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Protect America's Climbing



Letter from the Director

2021 marks Access Fund's 30th birthday, and we've been reflecting a lot on how far climbing has come in the last three decades. Who could have guessed that climbing gyms would spring up in communities all across America? That a climbing film would win an Oscar? That climbing would become an Olympic sport? Or that there would be more than 7 million climbers across the country, a number that is growing every day?

People of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities have discovered the joy and benefits that climbing has to offer. We are happier, healthier, and more productive when we spend time outside in the vertical environment. And lawmakers and land managers are seeing that climbing helps fuel rural economies all over the country, and that climbers are actively supporting local communities. The trails and recreation infrastructure needed at climbing areas create jobs, protect public lands, and connect young people with the outdoors.

In my mind, however, the most important benefit of climbing is something less tangible. When we spend time outside with friends and family, experiencing wild places and testing ourselves on our own terms, we come back with a much deeper appreciation for nature. And through climbing, we meet people from around the world, experience other cultures, and share a common bond.

In a day and age when so many of us stare at screens all day long, we desperately need to foster more opportunities and access for all of us to connect with each other and with the natural world around us. These experiences inspire and teach us to care about the environment. They help us grow into advocates, stewards, and champions for the trees and animals and future generations who will inherit what we leave behind. They help us become connected to something that is bigger than ourselves.

Our connection to the land bridges social and cultural divides and, as climbers, we must embrace those common bonds to protect and steward the land that sustains us.

As we look forward to the next 30 years, our challenge at Access Fund is to ensure that our core values of sustainable access, conservation, and stewardship are deeply embedded in all climbers. We all have an important role to play in taking care of the places we love, regardless of how hard we climb, where we're from, or what we look like. Our connection to the land bridges social and cultural divides and, as climbers, we must embrace those common bonds to protect and steward the land that sustains us.



Haychoi Taing bouldering at Index, Washington, ancestral lands of Coast Salish, Tulalip, Skykomish. © Trúc Nguyen Allen

To those of you who have been Access Fund members for years—who have a drawer full of T-shirts—thank you for supporting this mission for so long. If you haven't yet joined Access Fund, now is the time! Regardless of whether you love highball boulders, alpine ridgelines, or overhanging limestone, Access Fund is for all climbers, and we all have a responsibility to take care of the land for current and future generations.



Chris Winter Executive Director

Progress in the Fight for Oak Flat

In the final days before leaving office, Trump's political appointees at the Department of Agriculture ordered the final step toward the transfer of over 2,200 acres in Oak Flat, Arizona, to foreign-owned Resolution Copper Mining (RCM). If allowed to move forward, the proposed mining operation would destroy lands that are sacred to the Apache and result in the largest ever loss of climbing on public lands.

Access Fund quickly partnered with tribes and conservation groups to file a lawsuit to prevent the transfer of the 2,422 acres of public land and, at the same time, asked the incoming Biden Administration to withdraw the deeply flawed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that initiated the land transfer. The EIS, developed during the Trump Administration, ignored critical social, cultural, and environmental impacts that would result from the proposed mining operation.

On March 1, the U.S. Forest Service threw Oak Flat a temporary lifeline, announcing that it had withdrawn the hastily developed EIS. The announcement marked a stunning change of direction in favor of Native American tribes, climbers, and conservation values, but the fight is far from over.

"The tide has turned in the fight to save Oak Flat," says Chris Winter, executive director of Access Fund. "After 15 long years engaged in this fight, we've seen the momentum shift dramatically in our favor, and we now have to focus all of our energies on Congress."

Withdrawal of the flawed EIS is a historic victory—shared by tribes, climbers, and conservationists—but the battle for Oak Flat isn't over yet. To permanently protect Oak Flat, Access Fund and its partners are taking the fight to Congress, working to convince lawmakers to revoke the land transfer mandate that was snuck into the unrelated, must-pass 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, paving the way for this land exchange.

If the proposed mine is allowed to move forward, it will result in a surface crater approximately two miles wide and 1,000 feet deep—consuming Oak Flat and all of its sacred sites and climbing resources.

Rio Tinto Group, one of RCM's parent companies, recently destroyed an Aboriginal site in Australia while mining for iron, and it has promised to not destroy important cultural sites ever again, yet it is poised to do just that at Oak Flat. If the proposed mine is allowed to move forward, it will, by RCM's own estimate, result in a surface crater approximately two miles wide and 1,000 feet deep—consuming Oak Flat and all of the sacred sites and recreational resources within it.

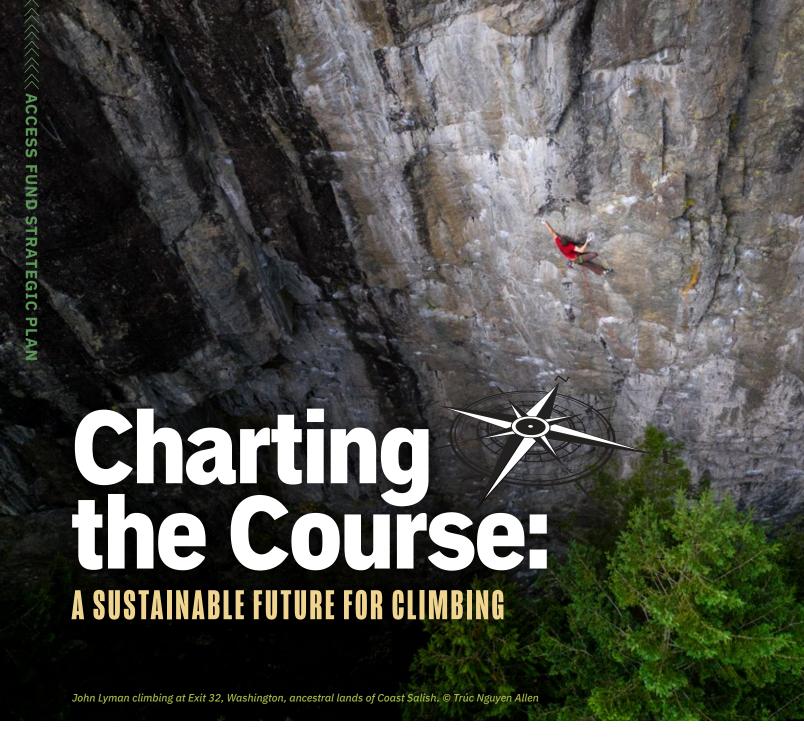
There is momentum within Congress to put a stop to this land transfer. Representative Raúl Grijalva, Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, has introduced the Save Oak Flat Act (H.R. 1884) to repeal the section of the 2015 law that authorized the land transfer. A companion bill (S. 915) was introduced into the Senate by Senator Bernie Sanders.

Access Fund recently submitted testimony for a hearing on the Save Oak Flat bill with the House Natural Resources Committee, and we are asking all climbers to write their congressional representatives to ask them to support the Save Oak Flat Act.

