

# DOES CLIMBING MATTER?

**Climbers Save Iconic Northeastern Crag** PAGE 5

**Victory in Yosemite Valley** PAGE 6

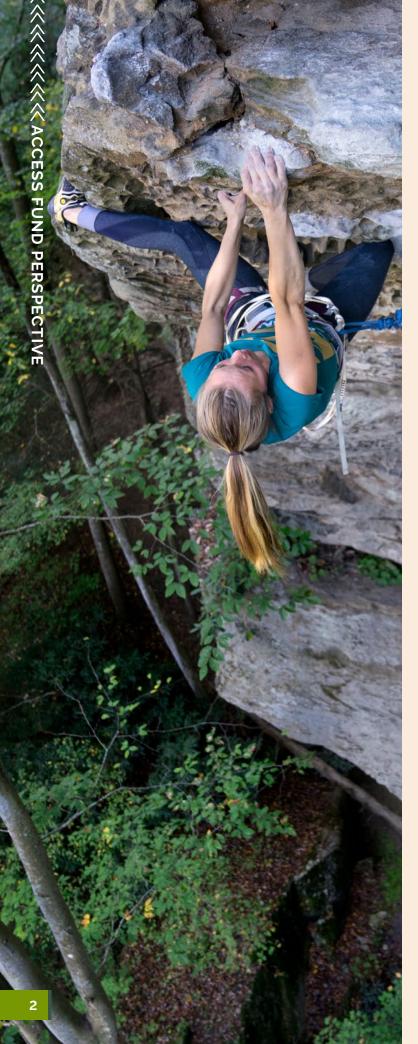
**How Access Fund Tackles Climate Change** 

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**Protect America's Climbing** 







## Letter from the Director

What does being a climbing advocate mean to you? Is it taking action through one of our action alerts? Volunteering at an Adopt a Crag? Maybe it's your annual Access Fund donation? Or it could be all of the above.

My own climbing advocacy journey began more than three decades ago. Since then, I've worked in government and industry, as a researcher and teacher, and—for nearly 10 years—here at Access Fund. Earlier this year, I took on the role of interim executive director.

Over the past few months, I've gained an even greater respect for the incredible breadth and sophistication of the climbing advocacy movement. As you'll read in the following pages, the contributions from climbing advocates like you have an amazing impact. From rehabilitating Lover's Leap in the wake of a climate-driven wildfire to protecting sustainable climbing access to Yosemite's big walls to shaping federal climbing management policies, there's nothing we can't accomplish when the climbing community comes together.

When I took on this interim role, I knew that our success would be measured in three ways: our support for onthe-ground stewardship work, our success in advancing national policy to protect sustainable climbing access, and our partnerships with nearly 150 local climbing organizations around the country. Thanks to your support, we've been successful in each of these areas of our work.

I've personally come a long way since the first time I got out climbing as a college freshman in Indiana in 1989. And the climbing advocacy movement has, too. Together, we have the power to improve the world—from climate to public health to local economies.

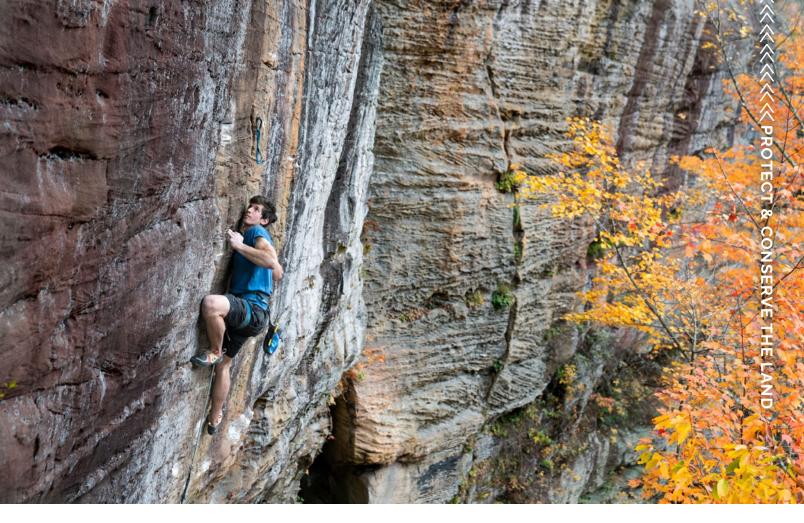
Thanks for being part of the movement.

Git Mobile

Erik Murdock, Ph.D.
Interim Executive Director, Access Fund

Left: Red River Gorge, Kentucky. Ancestral lands of CWJ ይህ አ Tsalaguwetiyi, ካለኋለኋር KOያ በ ናበርብ ሶለጎኋለ^, S'atsoyaha, Shawandasse Tula, Hopewell Culture, and Adena Culture. © Tiffany Nardico.

On the cover: Zion National Park, Utah. Ancestral lands of the Southern Paiute and Pueblo People. © Tiffany Nardico.



# Access Fund Expands Climber Stewards Program to the Red

he Red River Gorge region of Kentucky is one of the most popular climbing destinations in the world. But popularity has its challenges. High visitation puts massive pressure on sensitive landscapes, leading to erosion, destabilized slopes, tree damage, and vegetation loss. Unless climbers join together to take care of these incredible landscapes, we could ultimately lose access to beloved crags.

