots coordinator to manage AF relationships with local climber organizations and volunteer activists. Coordinator will also conduct periodic trainings and workshops for activists.

Provided a \$2,500 grant to support the work of the Flatirons Climbing Council. The group is dedicated to preserving access in the Flatirons, CO.

Provided a \$1,000 grant to the grassroots climber advocacy group, Friends of Joshua Tree for continued advocacy work in Joshua Tree National Park. The group provides a critical communication link between Park officials and climbers.

Organized and attended a climbers meeting in Bishop, CA which led to the formation of a local climber organization to represent climbers on the east side of the Sierra.

Produced and distributed an interim educational brochure for recreational users of Castle Rocks State Park and adjacent City of Rocks in Idaho. This educational/informational brochure was supported through partnerships with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, The National Park Service, Black Diamond Equipment, Marmot, and The Elephant's Perch.

Attended a "bouldering workgroup" meeting in Joshua Tree, CA. The workgroup consists of park officials, manufacturing representatives, outdoor retailers and boulderers. The group will focus on climber education and stewardship.

Assisted the formation of the Climber's of Hueco Tanks. The group will focus on climber education and stewardship projects at Hueco. Held a climbers meeting at Hueco to hear the concerns of the bouldering community.

Provided a \$500 grant for informational signage at Tres Piedras, NM.

Land Acquisitions

Red River Gorge, KY. Provided a \$7,500 grant to the Red River Gorge Climbers Coalition to support their acquisition of 700-acres of privately owned land containing significant climbing opportunities in the Red.

Bolton Quarry, VT. Provided a \$2,500 grant to the Climbing Resource Access Group of Vermont (CRAG-VT) to assist with the acquisition of the Bolton Quarry climbing area.

Quartz Mountain, OK. Purchased 60-acres of privately owned property adjacent to Baldy Point climbing area. Acquired land contains quality bouldering opportunities and is now permanently protected as part of the Quartz Mountain Park system.