Take Action Now

If you haven't done so already, visit accessfund.org/oakflat and submit a letter to your Congressional representatives asking them to repeal the land transfer law, preventing destruction of the sacred site and the largest loss of climbing in American history.





This year, Access Fund celebrates its 30th birthday: It's a time to reflect on all that we have achieved together and, more importantly, to take stock of the challenges ahead and chart a course that will protect the future of climbing.

Over the past three decades, Access Fund has primarily fought for legal or physical access to the places we love to climb. While there is still a lot of work to be done on this front, we have largely established climbing as a legitimate use of public land. We have also developed a number of well-established tools that assist with legal access to private land, like our Climbing Conservation Loan Program, recreational easements, and leases. And we have mobilized climbing conservation, putting crews on the road to help climbing communities address the growing impacts at our climbing areas. We have come so far, but there is still much work to do.

Explosive Growth Drives New Threats

Looking forward, the explosive growth in the number of outdoor climbers defines a new set of challenges, as well as opportunities. This growth places an increased need on Access Fund's work. In many cases, we are loving our climbing areas to death, and this is creating new threats to climbing access, including overuse, overcrowding, more competition, and changing environmental conditions.

The question is no longer whether land managers should or should not allow climbers to scale the cliffs of El Cap or other iconic crags. Now, the question is whether the tremendous growth in the number of climbers is sustainable—whether land managers can support access while also protecting the land and the places we love. The impacts we have as climbers may very well lead to the greatest threats to access in the future.



Land managers at Red Rock Canyon turn visitors away due to crowding. Ancestral lands of Southern Paiute and Western Shoshone. © Irene Yee

But this growth in climbing is also an opportunity. As our numbers swell, it means there are more climbers walking the halls of our nation's Capitol, more climbers in influential land management positions, and more climbers in the media spotlight. We have an opportunity to turn all of these influential climbers into advocates, whether meeting with lawmakers, building trails, or just setting a good example while they are out at the crag.

The Path Forward

If we're going to continue to be successful in safeguarding the places we love and maintaining climbing access, we must connect with these new climbers and engage them in the rewarding work of protecting America's climbing. And we must scale Access Fund's programs and investments in local communities to meet the unprecedented demands of our growing sport.

There is no organization better poised than Access Fund to steer this growth in climbing. Thirty years of unparalleled success have laid a strong foundation for the path forward, which includes a committed and talented staff distributed across the country, a vibrant and energetic Board of Directors, programs that are on point and impactful, and a dedicated community of volunteers, members and partners. As we look to the future, we'll be doing the same great work you've come to expect from Access Fund. This new course is by no means a sea change in the manner and direction of our work. Rather, it reflects the evolving role of Access Fund in the climbing community.

HOW WE'LL GET IT DONE

Connect With and Inspire More Climbers to Join the Advocacy Movement

Protecting climbing areas means more than keeping them open—it means making sure that the climbers who use these areas are well-educated, engaged, and inspired to protect the places they climb. If we are going to create a sustainable future for climbing, we must reach the rapidly growing constituency of new climbers and bring them into this rewarding work. All climbers have a role to play in protecting the places they love, and Access Fund will be actively working to bring all climbers into our diverse and vibrant community of climbing advocates.

Scale Programs to Meet Growing Demand

Over the past three decades, Access Fund has earned the reputation of getting things done and securing tangible results in protecting climbing areas. With five incredibly impactful programs—climbing policy and advocacy, stewardship and conservation, land acquisition and protection, local support and mobilization, and education—our core mission activities are already on-point to address the challenges ahead. Now, we must scale these programs, adding more capacity to meet the needs of a much larger community of climbers. This will require more boots on the ground building out sustainable climbing areas, more trips to Washington, D.C., to meet with lawmakers, more local advocates building relationships with land managers, and more horsepower behind climber education initiatives.

Deepen Investments in Local Climbing Communities

The first and best line of defense for protecting climbing areas is almost always the local climbers who are familiar with the area and the issues. That's why a critical piece of our work is to organize and support local climbing communities with funding, capacity building, and stewardship and advocacy expertise. As Access Fund scales its programs, we must also scale our investment in these local climbing advocacy communities through more grants, more services, more regional staff time—giving local advocates the tools they need to protect the backyard crags in your community.

A Bright Future

As we chart an exciting path forward for Access Fund and the climbing community, we should always remember that the eyes of the country are watching us. Climbing has captured the imagination of the general public, the mainstream media, and policy makers in a way we never could have predicted 15-20 years ago. Free Solo and the Dawn Wall have landed climbers on the stage of the Academy Awards, and on the front page of *The New York Times*. Climbing pros have become social media superstars, and after climbing debuts in the Olympics this year, that spotlight popularity is sure to grow. And in Washington, D.C., virtually every public lands bill introduced into Congress is now framed in terms of the outdoor recreation economy.

This is an exciting time for climbing, and we are honored to lead the charge in creating a sustainable future for our sport.



The fight for America's public lands is a long one, but we've had some great victories over the past few months. Be sure to check out the story on page 3 for an update on the fight to save Oak Flat in Arizona.

Awaiting a Decision on the Future of Bears Ears

On January 20th, President Biden signed an executive order to review the boundaries and conditions of Bears Ears National Monument, 85% of which lost monument protections in a 2017 Trump executive order. It seems likely that President Biden will move to restore protections to this incredible landscape, which is sacred to many Native American tribes. At the time we went to press, Department of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland was still conducting a review and analysis of the monument's purpose and boundaries. Access Fund has submitted recommendations on behalf of the climbing community, and we remain hopeful that the Biden Administration will restore landscape-level protections to this exceptional cultural region, which is also home to world-class climbing areas like Indian Creek.

New River Gorge Named America's Newest National Park

The New River Gorge, previously designated a National River, was recently named America's 63rd National Park, gaining the highest level of protection from the federal government. This is a big win for West Virginia, and we're optimistic that the new National Park status will improve climbing management at this premiere climbing destination. Access Fund is currently partnering with NPS and New River Alliance of Climbers on a comprehensive restoration of Bridge Buttress, the most popular climbing area in the New River Gorge, bringing the area up to the high standard it deserves as part of an iconic National Park.

An Uptick in Climbing Management Plans

As climbing has increased in popularity, Access Fund is seeing an uptick in the number of federal land managers looking to develop climbing management plans (CMPs) to address issues they're facing with climbing, like resource impacts and crowding. While nearly 60% of climbing in America is on federal land, none of our federal land management agencies (like the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, or National Park Service) have formal, national-level policies that outline how climbing should be managed at parks and forests across the country. This creates a lot of variability in how climbing is managed. While Access Fund is working with policy makers in DC to establish these national-level policies, CMPs are currently our best tool to ensure climbers have sustainable access while setting ground rules for how agencies and climbers collaborate. CMPs cover all aspects of climbing, including education, climber-land manager partnerships, trails, search and rescue, fixed anchor use, human waste management, and much more. We're currently working on CMPs for Bighorn National Forest in Wyoming (Tensleep), Bitterroot National Forest in Montana, Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia (Seneca Rocks), Joshua Tree National Park in California, and several others across the country are slated for 2021.