Earlier this year, we had an opportunity to protect sustainable climbing access in the Red. The climbing community stepped up, investing in recreation infrastructure and visitor education to ensure sustainable climbing access into the future. Ultimately, climbers raised more than \$30,000 in grassroots donations for the area.

Access Fund and the Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition (RRGCC) teamed up to launch the Red River Gorge Climbing Conservation Initiative with the support of climbers around the

country. This new initiative brings a team of Access Fund Climber Stewards to popular crags in the region to educate visitors about minimizing their impacts and climber best practices. It will also bring two Access Fund Conservation Teams to the region to improve sustainable climbing infrastructure, fix eroding access trails and base areas, and mitigate climber impacts.

"Any time humans are out on the land there will be environmental impact, and climbing is no exception," says Access Fund Stewardship Manager Andrea Hassler. "Our Climber Stewards and Conservation Teams have the tools and expertise to help climbing communities around the country manage their environmental impacts so that climbing landscapes like the Red can thrive."

Launched in early September, the Red River Gorge Climber Stewards join successful programs already running in Indian Creek and the New River Gorge.

# Climbers Rehab Lover's Leap After Massive Wildfire

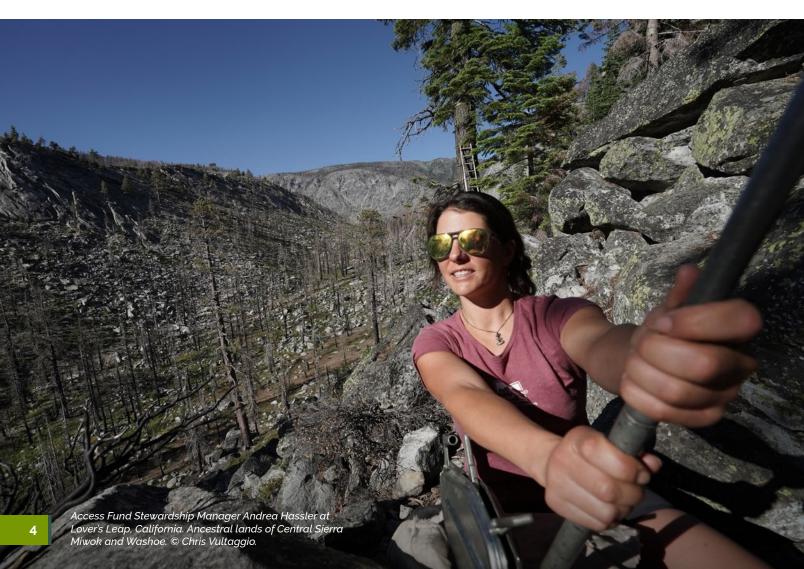
rotecting America's Climbing isn't a one-time thing. At areas like Lover's Leap near Lake Tahoe, California, protecting and conserving the land requires years of effort. This well-loved area, with its exceptional multipitch routes at moderate grades, draws climbers from throughout the region. But when the Caldor fire tore through the area in 2021, it devastated the entire landscape—trails and climbing areas included.

"Areas like Lover's Leap are a stark reminder that we must prepare the climbing landscapes we love to adapt to a changing climate," says Access Fund Stewardship Manager Andrea Hassler. "By working with local communities, our land stewardship experts help restore habitats, preserve biodiversity, and develop recreation infrastructure that promotes sustainable access for generations to come."

Earlier this year, the Access Fund Conservation Team returned to the Leap, where they worked alongside Climbing Resources Advocates for Greater Sacramento, Tahoe Climbing Coalition, Bay Area Climbers Coalition, Lover's Leap Guides, Eldorado National Forest staff, and local volunteers. The team spent 30 days in the field and rallied more than 80 volunteers. Together, they moved 88 tons of stone to complete a retaining wall at the base of the Surrealistic Pillar and make improvements to access trails for the Lower Buttress.

"It's rare to have an opportunity to work on an area across multiple years," says Hassler. "Thanks to an incredible community effort across six weeks of Adopt a Crag days, Lover's Leap is better equipped to continue welcoming and inspiring climbers."

Read more about challenges at Lover's Leap in our feature story on page 12.



# MASSACHUSETTS CLIMBERS

# Won Big at Farley Ledges

ith Access Fund's support, Western Massachusetts Climbers' Coalition (WMCC) recently secured permanent conservation protection for Farley Ledges and Rose Ledge. The victory is another reminder that when climbing access is threatened, local climbing organizations (LCOs) are often the first and best line of defense.

"Rose and Farley Ledges are some of the most popular rock climbing locations in Massachusetts," says Andy Neuman, WMCC president. They feature gneiss cliffs that offer both trad and sport climbing, plus a wealth of boulders with dozens of high-quality lines for climbers to explore.

The ledges are located on a combination of land leased by FirstLight Power—a local energy provider—and other private landowners. This patchwork of ownership and informal agreements left climbing access uncertain due to factors uncontrollable to climbers.

