



January 6th, 2020

Bureau of Land Management,
Attn: Northern Corridor Project
345 East Riverside Drive
St. George, UT, 84790.

Submitted Via Email to BLM_UT_NorthernCorridor@blm.gov.

RE: Access Fund Comments on Scoping for the Northern Corridor Project DEIS

Dear BLM Planning Staff,

Access Fund, Southern Utah Climbers Alliance (SUCA) and Zion Climbing Coalition (ZCC) and the local rock climbing community in Washington County, Utah have been closely tracking both the Desert Tortoise Habitat Conservation Plan Expansion Act¹ (H.R 5597) and the Northern Corridor project, both of which currently propose adding ~6,800 acres to the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (Zone 6) to mitigate for desert tortoise habitat impacted by the Utah Department of Transportation's right of way request for road development on land north of St. George, UT. Access Fund and the climbing community at large strongly support desert tortoise conservation efforts, and believe that these efforts can be balanced with the existing world-class recreation opportunities in the St. George region.

Comments

The proposed boundary of Zone 6 encompasses numerous highly valued and well-established rock climbing resources (cliffs and boulders) known as Moe's Valley, The Zen Wall, and the Green Valley Gap. Moe's Valley (Zone 6) is an international climbing destination that draws climbers both locally and from around the world to experience high quality rock climbing. Access Fund and the local climbing organizations SUCA and ZCC support continued access to Moe's Valley and are committed to continued stewardship of the climbing areas and the surrounding environment, including numerous hiking and mountain biking trails. (the Zen Trail).

We request language be included in any future EIS, plan, or other management prescription for Zone 6 that explicitly notes "*rock climbing and mountain biking as an appropriate recreational activity*" within the area. In addition, existing trails to access climbing resources should be

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5597>.

recognized and allowed along with appropriate stewardship and maintenance within Zone 6. Access Fund, ZCC and SUCA are available to provide detailed maps and locations of all existing climbing resources and access trails within Zone 6 to assist in management efforts associated with the EIS and planning process.

Thank you for your consideration of adding language to list “*rock climbing and mountain biking as an appropriate recreational activity*” within Zone 6. Access Fund, ZCC and SUCA have the experience, local contacts, and resources to help land managers craft plans that encourage climbing while sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of this important habitat. Feel free to contact me via telephone (303-552-2843) or email (katie@accessfund.org) to discuss this matter further.

* * *

Access Fund

Access Fund is a national advocacy organization whose mission keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. A 501(c)(3) non-profit supporting and representing over 6.8 million climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing—rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering—the Access Fund is the largest US climbing organization with over 20,000 members and 123 affiliates. The Access Fund provides climbing management expertise, stewardship, project specific funding, and educational outreach. For more information about the Access Fund, visit www.accessfund.org.

Southern Utah Climber Alliance

Southern Utah Climbers Alliance was started to address the need for maintenance of our local climbing areas. Our focus is on replacing old and outdated hardware to keep our climbing areas safe for generations to come.

Zion Climbing Coalition

The ZCC believes that climbing is a meaningful and inherently valuable way to connect with Zion National Park. It is our mission to preserve access to this resource and promote a healthy relationship between Zion National Park and the climbing community. We accomplish this mission through a steadfast commitment to our core values of stewardship, inclusivity, and education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Goodwin". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Katie Goodwin, Policy Analyst- Access Fund

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd Perkins". The signature is very fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Todd Perkins, Director-Southern Utah Climbers Alliance

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steffan Gregory". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Steffan Gregory- Zion Climbing Coalition

Cc:

Chris Winter, Executive Director - Access Fund
Erik Murdock, Policy Director - Access Fund
Taimur Ahmad, Policy Associate - Access Fund