Sign up for Access Fund's Policy Digest email to stay current on the latest in the fight for public lands. accessfund.org/pages/policy-digest

How to Assess Sandstone After Rain or Snow

From the soaring splitters of Indian Creek to the immaculate desert varnish of Red Rock, sandstone makes up some of the most incredible climbing in the world. Unfortunately, it is also some of the most fragile. While the Nuttall sandstone at the New River Gorge is actually harder than granite, most sandstone is weakened to an incredible degree by moisture. As a porous rock type that can absorb a lot of water, western sandstone from Utah to California can lose up to 75% of its strength while wet, making it easy to snap off holds and irreparably damage classic climbs.

The bottom line for climbers: Don't climb on wet sandstone, full stop.

But this is sometimes easier said than done. While staying off the stone for 24-48 hours after it rains is a no-brainer, many factors such as aspect, wind, season, and amount of precipitation have an impact on how long it takes sandstone to truly dry off and be safe to climb again. When climbing on sandstone, consider the following:

- ► How much precipitation fell? While a brief, passing storm may largely run off the rock and allow climbing within a day, it could take days after a heavy downpour or snowstorm for sandstone to truly dry out.
- ► How humid is it? Drier conditions will lead to faster evaporation. Humid weather, conversely, will extend the drying-out period.
- ▶ What is the crag's aspect? South- or west-facing crags that get lots of sunlight will dry out faster than north- and east-facing crags that are shaded most of the day. Similarly, cloudy or overcast weather will extend drying times.
- ▶ **Is it windy?** Brisk winds can accelerate the drying process.
- ▶ Is there evidence of moisture? Even if the surface of the rock is dry, it is entirely possible that moisture is lingering in the subsurface. Is there damp ground on the approach? Is there any wetness at the base of the rock? If you dig down an inch or two into the dirt at the base of the crag, is there underlying moisture? If the answer is yes to any of these questions, there is probably still moisture under the surface of the rock.

Take all of the above factors into account after precipitation on sandstone. If it's a bright sunny day after a light rainfall, with dry conditions, the rock may only need 24-48 hours to be climbable. If it's humid and cool following a downpour, you may need to wait several days or even a week. It is never worth rushing: The route will be there ... as long as the holds don't break.



Texas Climbers Embrace Mentorship in Route Development

Deep in the heart of Texas sits a pristine crag, untouched by even a trace of chalk. Amidst the hill country landscape of caliche and live oaks, the pink granite loaves and eggs promise outstanding climbing on everything from splitters to crystal-crimping slabs. But there's a catch: As with 95% of the land in the Lone Star State, this dreamy crag is on private land.

When Brian Tickle, Access Fund's Texas regional director, approached the owners of Inks Ranch in 2017, control of the ranch had just changed hands from the patriarch of the family to the children. This change in management presented a rare opportunity for climbers to potentially gain access to a trove of untouched Texas granite. After Tickle spent a sweltering July day walking the ranch and talking to the owners, the framework for climbing at Inks Ranch was set.

Access Fund put out an open call for route developers to start putting up new routes, and soon a posse of seasoned Texas first-ascensionists were ready to establish enough routes to make the inaugural festival a success. There was only one glaring issue left to address. "Texas is one of the most diverse states in the nation," Tickle says. "But historically, route development has been anything but diverse." The climbing

community has diversified to an incredible degree in the last 20 years, but the route development community has not kept pace with this change.

Access Fund wanted the crew developing Inks Ranch to reflect the diversity of the climbing community in Texas but had difficulty finding individuals with the gear and experience needed to put up safe, high-quality new routes who weren't already a part of the long-established Texas route development crew. The solution? A mentorship event that paired seasoned veterans with psyched newcomers from communities traditionally underrepresented in new routing.

"We created this event because we believe in dismantling structures that create inequity and replacing them with ones that foster diversity," Tickle says. "In the case of route development, there are many factors that have made climbers feel unable to get involved, from lack of access to land and financial barriers to a lack of mentorship."

Tickle reached out to local Texas affinity groups like the Texas Lady Crushers and Brown Girls Climb to find participants. What these newcomers may have lacked in gear or experience, they more than made up in enthusiasm.





"When I first was invited to the route development weekend, my initial reaction was childlike giddiness," says climber Alyssa Garza. "I understood how unique this opportunity was to check off a bucket-list item."

On a beautiful October weekend, veteran route developers paired up with a diverse group of mentees and got to work. The route development began with a short ground school that introduced mentees to the tools of the trade and also gave the abridged version of the history of route development in Texas. Afterward, everyone broke off into groups and disappeared into the boulders. Mentors offered advice about how to find quality lines, assess rock quality, and how to sparingly place fixed hardware only where necessary. Mentees got handson experience cleaning routes, bolting, and going for first ascents (FAs). Over the course of the weekend, these mentormentee teams put up dozens of routes, including traditionally protected splitters, bolted face climbs, and gnarly offwidths.

For mentee Bree Jameson, the significance of the event went beyond the skills she learned. "I'm told by my peers and mentors that, to their knowledge, a black woman has never had this opportunity in Texas and perhaps even the U.S. I'm a mom of sons who are already growing up in a world where they are often pioneering right alongside me. We are regularly the only BIPOC people we see on the trails and at the crags. I want to instill in them the courage to boldly chase whatever endeavors impassion them, even if there is no one like them around, but especially if they are the first."

Being an example for her kids was important to mentee Glenda Reyes-Ortiz, too: "To be completely honest, I didn't fully grasp the importance of diversity and inclusion when it came to route development until the event. After I bolted my first route and got the FA on it, I was so stoked and still in disbelief that it had happened. As I was telling my husband and kids all about the day, they were all stoked for me, and I found myself choking up just talking about it. This needs to be available to anyone who wants to learn and put in the work—even to moms like me."

We had the whole-hearted support of a crew of incredibly knowledgeable men that forewent their own glory to educate and empower a new generation.

Garza summed up the experience of the weekend: "We entered this weekend as motivated climbers and drove home that Sunday as route developers. We had the whole-hearted support of a crew of incredibly knowledgeable men that forewent their own glory to educate and empower a new generation. We are not the first women to develop routes, nor were they the first men to pass down knowledge. But the opportunity and privilege we were afforded that weekend is a signal that we are part of the catalyst of change. And that is an honor unlike any other."