"Handshake agreements and informal access can be an important starting point, but long-term, permanent protection is the gold standard," says Erik Murdock, interim executive director of Access Fund. "One of the key ways Access Fund supports local climbers is finding ways to turn those handshakes into signatures on formal agreements and contracts."

WMCC, with the help of Access Fund and in partnership with hikers, kayakers, and other outdoor enthusiasts, reached an agreement with FirstLight Power to officially recognize climbing as a recreational activity at Farley Ledges and Rose Ledge.

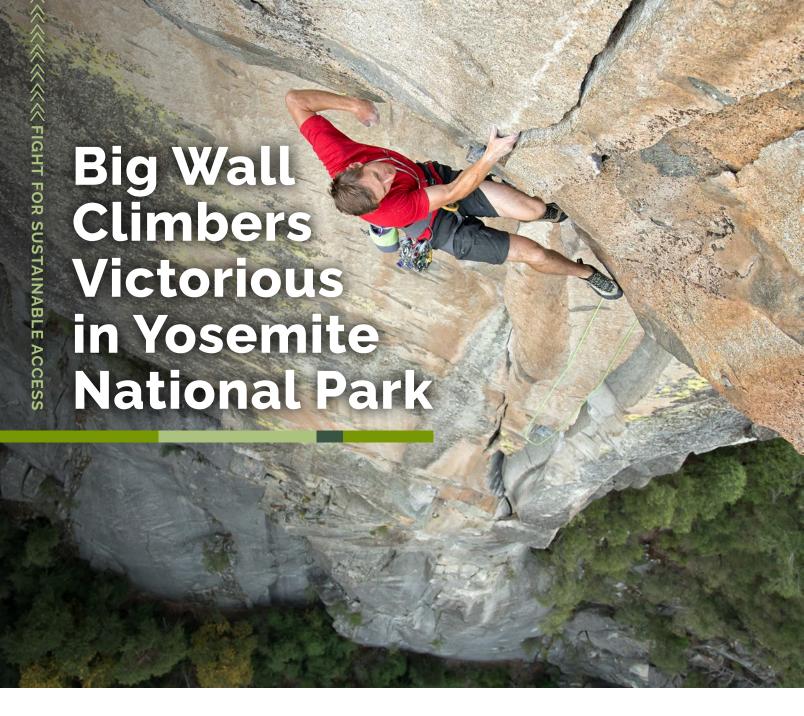
"Access Fund was always there for us with advice from a national perspective and their library of resources for LCOs," says Pamela Matsuda-Dunn, WMCC secretary. "WMCC was on the front line, but we knew Access Fund had our back."

FirstLight Power filed the recreation agreement on June 13, 2023.

"Though rock climbing was informally allowed by FirstLight," says Neuman, "this Recreation Settlement Agreement permanently secures the privilege to climb in these areas."

"This multiyear effort is the perfect example of how collaboration between Access Fund and engaged local advocates can lead to big wins for local climbers," says Murdock.





rguably the most iconic climbing area on the planet, Yosemite National Park is a living laboratory in the neverending work to conserve the environment and protect sustainable climbing access. The park recognizes the need to preserve the vertical environment and its unique climbing experiences, and it invests in working with climbers to make that happen.

Earlier this year, the park finalized a plan to require Wilderness climbing permits for overnight big wall climbs. Most of the park's iconic big walls are in Wilderness areas, including El Capitan, Half Dome, and Washington Column. Access Fund, along with our partners at the American Alpine Club and Yosemite Climbing Association, collaborated directly with park managers, urging them to manage the new program in a way that worked for climbers and protected Wilderness values.

Park managers addressed the climbing community's concerns, and the program is better because of it—maximizing flexibility

for big-wall climbers, just as we requested. Permits are free and there is no quota. More specifically:

- Permits are available by self-registration (24 hours a day/7 days a week) in front of the Climbing Management Office located just west of the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center (in the same building as the Yosemite Museum).
- Climbing rangers will frequently be available at the Climbing Management Office for more in-depth big-wall, Leave No Trace, and climbing technique advice; safety tips; and route-condition information. Office hours and program times will be posted on the self-registration board.

Yosemite's goals for the permit system are to help climbing rangers better understand use patterns on big walls, increase compliance with existing regulations (e.g., proper disposal of waste), and minimize impacts to Wilderness character through improved education. We believe this program will help them meet those goals.





# Bills to Protect Wilderness Climbing Gain Momentum

hanks to dedicated Wilderness and recreation champions in Congress and the voices of everyday climbers, bills to protect Wilderness climbing on public lands are closer than ever to becoming law. The bipartisan Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act (PARC Act) in the House and the America's Outdoor Recreation Act (AORA) in the Senate would ensure sustainable access to rock climbing in designated Wilderness areas.

"We are proud to champion this climbing legislation, which is designed to uphold the integrity of the Wilderness Act and ensure that climbers are able to continue experiencing America's Wilderness areas in a responsible way," says Erik Murdock, interim executive director for Access Fund. "Climbers across the country have consistently answered Access Fund's calls to action, and our collective voices are helping to move this critical legislation toward the president's desk."

