



May 31, 2023

Superintendent Black  
Little River Canyon National Preserve  
4322 Little River Canyon Trail NE, Ste. 100  
Fort Payne, AL 35967

Submitted via email: [steve\\_black@nps.gov](mailto:steve_black@nps.gov) and NPS comment portal:  
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=391&projectID=116719&documentID=128606>

**RE: Little River Canyon National Preserve Park Entrance Fee Pilot Program**

Superintendent Black,

Access Fund and Southeastern Climbers Coalition appreciate this opportunity to share our thoughts and support from the climbing community regarding the proposed park entrance fee pilot program at Little River Canyon National Preserve.

Access Fund is a national advocacy organization and accredited land trust whose mission keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. A 501(c)(3) non-profit supporting and representing over 8 million climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing—rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering—Access Fund is the largest U.S. climbing advocacy organization with over 20,000 members and 130 affiliates. Access Fund provides climbing management expertise, stewardship, project specific funding, and educational outreach for climbing areas across the country. For more information about Access Fund, visit [www.accessfund.org](http://www.accessfund.org).

The Southeastern Climbers Coalition (SCC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1993. Our mission is to preserve climbing areas in the southeast for future generations. After twenty-nine years of operations, the SCC remains a grassroots organization, yet our accomplishments are substantial. The SCC has roughly 1800 members, has raised over \$800,000 to acquire 10 different climbing areas in the TAG region, some which have been transferred to public management agencies; has maintained relationships with land managers to ensure public access to climbing areas in the region; and worked with partners and volunteers to organize and execute an average of 40 trail days a year at public and private areas amassing hundreds of volunteer hours to provide stewardship, conservation, and land management support.

## Comments

Little River Canyon is a historical and nationally important climbing area that sees visitation from rock climbers from all across the country. Given its southerly location, Little River Canyon and the numerous sandstone bluffs generally see the highest climber visitation during the winter months, although local climbers visit the Canyon year round. While the date range of this pilot program generally falls in the “off-season” for climber visitation, we want to ensure that we are clearly communicating the details of this pilot program to the climbing community, preparing the park for potential impacts to climbers and their use patterns, and asking that climbers are taken into consideration during this process.

Access Fund and SCC are interested in assisting the park with communication to the climbing community about this pilot program as well as any other climbing related issues.

We plan to update our web pages, communicate the new fee process to our public, and work with administrators of sites like Mountain Project to communicate the pilot program in an effort to capture as many of our users as possible so that we can comply with the parking fees.

In a 2022 survey conducted by the Access Fund, we found that on average climbers are supportive of entry fees for the purposes of maintenance, infrastructure improvement, and ecological restoration. Since these are the stated purposes of this pilot fee program we expect climbers to be generally supportive. Of note, SCC has conducted two Adopt-a Crag stewardship events to address climber impacts and build sustainable recreation infrastructure within the park. Additional resources to assist with these stewardship activities would be welcome by our organizations.

When rock climbers visit the Canyon they access the individual climbing sites from a variety of entrances and utilize informal and formal pull-offs along Little River Canyon Rim Parkway and County Road 275, all of which are cited in the Little River Canyon guidebook<sup>1</sup>. These access points are critical to climbing access and should be considered when addressing overall visitor use. We ask that the park consider putting up signage about the pilot program at all major entrances so that our constituents can be sure to comply with the new pilot fee program.

Since this is a pilot program, we request that park staff use this opportunity to collect data on visitor use and make it available to the public. Future, more permanent management decisions should be based on data collected during this pilot program. We request park staff to develop clear metrics to measure success of the program and provide ongoing communication with visitors and partner organizations about changes or additional requirements.

Please reach out to Daniel Dunn ([daniel@accessfund.org](mailto:daniel@accessfund.org)) or Meg Evans ([meg@seclimbers.org](mailto:meg@seclimbers.org)) with any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Henry, *Little River Canyon Climbing Guide*. 2016

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Dunn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "D" at the beginning.

Daniel Dunn  
Southeast Regional Manager  
Access Fund

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meagan Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "M" at the beginning.

Meagan Evans  
Executive Director  
Southeastern Climbers Coalition