Beyond bigger themes of breaking through barriers, the event was also just plain fun. Garza led her first trad route—the fact that she also got to claim it as an FA, she says, "was icing on top of a most delicious cake."

When asked if she was interested in continuing with route development, Jameson answered, "1,000%, yes! I hope to name all the routes very provocatively to induce conversations around all the things we should be talking about in society to progress and grow."

Garza echoes Jameson: "I cannot put into words how fired up I am to do more route development. I have my eye on Mexico in particular. I have a lot of family in Monterrey and Guadalajara and would love nothing more than to spend time back in that country with a chance to develop new locations out there, too."

The weekend at Inks Ranch is just one example of how much stronger the community becomes when we build bridges. Access Fund looks forward to seeing more climbers across the country embrace mentorship and share their years of knowledge and skills to protect and enhance climbing areas.

PROTECTING BEARS EARS:

Stone Work to Policy Work

The greater Bears Ears region in southeast Utah is one of the most superlative landscapes in the country. The whole region is a living testament to thousands of years of Indigenous history and culture that thrives to this day. It contains snow-capped peaks and red rock canyonlands, incredible biological diversity, and is home to the best crack climbing in the world.

Access Fund has been working for more than 20 years to make sure this landscape is protected—from trail work to helping craft management plans to suing the Trump Administration over its decision to slash Bears Ears National Monument by nearly 85%. Our vision is that current and future generations of climbers will enjoy sustainable access to this incredible landscape and develop a deep appreciation for its truly unique cultural and ecological values.

There are a diverse group of stakeholders who all have an interest in how this land is managed: Tribes, climbers, mountain bikers, hunters, OHV users, conservation groups, ranchers, the oil and gas industry, and the mining industry, to name just a few. These stakeholders coalesce around the region, sometimes working together and sometimes at odds with one another. It's near impossible to satisfy all of these interests at once, especially when some want to protect the landscape and some want to develop it. This results in a complex balancing act of priorities and policies, many of which shift with each change in administration in Washington, D.C.

However, we have learned that a core group of stakeholders in the region share many of the same values, regardless of whether we think of ourselves as climbers, or conservationists, or tribal members and advocates.

The work to protect Bears Ears and Indian Creek is made possible by strong partnerships with a long list of fantastic organizations, including the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition, Friends of Indian Creek, Canyonlands Research Center, the Rocky Mountain Field Institute, Salt Lake Climbers Alliance, Boulder Climbing Community, the Nature Conservancy, local students from Montrose High School, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Ancestral Lands program of Conservation Legacy.

Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, ancestral lands of Ute and Pueblo. © James Q. Martin

It's been hugely important to collaborate with and take our lead from the tribes, and it's clear that we share many common values and hopes for the long-term conservation and management of Bears Ears.

"All the stakeholders that want to protect Bears Ears have a shared interest in protecting Indigenous sacred and cultural sites and mitigating the impacts from extractive industries," says Access Fund Executive Director Chris Winter. "It's been hugely important to collaborate with and take our lead from the tribes, and it's clear that we share many common values and hopes for the long-term conservation and management of Bears Ears."

As with so many other special places, Bears Ears has faced many threats in recent years. The monument rollback has reduced resources for the protection of Indigenous archaeological and cultural sites, and opened up huge swathes of sensitive land to oil and gas drilling. Indian Creek has also grappled with overcrowding, human waste issues, and impacts to the landscape itself, such as erosion. Unfortunately, many of these issues are a result of our own community's love for climbing in the Creek.

"Climbers need to lead the way in taking care of the places where we are having the most impact," says Winter. "Ultimately, we believe that climbing and other forms of outdoor recreation can fit in with the cultural, historical, and ecological values of Bears Ears and the Creek, but we must be deliberate in how we manage recreation and its impacts to achieve this balance."

"Tribes and climbers share similar environmental values that inform the management of land and relationships to it," says Aaron Mike, Access Fund Native Lands Coordinator and member of the Navajo Nation. "Tribes and many climbers have developed a sense of identity based on the land. The sacredness and value of the land translates into a deep connection to place for both groups. It is because of this connection that tribes and climbers have developed shared environmental values that prioritize stewardship and sustainability."

In addition to policy work to protect the Bears Ears landscape, Access Fund's Conservation Teams have spent thousands of hours on the ground, completing stewardship projects that mitigate climber impacts at the Creek.

The bulk of our work in recent years has focused on creating sustainable access and approach routes," says Access Fund Stewardship Director Ty Tyler. "This is a labor-intensive, high skill process. We're talking massive stone staircases, stone retaining walls—turning sandy gully approaches into stone masterpieces that will protect the landscape from erosion and last for generations.

Volunteers give the Conservation Team a hand on the restoration and rebuild of the Scarface approach trail at Indian Creek.

To date, Access Fund has been able to complete these projects by getting one-off approvals from land managers, but a pending environmental assessment is expected to vastly expand permission to work at multiple walls over the next several years. Access Fund has already secured funding for some of these proposed projects, and the work will be a joint effort between the Access Fund-Jeep Conservation Teams and Indigenous crews from the Ancestral Lands program of Conservation Legacy.

As skilled as the Access Fund-Jeep Conservation Teams are, these sorts of large-scale sustainability projects need lots of hands—and climbers need to step up.

Indian Creek is a challenging place to get folks to volunteer. We'd love to see climbers use a few hours on their rest days to come help out, or even build a day of stewardship into their trip.

"Volunteers are critical," says Tyler. "Indian Creek is a challenging place to get folks to volunteer. Many people are there to climb on their vacations, so they're less likely to pitch in. We'd love to see climbers use a few hours on their rest days to come help out, or even build a day of stewardship into their trip."

Reflecting on the road ahead, Tyler is also keen to focus on education and collaboration, in addition to the on-the-ground stewardship work.

"We'd like to start a Climber Stewards program, so that climbers can educate their own community on how to care for and protect Indian Creek. It's critical that climbers understand how to recreate sustainably in a landscape with so many sacred sites and ecologically sensitive areas."

With Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland's recent visit to Bears Ears, change at the policy level is almost certain for the region. While restored monument designations are likely, the specifics of what they will look like are still coming into focus. And with over a century of struggle over land protection in southeastern Utah, renewed protections will almost certainly not be the end of the story for Bears Ears.

Access Fund will be leading a visioning process, alongside a range of stakeholders, to identify immediate stewardship needs, long-term management needs, and to outline the actions that the climbing community can take to protect this special landscape.

"Bears Ears and Indian Creek are such central places—for the tribal community, for climbers, and from an ecological perspective," reflects Winter. "So many stories and pieces of history are tied up in the canyon country. It's a gift that we get to experience this landscape, and we have a responsibility as a community to do what we can to protect it for generations to come."



After a full day of trail stabilization work, the Conservation Team crew enjoys a scenic commute back to their campsite in Indian Creek, Utah. Ancestral lands of Ute and Pueblo.