The bills respond to a growing threat from the National Park Service, which recently proposed a novel interpretation of the Wilderness Act that would change federal policy and prohibit fixed anchors in Wilderness areas in California and Colorado. The PARC Act and AORA would establish consistency in how different federal land agencies manage Wilderness climbing. They codify the long-standing federal policy that standard climbing activities, including the conditional use, placement, and maintenance of climbing anchors, continue to be considered appropriate uses of America's Wilderness areas, subject to reasonable rules and regulations to protect Wilderness character. And while the bills do not dictate the details for how each agency should manage fixed anchors, it does prevent land management agencies from formalizing policies that would fundamentally prohibit long-standing, appropriate Wilderness climbing practices.

The federal legislative process can be tricky, and Access Fund will need climbers to step up again to push this bill forward at any moment. When we do, remember that America's 8 million climbers are a powerful force. Every climber has an incredible opportunity to influence the future of climbing and the greater conservation movement.



his fall, Access Fund awarded nearly \$30,000 in climbing conservation grants. These grants will advance ten exciting local climbing organization (LCO) projects that tackle erosion mitigation, infrastructure repairs, trail work, and climber education.

"Climbers are conservationists at heart, and we're willing to roll up our sleeves on behalf of the lands we love," says Access Fund National Affiliate Director Jenna Winkler. "From the mountains of Idaho to the hollers of Kentucky, we're proud to fund these ten critical conservation projects."

Access Fund has awarded more than \$1.5 million in Climbing Conservation Grants to support 455 projects in land conservation and climbing access.

#### This year's grantees include:

Colorado: Boulder Climbing Community: Blob Rock Climbing Access—Phase I.

**Texas: Climbers of Hueco Tanks Coalition:** Recreating in Hueco Tanks After Precipitation Education Campaign.

**Colorado: Fix Colorado's Recreational Use Statute (CRUS) Coalition:** 2024 Education Campaign Support.

**Utah: Friends of Indian Creek:** Continued Baseline Dispersed Campsite Inventory and Education Project.

Kentucky: Friends of Muir Valley: Concrete Bridge Repair on Muir Valley Floor.

**Minnesota and South Dakota: Great Plains Climbing Coalition:** Environmental Impact Improvement.

Connecticut: Ragged Mountain Foundation: Dam Repair Project.

Tennessee: Southeastern Climbers Coalition: Woodcock Cove Trail Infrastructure.

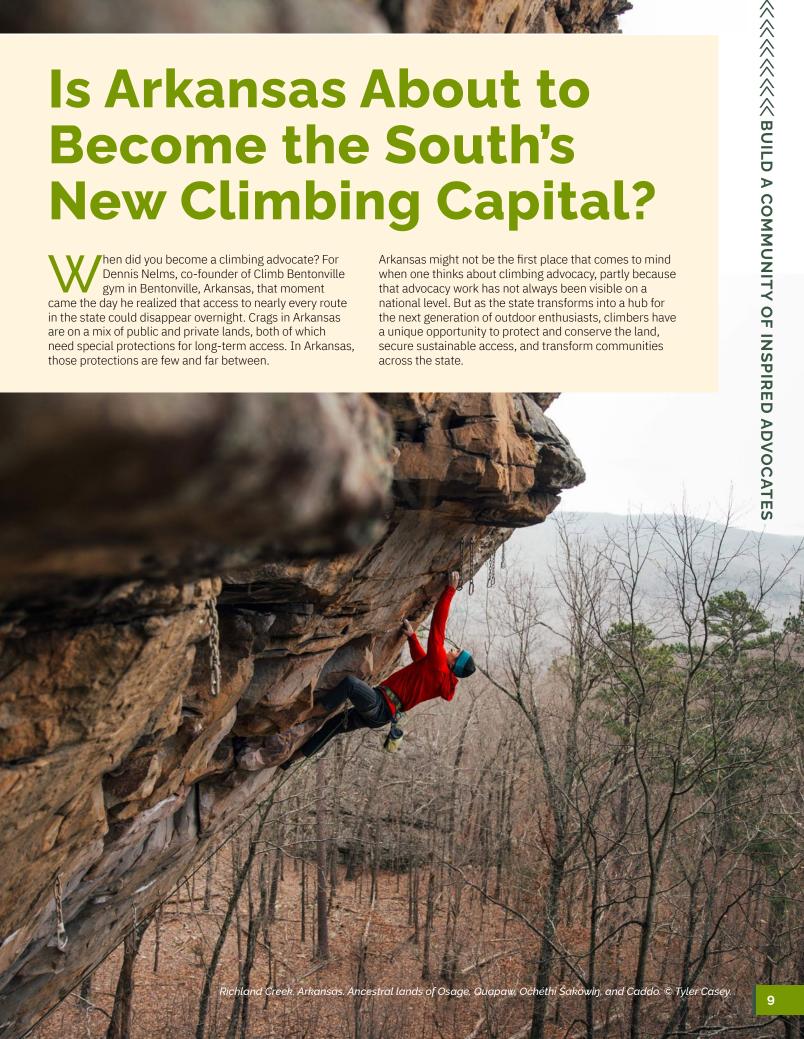
California: Tom Addison: Shell Road Parking Lot.

Idaho: Wilderness Volunteers: Owl Rock Trail Maintenance & Erosion Mitigation.

# Is Arkansas About to **Become the South's New Climbing Capital?**

'hen did you become a climbing advocate? For Dennis Nelms, co-founder of Climb Bentonville gym in Bentonville, Arkansas, that moment came the day he realized that access to nearly every route in the state could disappear overnight. Crags in Arkansas are on a mix of public and private lands, both of which need special protections for long-term access. In Arkansas, those protections are few and far between.

Arkansas might not be the first place that comes to mind when one thinks about climbing advocacy, partly because that advocacy work has not always been visible on a national level. But as the state transforms into a hub for the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts, climbers have a unique opportunity to protect and conserve the land, secure sustainable access, and transform communities across the state.





#### What Does Arkansas Offer?

Arkansas has always been an outdoor enthusiast's paradise. Hunting, fishing, kayaking, and other recreation opportunities abound throughout the Natural State's forested woodlands, pristine waterways, and the majestic Ozark Mountains. And those in the know count climbing among one of the state's best outdoor offerings, too.

Countless bands of high-quality sandstone cliffs hidden away under a dense, mountainous canopy offer a lifetime's worth of climbing. But even veteran Arkansas climbers like Nelms are still discovering rock just minutes away from urban centers.

As the state continues to activate new forms of recreation, it's turning into a destination for weekend warriors, vanlife nomads, and everyone in between. "Arkansas is doubling down on developing its recreation economy," says Erik Murdock, Access Fund interim executive director. "And we don't have to theorize how that plays out—we can just look at mountain biking."

#### A New Way of Working

Nelms watched as the mountain biking community in northwest Arkansas redefined what the sport could do for the area and across the state. "Cities and state agencies are starting to understand that outdoor recreation is showing huge results as far as the economic impact on these regions," says Nelms. "They get it—and they want in."

For decades, climbers tended to stay under the radar, only reacting to access threats when they arose. But Nelms sees an encouraging trend as Arkansas climbers begin to plan ahead. "Instead of reacting to an access threat, we're looking at the mountain biking blueprint to be proactive about buffering our climbing areas against future threats."

Part of that forward-looking approach involves developing smart climbing management strategies that protect the plants, animals, and cultural resources that inhabit these incredible landscapes before a crag ever opens to the public. It's a tall order, but one that climbers in Arkansas are already actively engaged in.

#### Partnering for the Future

One place where climbers have already made an impact is Lincoln Lake. Through the advocacy work of Access Fund and local climbers, much of the area's climbing is on the verge of being permanently protected through a conservation easement to be held by the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust. "We went to NWA Land Trust and made our proposal—conservation with recreation access—and they didn't hesitate," says Nelms. "They said, 'Awesome, let's do it." Just like that, with a small coalition of partners, climbers in Arkansas are about to permanently protect a landscape that was threatened by development only a decade ago.

Arkansas' openness to outdoor recreation has also presented new opportunities to partner with state and local government officials. To continue fostering climbing in the state, Access Fund and the Arkansas Climbers Coalition (ARCC) assisted Arkansas State Parks in completely revamping its statewide climbing policy. The policy was approved by the state legislature in 2022 and is now in effect.

"The policy that Arkansas State Parks adopted for climbing is the new gold standard for statewide climbing policies," says Brian Tickle, Access Fund's national acquisitions director. "It's forward-looking on sustainability and provides rational and clear guidance on fixed anchors."

Arkansas Climbers Coalition is now solidly aligned with Arkansas State Parks and working to secure additional climbing opportunities in state parks.

"Arkansas State Parks' partnership with the ARCC allowed both organizations to work together to create a climbing policy that aligns our goals for future partnerships and policies," says ARCC President Dave Thompson. "Now, we're looking beyond state parks and ready to help craft sustainable climbing policies along with other land managers across the state."

And the coalition's work isn't limited to public lands. It recently worked with another partner outside of the traditional climbing community to open up sustainable access to a new crag outside of Bentonville—a partner who knows a thing or two about opening up new recreation areas.

#### **Opening Fitzgerald South**

Fitzgerald Mountain is a mountain-biking destination with more than 12 miles of trails for riders of all skill levels. With the help of Arkansas Climbers Coalition, Access Fund, and Trailblazers (a local nonprofit dedicated to increasing access to outdoor recreation), Fitzgerald will soon boast designed trails, durable belay areas, and more than 50 sport climbs at a range of grades.

Nelms identified the area's potential for climbing and started building a coalition of partners to make his vision a reality. He brought in Trailblazers to acquire a piece of adjacent property, Arkansas Climbers Coalition to design the crag and develop new routes, and Access Fund to design and build sustainable access to the crag that will stand up to heavy climber traffic.

Fitzgerald Mountain is peppered with large sandstone boulders and bluffs that offer high-quality climbing at a range of grades. The property is owned and managed by Trailblazers as an urban-adjacent mountain-biking park. Now, they're adding climbing to the mix. The invitation is an opportunity to show one way that an entire crag can be designed and equipped before it's open to the public. It may just be the perfect project to show state and local officials how to open new climbing areas.