The Access Fund-Jeep Conservation Team, the only program solely dedicated to stewarding and conserving America's climbing areas, celebrates 10 years of mobile climbing conservation this year. This milestone, and the growing legacy of sustainable climbing areas around the country, shows land managers that climbers are committed to caring for the places they recreate.

Helping Local Communities Address Growing Impacts

Access Fund launched this innovative program in 2011, with title sponsor Jeep, to bring professional trail-building and conservation expertise to local climbing communities across the nation, many of which were struggling to keep up with the impacts of our growing sport.

"Most climbing areas in this country were developed quietly, by an adventurous few, in a time when the sport was relatively obscure and climber impacts barely existed," says Access Fund Stewardship Director Ty Tyler. "The majority were not designed as actual recreation sites, with infrastructure to contain the impact and protect the environment."

This wasn't a problem when the cliffs and boulders saw few visitors, but the number of climbers in this country has increased dramatically, and our climbing areas began buckling under the pressure of more and more visitors. The Conservation Team program was created to address this growing need—a need that keeps increasing every year.



Jeff Young, member of the very first Conservation Team crew, gears up for a project at City of Rocks in Idaho. Ancestral lands of Shoshone-Bannock.

The Conservation Team program launched modestly in 2011, with a single team of two trail-building and conservation experts traveling to the climbing areas in most dire need. As the program gained momentum, and demand for the team increased, Access Fund worked with Jeep to expand to two teams in 2016. Just a year later, Access Fund put a third team on the road to meet the ever-increasing demand from local climbing communities.

A Legacy in the Making

Many of the impacts at climbing areas can be diminished with proper planning and infrastructure that is designed to manage visitors and protect the environment. The Conservation Teams are focused on building out this infrastructure—things like sustainable trails, approved parking areas, toilets, reinforced belay and pad areas, and educational signage. All of these investments help to concentrate climbers and their associated impacts onto well-built infrastructure that is designed to protect the surrounding environment.





This belay area at Fun Rock in Washington was supported by a set of rotting timbers, installed decades ago, which were collapsing and destabilizing the hillside. These new stone steps reinforce the hillside, protect the trees, and give climbers a sustainable area to belay without damaging the surrounding environment. Ancestral lands of Okanagan and Nlaka'pamux.

Since the program's inception, Conservation Team crews have completed over a thousand projects to steward and restore climbing areas in nearly every state, mobilizing and training nearly 10,000 volunteers and climbing advocates along the way—showing land managers that climbers are responsible users and demonstrating effective strategies to protect the land.

"Working with Access Fund's Conservation Teams has been an exemplary collaboration," says Zachary Winters, U.S. Forest Service Climbing Ranger at Fun Rock. "The most gratifying part has been observing each crew member and volunteer take ownership in stewarding these extraordinary climbing resources. The final product is one we are all incredibly proud of: restored social trails, logical approach design, and sustainable trail structures. Climbing at Washington Pass can remain an example of minimum-impact recreation in the National Forest."

Cultivating the Next Generation of Stewards

Conservation Team crews are some of the hardest working members of the Access Fund team, dedicating their backs and brains to the difficult work of restoring climbing areas and making them sustainable for current and future generations.

"The Conservation Team was instrumental in getting our Washington Climbers Conservation Initiative off the ground in 2016," says Washington Climbers Coalition Board Member Jeremy Park. "The level of knowledge in stewarding climbing areas simply can't be found any place else."



Conservation Team crews worked at the base of Thin Air Buttress of Cathedral Ledge in New Hampshire for several weeks, removing rotten timber structures and replacing them with a sustainable stone staircase that will last. Ancestral lands of Wabanaki Confederacy, Abenaki/Abénaquis, and Pequawket. © Cait Bourgault

Most teams come into the program with basic trail building experience and receive on-the-job training specific to climbing area conservation. This is highly technical and labor-intensive work, but comes with great reward.

"Working as a Conservation Team crew member allowed me to embrace the challenges—physical, technical, and personal—of doing trail work and stewardship projects full time, with new volunteers and partners in a new environment almost every week," says Amanda Peterson, who spent three years as a crew member of the Access Fund-Jeep Conservation Team. "It was incredibly rewarding to facilitate the sharing of ideas and empower passionate volunteers with the skills and leadership to care for their local climbing areas."

A large part of Access Fund's strategy is for Conservation Team crews to train local volunteers and advocates, many of whom volunteer through their local climbing organizations (LCOs), on the basic skills needed to care for their climbing areas long after the professionals have left.

10 Years of Climbing Conservation

Miles Traveled	503,302
Stewardship Projects	1,267
Volunteers Engaged	9,573
Volunteer Hours Harnessed	57,344
Feet of Social Trail Eliminated	59,677
Sustainable Staircases Built	531
Retaining Walls Built	581

Drainage Ditches Dug	446
Graffiti Cleanups	77
Trash Cleanups	243
Feet of Sustainable Trail Built	65,064
Educational Gym Visits	211
Tons of Rock Hauled	3,507



Amanda splits rocks to reconstruct the popular trail into Hidden Valley at Joshua Tree National Park. Ancestral lands of Serrano and Western Shoshone.

"Conservation Team crews are true heroes in protecting America's climbing, but they simply can't do this work alone. These two-person teams could never move the tons of stone and materials necessary to keep our climbing areas stabilized," says Tyler. "Training local volunteers and community leaders is a critical component of ensuring long-term sustainability of our climbing areas."



A Conservation Team crew member demonstrates a technique for creating the foundation for a stone retaining wall structure in Ten Sleep Canyon. Ancestral lands of Crow, Cheyenne, and Sioux. © Kris Ugarriza

Crags of Tomorrow

As climbing continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, so will the need for large-scale infrastructure projects at climbing areas. The time has come to think more holistically about crag stewardship and development. It's about more than developing routes and picking up some trash—it includes everything from appropriate parking and trailhead facilities to sustainable approach trails and staging areas,

waste management solutions, and more. The Conservation Teams will continue to lead this work, supporting the community as we strive together to make climbing areas sustainable for decades to come.

Access Fund is actively working to expand the Conservation Team program to put another crew on the road to lead and inspire the growing population of climbers to care for the places they love. You can help with this effort by making a donation today at accessfund.org/donate.



Visitors at City of Rocks in Idaho express their appreciation for the Conservation Team's work. Ancestral lands of Shoshone-Bannock.

The Access Fund-Jeep Conservation Team program is made possible through the generous support of title sponsor Jeep and supporting sponsors REI Co-op, La Sportiva, CLIF, Therm-a-rest, YETI. Mountain Hardwear, and Athletic Brewing Company.



2020 Climbing Advocate Awards

We're proud to announce the recipients of the 2020 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 rockstar community builders, climbing stewards, equitable access leaders, and land conservationists. These individuals and organizations stand out in their commitment to the American climbing community.

Bill Dockins Menocal Lifetime Achievement Award

We are honored to present Bill Dockins with the Menocal Lifetime Achievement Award for his expansive contributions to climbing advocacy in Montana. Founder of



the Southwest Montana Climbers Coalition (SMCC), Bill's efforts have been instrumental in improving and securing access to countless climbing areas in the region. He also led early bolt replacement efforts, and continues to contribute to this work. As an attorney, Bill has also provided priceless pro bono counsel to SMCC. Through the years, he has remained as a consistent voice of reason as climbing evolved from a fringe pursuit to a globally appreciated outdoor activity.

Sarah Garlick Community Leader: Local Organizing

We are thrilled to present New Hampshire's Sarah Garlick with a Climbing Advocate Award for her years of dedication and



key role in founding, organizing, and leading Friends of the Ledges, a local climbing organization that protects climbing in the eastern White Mountains of New Hampshire and Maine. Under Sarah's leadership, the organization has grown its stewardship, land conservation, and land manager relations efforts.

Peter Cody Bebie Leadership Award

We are thrilled to present New York's Peter Cody with a Bebie Leadership Award for his leadership of Gunks Climbers Coalition and his role in the acquisition of Ant Lion



Crag on Millbrook Mountain. Thanks to Peter, the Gunks has a new, permanently protected climbing area. Peter continues to use his trademark relationship-building skills to explore new opportunities for access along the Shawangunk ridgeline.

Angela Lee Community Leader: JEDI, Local Organizing and Climbing Access

We are honored to recognize Angela Lee's work in Colorado's San Luis Valley. Angela is the co-founder and president of the local



climbing organization, San Luis Valley Climbers
Alliance (SLVCA), and an outspoken leader in
incorporating justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion
(JEDI) principles into climbing advocacy. With SLVCA,
she also played an instrumental role in working with
a private landowner to permanently protect access to
Denny's climbing area.

Memphis Rox

Community Leader: Equitable Access

We are excited to present Memphis Rox in Tennessee with a Climbing Advocate Award for demonstrating a



revolutionary model for equitable climbing access. Memphis Rox has redefined traditional notions of what gyms are and how they operate by integrating itself into a low-income community and instituting a sliding pay scale. As part of its programming, Memphis Rox also offers a host of social services—such as Covid support, healthy food programs, exercise, and exposure of youth to the outdoors—that make it oriented as much around justice, equity, and service as it is around climbing.

Pam Neal Community Leader: Stewardship & Advocacy

We are honored to recognize Pam Neal for her work with the Southern California Mountaineering Association (SCMA), where she has provided climbing



advocacy and stewardship leadership in her work with California State Parks. Pam has helped organize many Adopt a Crag trail days at areas like Point Dume, Echo Cliffs, and Malibu Creek, and has worked with land management agencies to protect sensitive and endangered species in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Dave Pagel Community Leader: Climbing Access & Local Organizing

We are proud to present Dave Pagel with a Climbing Advocate Award for his success in opening the Duluth Ice Park, a new ice climbing area



in Minnesota. Dave has also played a critical role in leading and organizing the community and the Duluth Climbers Coalition.

Eric Ruljancich Community Leader: Stewardship

We are excited to recognize Eric Ruljancich with a Climbing Advocate Award for his service on the board of the



Climbing Association of Southern Arizona and his stellar leadership on the cutting edge of climbing area stewardship. Eric has led numerous community stewardship projects at places like Mt. Lemmon and Cochise Stronghold.

Jeremy Park Community Leader: Stewardship

We are excited to present Jeremy Park with a Climbing Advocate Award for his volunteer leadership on the board of Washington Climbers Coalition (WCC). Over the



past 10 years, Jeremy has helped the WCC with event organizing, fundraising, and community outreach, and has played a critical role in organizing and funding the four-year Washington Climbing Conservation Initiative.

Ryan Shipp Community Leader: Local Organizing & Stewardship

Nominated by the community, we are thrilled to present Ryan Shipp with a Climbing Advocate Award for his outstanding leadership of South Central



Pennsylvania Climbers (SCPC). Ryan has brought the community together to steward and protect climbing areas like Governor Stable, Mt. Gretna, Chickies Rock, and more. His passion for getting youth and people out to climb in a responsible and safe fashion is exemplified by his work to help organize SCPC's annual Safe Harbor gym-to-crag event.

Alexis Krauss

Community Leader: Youth, Access, and Equitable Climbing

Nominated by the community, we are thrilled to honor Alexis Krauss with a Climbing Advocate



Award for her leadership as a founding member of Young Women Who Crush (YWWC), a rock climbing and leadership development program serving young women and gender expansive youth from New York City public schools. Alexis has brought together a diverse team of co-founders and mentors to help inspire young women to recognize their strength and realize their potential through a discipline they may not have otherwise experienced: climbing.

Carolina Climbers Coalition

Land Conservation Award

Access Fund is honored to recognize Carolina Climbers

Coalition with a Land Conservation Award for permanently protecting the Buckeye Boulders in North Carolina. This multi-year conservation project ensures long-term climber-friendly management of Buckeye Boulders and also protects access to the adjacent Barn Boulders.

Southeastern Climbers Coalition



IMBER

Land Conservation Award

Access Fund is proud to honor Southeastern Climbers Coalition (SCC) with a Land Conservation Award for permanently protecting Denny Cove in Tennessee. In this multi-year conservation project, SCC used an Access Fund loan to acquire this new climbing area and make significant investments in sustainable access and trails. SCC then transferred the property to South Cumberland State Park for long-term, climber-friendly management.

The Vansmith Corporate Responsibility

Access Fund is thrilled to honor The Vansmith with a Climbing Advocate Award for its commitment to protecting America's climbing. The Vansmith selected Access Fund as its nonprofit of



choice to receive grant funds from its campaigns with Omaze, which offer outdoor lovers the chance to win a brand new Sprinter van with a custom Vansmith conversion. These campaigns have brought in over \$2 million to help protect America's climbing.

Rumney Climbers Association

Land Conservation Award



Access Fund is excited to honor Rumney Climbers Association (RCA) with a Land Conservation Award for permanently protecting Rumney's Northwest Crags in New Hampshire. In this multi-year conservation project, RCA used an Access Fund loan to help purchase the last tract of private land at Rumney Rocks and build sustainable trails and access to the area. RCA then transferred the property to White Mountain National Forest for long-term, climberfriendly management.

News from the Grassroots Network

Eastern Tennessee Climbers Coalition (ETCC)

ETCC is on a roll protecting climbing in eastern Tennessee. They recently purchased a new piece of land that protects access to South Clear Creek climbing and finished improvements to the parking area with help from an Access Fund grant. ETCC also partnered with Cumberland Trail State Park to revitalize climbing at Black Mountain, replacing bolts and top anchors, and updating the management plan. Families and beginner climbers are among the many people enjoying the area now.