# Is Arkansas the Case Study for Protecting America's Climbing?

"We've never seen a state double down on climbing the way Arkansas doubled down on mountain biking," says Murdock. "If climbers can make it happen, then we'll have an incredible case study to bring to other states, cities, parks, forests, and more where we can say, 'Look, it works, and here's the proof."

Arkansas could become the country's most powerful example of how to tap into climbing as a worthwhile and transformative outdoor activity that nearly any state can add to its outdoor recreation portfolio. "To me, the question is whether Arkansas can maximize its potential for climbing," says Nelms. "If it can fully realize the vision that climbers here have for the state, then it can be an example for other states to do the same thing."

To hear Nelms talk about it, it doesn't seem like much of a question. "We have the rock. We have the momentum. We have the blueprint. We have the community. We just have to keep working to put it all together."



# Does Climbing

ur world is changing, and for climbers, it's impossible to ignore. Burned up crags. Washed out roads. Ice climbs that no longer form. Increasingly strange and severe weather-driven by climate change-is already impacting our climbing experience, putting the places we recreate and the sport we love at risk.

Headline-grabbing catastrophes around the country are the culmination of decades of environmental change. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, wildfire season in the West has grown from five months to more than seven months in duration over the past five decades. Some experts even reject the idea of "wildfire season" entirely, since megafires now occur in nearly every month of the year.

And in spite of the West's above-average snowpack last year, the compounding problems of high temperatures, drought, and wildfires still threaten the wide-open Western landscapes climbers love.

"One good year of snowpack can't erase decades of climate impacts," says Brendan Witt, western lands policy fellow at

Western Resource Advocates. "It's great for a lot of things but doesn't stem the tide of the cumulative impacts of climate change."

For Western crags and boulder fields, record snowpack is creating new challenges. In areas like Bishop, California, and Indian Creek, Utah, flooding washed out roads and made it nearly impossible to access popular climbing areas.

"No matter where you live or love to climb, you're seeing changes in climbing landscapes."

"No matter where you live or love to climb, you're seeing changes in climbing landscapes," says Access Fund interim executive director Erik Murdock. "From worsening wildfires to dangerous rockfall to irreparable changes in ecosystems climbers love, these shifts mean real risks every time we head outside."





#### **Does Climbing Even Matter?**

As we consider climbing within the context of these vast environmental challenges, it's easy to feel small or insignificant. After all, can one packed-out poop really save a watershed? Or one well-routed trail? How about making it one move further on your project?

Climbers have debated this question around campfires for generations. It's easy to write off this passion we have as selfish or obscure. But climbing does have value. What we do—and how we do it—makes a difference.

The time we spend climbing connects us to nature and tunes us in to the changes in the world around us, big and small. Visiting a place year in and year out gives us an appreciation for how landscapes change between years and seasons. We pay attention to variations in the landscapes and how we interact with them. All of this makes climbers ideal messengers, ready to sound the alarm on big environmental changes.

## Protecting Landscapes We Love in a Changing World

Access Fund believes that climbing can make us, and the world around us, better. The experiences we have outside drive climbers to protect and conserve the beautiful places that make the climbing experience so special.

There's no one way to solve these environmental challenges. Climbers have to take action together.

Sometimes that means buying threatened climbing areas that are about to be sold off for resource extraction or development. Other times, it means rolling up our sleeves and working in the dirt to install recreation infrastructure that protects the surrounding environment and allows native species to thrive. And it means showing up in Washington, D.C., to protect public lands and advance climate action.

"When we talk about Access Fund's work, we focus on three areas: protecting and conserving the land, fighting for sustainable access, and building a community of inspired advocates," says Murdock. "They all have to come together for climbing advocacy to succeed. And for many climbers, what inspires us to advocacy is time spent outside."





#### **Rolling Up Our Sleeves to Protect Crags**

Across the country, climbers are racing to adapt our favorite areas to a rapidly changing climate. This means better trails with hardened surfaces, stronger erosion control, and fire mitigation efforts. Because once an area is impacted by a major event like a wildfire, it has a long road back to health—as climbers who frequent Lover's Leap in California know all too well.

For years, Lover's Leap deteriorated under an increase in climber traffic from areas like San Francisco, Sacramento, and South Lake Tahoe. The lack of a formal trail system for climbing access led to an unstable system of access trails across the mountainside, causing severe erosion and the trampling of sensitive vegetation. And then, in 2021, the area burned in the Caldor fire.

#### "A wildfire isn't a one-time event. Once a megafire comes through an area, its impacts can linger for decades."

"A wildfire isn't a one-time event," says Witt of Western Resource Advocates. "Once a megafire comes through an area, its impacts can linger for decades."

Areas like Lover's Leap need the kind of hands-on stewardship that Access Fund's Conservation Teams provide year after year, alongside dedicated volunteers.

"Around the country, we need organizations fighting for landscape-level designations that protect areas from development and extraction working side-by-side with the folks who actively restore areas that already enjoy some level of protection," Witt adds.

Access Fund is proud to do both.

#### **Community Support is More Vital Than Ever**

Climbing matters because it bonds us to the land and each other.