Alaska Climbing Advocacy

Access Fund is thrilled to welcome two new Alaska local climbing organizations (LCOs) to our affiliate network. The Climbing Alliance of Southcentral Alaska is based in Anchorage and focuses on identifying and solving issues to climbing access. Valdez Adventure Alliance is a neighboring organization committed to bringing the Valdez community together to promote outdoor access. Both organizations will help Access Fund deepen its relationships in Alaska and explore new climbing opportunities.





LCO Webinar Series

Access Fund will host a series of four advocate webinars this year. Our first webinar was held in March and focused on grant funding for LCOs. Upcoming webinars include rebolting, JEDI approaches, and minimum-impact climbing education. Visit accessfund.org/webinars to learn more.

LCO 101: Virtual Programming

With the pandemic still curtailing in-person activities, many LCOs are making the jump to virtual events and programming. Here are some tips for making the digital leap.

Community Still Matters. Community is still really important right now. The DIY, grassroots vibe is all good and you don't have to be a TV anchor or producer to make virtual programming work.

What Kind of Programming? LCOs and other nonprofits are having success with movie nights, webinars, panels, Zoom happy hours, game nights, and other creative ideas.

Pick Your Platform. Zoom works for webinars and open meetings, and helps you organize speakers and registration all in one. There are also plenty of free platforms for a more casual and approachable event, including Facebook Live, Instagram Live, and YouTube Live.

Fundraising Works. Some have wondered if their community will continue to donate and support them financially during this challenging time. The answer is yes, and virtual events and programs are a great way to raise funds. Focus on optional donations in small denominations, auctions, raffles, or affordable tickets for movie nights.



Update Your Digital Presence. Take the opportunity to update your website, social media, and video pages. Freshen up or start more regular e-newsletter and social posts. Your community is spending a lot more time checking in with you on these platforms, so spiff them up, and build them out.

Welcome Last-Minute Participation. Stay open to last-minute reservations and participation. If you set hard, early deadlines on registration, you may lose a lot of people. Many folks will decide to tap in on a whim, or tune in for half of your show and leave. Embrace the flexibility and impulsiveness of participation and you'll get more people involved.

Ways to Support Climbing Access and Conservation

Remember that epic climbing day you still talk about because its memory fills you with absolute joy?

We want you to feel that same way when you give to Access Fund. Your generous gift ensures that, together, we keep the nation's climbing areas open and conserved for years to come. Our philanthropy team is here to deliver an easy, fun experience that provides the support you need and showcases the impact of your donation.

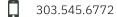
There are a variety of ways to contribute to our climbing and conservation efforts—and we are here to help! Reach out to us to explore the opportunities outlined below, to say hello, or simply to geek out on the latest gear and stellar climbs.

Start or Renew Your Membership

Members are the lifeblood of our work. Join or renew online, by mail, or by phone!

accessfund.org/join-or-giv

\square	Access Fund P.O. Box 17010 Boulder, CO 80308	
	*Please be sure to note "Membership Dues" in the memo.	



Give Through Your Employer

Many businesses and agencies provide easy ways to give, including Benevity, Your Cause, Combined Campaigns, and other platforms, and may even match your gift, multiplying the power of your support. Ask your HR department how.

Make a Gift of Stock or Mutual Funds

Giving appreciated securities can save on your tax bill. Please email development@accessfund.org, or visit our "Other Ways to Give" page (accessfund.org/join-or-give/other-ways-to-give) to find out more.

Consider a Bequest or Other Transfer of Assets \gg

Whether now or in the future, giving assets is a tax-smart way to support climbing. See our Planned Giving page at accessfund.org/join-or-give/other-ways-to-give, or contact Scott at development@accessfund.org

Become a Corporate Partner \gg

Access Fund can help build your brand by partnering to protect climbing. See our Corporate Partners page at accessfund.org/corporate-partnership, or contact Scott at development@accessfund.org

Your Philanthropy Team

Our team of philanthropy experts are standing by to help you with your next gift—whether it's a membership renewal, special donation, stock gift, transfer of assets, bequest, or other way of giving, we're ready to assist you.

Contact us by emailing development@accessfund.org with any questions you have about giving.



Kristina Cowell Membership & Office Coordinator

Kristina will help with your membership giving or find the right staff member to discuss any gift.



Heather Distad Events & Outreach Manager

Heather will help you with your crowdfunding efforts and can advise on individual gifts. She also oversees our major fundraising events.



Scott Dissel
Development Director

Scott will help you make a special gift, a bequest, stock gift, or other transfer of assets.

Featured Partners

The Vansmith

Based in Boulder, Colorado, The Vansmith is a premier manufacturer of custom vans that help modern-day explorers get out to enjoy the great outdoors while bringing some of the comforts from home with them. The Vansmith selected Access Fund as its nonprofit of choice to receive grant funds from its campaigns with Omaze, which offer outdoor lovers the chance to



win a brand new Sprinter van with a custom Vansmith conversion. These campaigns have brought in over \$2 million to help protect America's climbing. The funds have helped make Access Fund's policy and stewardship work a success, directly supporting our work to protect the Bears Ears region of Utah and improve and maintain access to many climbing areas around the country.

Jack Wolfskin

Based in Idstein, Germany, with a U.S. headquarters in Park City, Utah, Jack Wolfskin is one of the newest partners to support Access Fund's work. At Jack Wolfskin, they believe that fairness, environmental awareness, and corporate social responsibility are tied to the success of their company. As part of this responsibility to the



environment, the company has joined the Bluesign initiative to promote sustainability in the manufacturing of its products. Access Fund is actively working to expand our partnerships within the international climbing advocacy community, because the issues we face in the U.S. are often similar to those in other countries, and we believe that we can learn from each other. We welcome and thank Jack Wolfskin for joining and supporting the international climbing advocacy community.

Black Diamond

Black Diamond is a premier manufacturer of all-mountain gear with a specialization in rock climbing equipment. Based in Salt Lake City, Utah, Black Diamond has been



one of Access Fund's biggest supporters for more than two decades, helping to fund our climbing policy and advocacy work, as well as critical stewardship initiatives. Over the past few years, Black Diamond's support has helped fund our policy work in Washington, D.C., at the Climb the Hill lobbying event, where Access Fund advocates for sustainable recreation and the conservation of public lands. Black Diamond's support also assisted Access Fund in bringing together advocates from around the world for a virtual conservation and advocacy conference last year that helped climbers make a difference in their own communities.





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

Black Diamond Equipment

Titanium Plus - \$65,000+

The Vansmith

Titanium - \$50,000+

Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI)
Outdoor Research

Diamond - \$25,000+

Archer Law Offices

EarthTreks/Planet Granite

The North Face

La Sportiva

Touchstone Climbing

USA Climbing

Platinum Plus - \$15,000+

AKASO Tech, LLC

Athletic Brewing Company

Clif Bar

adidas TERREX / Five Ten

Platinum - \$10,000+

FrictionLabs

Google

Jason Keith Consulting

Mountain Hardwear

National Geographic

prAna

TAXA Outdoors

The Cliffs

The Spot Bouldering Gym

YETI

Gold - \$5,000+

Ascent Studio Climbing & Fitness

Austin Bouldering Project

EVO Rock + Fitness

Jack Wolfskin

Osprev

Outdoor Retailer

Petzl

Silver - \$2,500+

High Point Climbing and Fitness

Mystery Ranch

Phoenix Rock Gym

Topo Designs

Variner

Vertical Adventures

Major - \$1,000+

Adventure Rock

Alliant Insurance Services

Armaid Company

ASCEND Pittsburgh

Blue Ice

Climbing Business Journal

Epic Water Filters

Flash Foxy

Gunks Apps

Metolius

Planet Rock

Pollard Jeep of Boulder

Rock and Resole

Tension Climbing

TRUBLUE Auto Belay by HeadRush Technologies

Wave Front Consulting

Trúc Nguyen Allen

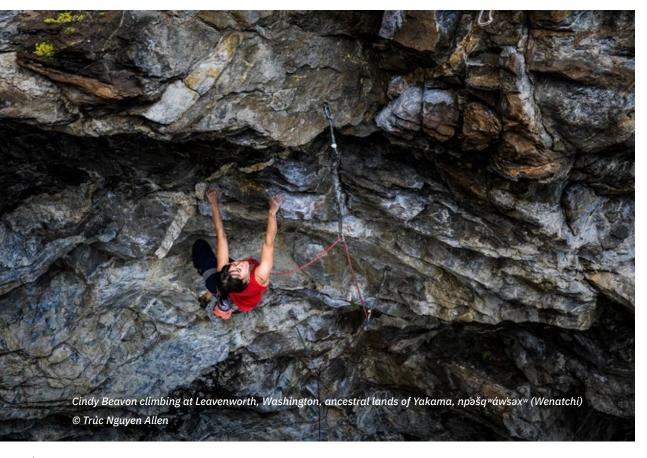
In 1980, Trúc and his mother arrived in the United States as refugees from war-torn Vietnam with only \$50 and the clothes they wore. In spite of economic and racial challenges, Trúc grew up like most kids, but he decided early on that the outdoors was where he wanted to spend his life. He was inspired by the billboards and TV commercials of "extreme sports," and smitten by the images of striking action and dreamy mountain lifestyles. At the time, he didn't know how to blend his love for the creative arts and the outdoors, but he was determined to get there.

In 1991, at the base of the Endless Wall in West Virginia's New River Gorge (NRG), Trúc's best friend convinced him to tie into a rope and chuff his way up some dingy, mossy, no-name offwidth. "I remember not really enjoying any of it, but 70 feet later, I made it to the anchors and felt the air beneath me, the full-body pump, the introspection of completion, anxiety, fear, excitement, elation, and peace. I was hooked," says Trúc.

Back at the NRG later that summer, a photographer from *Climbing Magazine* asked to get a shot of Trúc and his friend climbing the mega classic Strike a Scowl. He was instantly enamored with the idea of taking his creative aspirations and budding love for photography and following in that photographer's footsteps.

It took a long time before the camera became Trúc's constant adventure partner, but today, he can't imagine traveling without it. "Photography has taken me so many places and is truly a reflection of a passion for capturing the images that inspired me so much as a kid," says Trúc. You can learn more about Trúc's photography at trucallenmedia.com







Staff and Board

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Wayne Wallace ice climbing at Snoqualmie Pass, Washington, ancestral lands of Coast Salish, npàšqwáwsəxw (Wenatchi) © Trúc Nguyen Allen

ACCESS FUND STAFF

Taimur Ahmad

California Policy Assistant & Diversity Fellow taimur@accessfund.org

Kristina Cowell

Office & Membership Coordinator kristina@accessfund.org

Sophie Dasaro

Fulfillment Coordinator sdasaro@accessfund.org

Scott Dissel

Development Director scott@accessfund.org

Heather Distad

Events & Outreach Manager heather@accessfund.org

Michelle Estrella

Finance & Operations Director mestrella@accessfund.org

Katie Goodwin

Policy Analyst & California Regional Director katie@accessfund.org

Jake Groth

Conservation Specialist ctwest@accessfund.org

Brittany Hamilton

Membership Marketing Manager bhamilton@accessfund.org

Shaun Hannan

Data Systems & Tech Analyst shannan@accessfund.org

Jason Keith

Senior Policy Advisor jason@accessfund.org

Kyle Leihsing

Conservation Specialist ctnational@accessfund.org

Zachary Lesch-Huie

Southeast Regional Director & Affiliate Director zachary@accessfund.org

Gareth Martins

Marketing & Communications Director gmartins@accessfund.org

Mike Morin

Northeast Regional Director mike@accessfund.org

Erik Murdock

Policy Director erik@accessfund.org

Loryn Posladek

Conservation Specialist ctnational@accessfund.org

Sam Richards

Conservation Specialist ctwest@accessfund.org

Danielle Rocks

Finance Manager drocks@accessfund.org

Lindsey Saldivar

Digital Fundraising & Advocacy Director lsaldivar@accessfund.org

Curt Shannon

Policy Analyst curt@accessfund.org

Holly Smolenski

Senior Content Strategist holly@accessfund.org

Brian Tickle

Texas Regional Director brian@accessfund.org

Ty Tyler

Stewardship Director ty@accessfund.org

Jenna Winkler

Program Manager jenna@accessfund.org

Chris Winter

Executive Director cwinter@accessfund.org

GENERAL COUNSEL

Chris Archer

Archer Law Offices, P.C. chris@archerlawoffices.com



Protect America's Climbing

P.O. Box 17010 Boulder, CO 80308

Josh Jimenez is the director of routesetting at Memphis Rox, a nonprofit climbing and community facility. Located in one of the most underserved zip codes in the country, Memphis Rox's mission is to help diversify climbing, break down access barriers to the sport, create jobs in an underserved neighborhood, serve the community's needs, and to never turn anyone away—regardless of ability to pay. Josh plays an integral part in the fulfillment of this mission. In addition to leading an amazing and diverse team of routesetters, he volunteers his time to take community members outdoor climbing for the first time, is always around to give climbing advice or a helping hand. He even spearheaded a unique woodshop program to mentor community members in how to create unique handmade wood products that Memphis Rox sells on its website—creating more jobs and job training for the community. Josh truly lives the mission of Memphis Rox and is an embodiment of its ideals.