"Our approach to conservation makes climbers—and Access Fund itself—different," says Murdock. "Our work is about more than just protecting the places we climb. The connection between people and places is interwoven into everything we do. We're fighting to protect our ability to experience these places together."

Connections between climbers transcend nationality, geography, race, income, or politics. Our shared passion for climbing has the power to shape our very identity. And one way to honor the values that our community holds dear is to put them into action.

"The best way to avoid feeling overwhelmed is to take action," says Witt. "In communities around the country, you can look out your back door and see that things are getting done—and if they're not getting done, you have a chance to make them happen."

The environmental challenges we face may be too big to tackle alone, but we can make progress if we face them together.

Each of us has a role to play in the climbing conservation movement. As Access Fund looks to the future, we'll keep working to empower climbers with the tools they need to be effective advocates for the lands and sport we all love—whether that's elevating their voices to lawmakers, connecting them to volunteer opportunities, providing training and grants for local access and conservation projects, or helping them minimize their environmental impacts.

Above: Index, Washington. Ancestral lands of Tulalip and Skykomish. © Irene Yee.

Left: Bears Ears National Monument, Utah. Ancestral lands of Navajo, Ute, Ute Mountain, Hopi, and Zuni. © Heather Distad.



# How Access Fund Tackles Climate Change

#### Helping our community and the climbing landscapes we love face the challenges of a changing climate.

limate change isn't a far-off problem for future generations to solve. It's up to us to tackle it right now, safeguarding climbing while also protecting our environment, our health, and the economy.

At Access Fund, we believe that climbers have an important role to play in driving climate action and protecting the landscapes we love in a changing world. We want to help you make a difference by combining political advocacy with hands-on conservation work.

Here are the ways we're engaging in the fight, and we invite you to join us.

#### **Land Acquisition & Conservation**

Land conservation plays a crucial role in combating climate change. When we save a threatened climbing area from development, we're also conserving a natural ecosystem that mitigates greenhouse gas emissions and preserves biodiversity. Access Fund is an accredited land trust with a multimillion-

dollar conservation fund set aside to safeguard threatened climbing landscapes, many of which are overlooked by traditional conservation organizations.

#### **Climate Resilient Landscapes**

We must prepare the climbing areas we love to adapt to a changing climate. Our land stewardship experts work with local communities to restore habitats, preserve biodiversity, provide fire mitigation, and develop recreation infrastructure that promotes sustainable access.

#### **Public Lands Policy & Advocacy**

Conserving public lands is an essential piece of the puzzle in addressing climate change. Access Fund is a longtime leader in public lands conservation, working with agencies and lawmakers on sustainable land management practices that not only protect climbing areas, but also preserve natural habitats, support renewable energy, mitigate wildfires, and promote environmental justice.

### **NEWS FROM THE**

# **Grassroots Network**

#### Arkansas Climbers Coalition

Thank you to Arkansas Climbers Coalition (ARCC) for helping Access Fund plan our annual Climbing Advocacy Conference. This event brings together the advocacy community to learn from each other and discuss the future of climbing access. We couldn't have done it without ARCC's help in finding speakers, identifying locations, and making partner connections.

#### Willamette Area Climbers Coalition

Access Fund welcomes Willamette Area Climbers Coalition (WACC) to the affiliate local climbing organization (LCO) network. The WACC galvanizes the Willamette area climbing community in western Oregon through stewardship, advocacy, and by connecting community members.

#### Western Kentucky Climbers Coalition

The Western Kentucky Climbers Coalition (WKYCC) is a brand-new LCO working to educate the climbing community and to steward both public and private land. Access Fund is excited to bring WKYCC into the affiliate LCO network.



# ADVOCATE SPOTLIGHT: Chris Archer



hris Archer's contributions to Access Fund span decades, programs, and operations alike. He was a board member from 1992 to 2004 and has served as the organization's general counsel since 2004. In addition to providing hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of free legal services to Access Fund over the past 20 years, Archer has made numerous contributions to the climbing community in Boulder and throughout Colorado over the past 30 years.

#### **Five Questions for Chris Archer**

## How long have you worked with Access Fund, and what do you do as general counsel?

I became Access Fund's first general counsel in 2004 after serving on the board for 12 years. As general counsel, I advise Access Fund on legal issues that arise in the day-to-day operations of the organization.

# You are an active member of the climbing advocacy community in Boulder, Colorado, and have been for a long time. What are some of your favorite access accomplishments?

Two projects that I was fortunate enough to be involved in were developing new routes in Eldorado Canyon and helping Access Fund acquire North Table Mountain. Although I don't ice climb anymore, I am proud of my role in the creation of the Ouray Ice Park and the opening of Bridal Veil Falls after it had been closed for many years.

# What advice would you give to other attorneys who want to donate their skills to the climbing advocacy movement?

Please contact us and volunteer! Access Fund's legal needs expand annually, as do those of local climbing organizations.

## How has climbing advocacy changed over the years you've been involved?

Climbing advocacy has grown exponentially, become much more organized, and is now widely supported by climbers and the outdoor industry. When Access Fund was incorporated in 1991, there were no other national organizations protecting and advocating for climbing access.

Today, Access Fund is the preeminent climbing nonprofit advocating for climbers and has been amazingly successful in fulfilling its original mission to "Keep Climbing Areas Open." It's been inspiring to witness and to play a small part in that growth.

## What do you think is the most important climbing advocacy issue right now?

Hands down, Access Fund's work on the Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act (PARC Act). Preserving climbing access is a continuous and ongoing process. The current proposal by the National Park Service to ban fixed anchors in the Wilderness in Colorado and California is the most serious current threat. (See page 7 for updates on this legislation.)





Looking for an easy way to increase your impact as a climbing advocate? Consider becoming a recurring donor! Whether you sign up to give monthly or annually, the certainty of your recurring gift helps Access Fund make your gift go further. Here are a few of the reasons to become a recurring donor.

#### **It Increases Your Impact**

Recurring gifts allow Access Fund to budget with certainty, knowing your support will be there. When you become a sustaining donor, you help our team spend more time fighting for sustainable access, protecting and conserving the land, and building a community of climbing advocates.

#### It's Easier for You

Monthly sustaining donors enjoy all the benefits of membership, plus the ease of set-it-and-forget-it giving. Visit accessfund.org/donate and choose Monthly when you begin your donation.

#### It's Better for the Planet

Sustaining donors skip the printed membership reminders, helping to reduce paper waste, as well as printing and postage costs. Instead, we'll send you an email reminder when we process your donation.

#### Ready to Become a Recurring Donor?

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# FEATURED PARTNERS

# MICAO SEND

Microsend was created with one purpose, and one purpose only: to bring tiny sends to the great big world. They believe that every giant crusher has what it takes to be a tiny route setter. Since 2021, Microsend has provided big support for safe access and conservation of the environments and landscapes we love. With every purchase of a Magnetic Route Setting Kit, Microsend donates 10% to Access Fund. Every micro route that you set is a reminder of these incredible places that we are thrilled to experience for many years to come.

# **Hydro Flask®**

The Hydro Flask Parks for All Grant exemplifies a commitment to environmental conservation and outdoor accessibility. This initiative provides crucial support to Access Fund's New River Gorge Climber Stewards, who help protect the New River Gorge region while fostering sustainable recreational opportunities. By offering funding, resources, and expertise, Hydro Flask empowers these conservationists to protect fragile ecosystems and engage local communities in the stewardship of this precious landscape, ensuring that the area is protected for the future of climbing.



For more than 90 years, La Sportiva has possessed a strong passion and respect for the mountains and the environment. It is this consciousness that drives the brand to make responsible manufacturing decisions and reduce negative environmental impacts during production,

all while creating the best-performing outdoor products on the market. La Sportiva is proud to be a Climate Neutral Certified company and operate with dedicated responsibility for both environmental and social issues. Its hope is that the responsible decisions we make today will positively impact and protect the environment for generations to come. As a long-term organization partner, La Sportiva is happy to support Access Fund's mission to ensure a sustainable future for America's climbing areas.





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!

#### Titanium - \$50,000+

Black Diamond

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#### Diamond - \$25,000+

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#### Platinum Plus - Bronze - S

**GU Energy Labs** 

\$15,000+

Hydro Flask's Parks for All Program

**USA** Climbing

VF Corporation - The North Face

#### Platinum - \$10,000+

**EPIC Water Filters** 

KAYA

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Alliant Insurance Services

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Alpine Start

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#### Gold - \$5,000+

5.Life

American Alpine Club

Arizona Wilderness Brewing

**Escape Climbing** 

Metolius

Mystery Ranch

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Left: Red River Gorge, Kentucky. Ancestral lands of CWJŴJላδ Tsalaguwetiyi, ነለҲለҲα KOP೧ ናበርα 「የለ'Ҳለ', S'atsoyaha, Shawandasse Tula, Hopewell Culture, and Adena Culture. © Tiffany Nardico.







# **Featured Artist: Tiffany Nardico**

Tiffany Nardico is a traveling climber and photographer, operating primarily out of the Southeast. Through her photography company, Eye of the Red, she documents the adventure, beauty, and lifestyle of climbing in the Red River Gorge and beyond. In addition to capturing the climbing scene, she also gives back to the community, supporting projects like the Red River Gorge Conservation Initiative (see page 3) with her photography.

"My photographic journey is a winding one," says Nardico. "I was exposed to exploration at an early age, flipping through the pages of National Geographic and imagining myself as the photographer behind the image. I took a detour through the fashion industry and continue to partner with the United States Deep-Caving Team to this day, documenting anything from the alpine to deep underground systems.

"After many years in the Red River Gorge in Kentucky, I'm starting to explore new adventures near Chattanooga, Tennessee," Nardico continues. "Look for me and my sidekick Kika out on the road wherever the climbing season takes me."

Interested in donating your photos to support climbing advocacy? Reach out to communications@accessfund.org.

All photos Red River Gorge, Kentucky. Ancestral lands of CWJWJvδ Tsalaguwetiyi, ነለጂለጂ似 KOይበ ርበር似 (ኖለ^ጂለ^, S'atsoyaha, Shawandasse Tula, Hopewell Culture, and Adena Culture. © Tiffany Nardico.



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