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Submitted via email to: [BLM\\_SNDO\\_RR\\_CottonwoodRamp@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_SNDO_RR_CottonwoodRamp@blm.gov) and  
[BLM\\_NV\\_SNDO\\_RR\\_CalicoBasinRAMP\\_EA@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_NV_SNDO_RR_CalicoBasinRAMP_EA@blm.gov)

### **SNCC and AF Preliminary Comments on Cottonwood Valley and Calico Basin RAMPs**

The Southern Nevada Climbers Association (SNCC) and Access Fund appreciate the opportunity to offer these preliminary comments on the ongoing RAMP processes for Calico Basin and Cottonwood Valley. Both of these zones house incredible environmental and recreational resources, and we are eager to work with the BLM to find the best possible management strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of climbing in these areas.

#### **About the SNCC**

The SNCC is a grassroots affiliate of the [Access Fund](#). We advocate for rock climbers in Southern Nevada by promoting responsible stewardship of local resources and cultivating greater community awareness and involvement.

The SNCC provides an avenue for constructive dialogue between climbers and local land managers, as well as a resource for local and visiting climbers seeking information about the world-class climbing destinations in Southern Nevada.

Funding for SNCC projects comes primarily from members and partnering organizations such as the Access Fund, American Alpine Club (AAC) and the American Safe Climbing Association (ASCA). We are fortunate enough to have support from organizations like the American Alpine Institute (AAI), American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) and many local businesses.

#### **About Access Fund**

The Access Fund is a national advocacy organization and accredited land trust whose mission keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. A 501c(3) nonprofit and accredited land trust representing millions of climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing—rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering—the Access Fund is a US climbing

advocacy organization with over 20,000 members and over 123 local affiliates. The Access Fund and BLM memorandum of understanding outlines an agreement to collaborate on climbing management, stewardship, project specific funding, and educational outreach. For more information about the Access Fund, visit [www.accessfund.org](http://www.accessfund.org).

## **Comments**

Both Calico Basin and Cottonwood Valley are home to world-class climbing resources that are not only used by locals, but by hundreds of thousands of traveling rock climbers. Our community on a whole is very environmentally minded and believes in the need to protect the landscapes we so love to recreate in. We also believe that with strong, collaborative management, conservation and recreation needs can be balanced to ensure widespread access without compromising the integrity of the resource. As organizations that advocate for climbers and also work to mitigate their impact alongside the BLM, we recommend the following actions related to the future management of Cottonwood Valley and Calico Basin:

### **Cottonwood Valley**

1. We want to ensure future access to rock climbing in Cottonwood Valley. We also want to ensure that there is a plan to maintain and develop further rock climbing resources in the Cottonwood Valley area. For example, the new wildlife gates that have been installed across SR160 are preventing access to a climbing area called Chocolate Rocks. We would like to see these new gates have access points installed that allow people to continue to recreate on public land.
2. Additional free and legal dispersed camping options within Cottonwood Valley would be a major benefit. At the moment, there is very little camping available in the NCA and the dispersed camping in Cottonwood Valley cannot be accessed because Las Vegas Metro closed the access road. We believe that Cottonwood Valley could be a place suitable for free dispersed camping for climbers and other users and are more than happy to assist the BLM in finding the right locations for this use.
3. We would like to see improved infrastructure, signage, and parking for recreational areas that already exist in Cottonwood Valley. We believe that these improvements will help mitigate impacts caused by users of the area.

### **Calico Basin**

1. As with Cottonwood Valley, ensuring future access to rock climbing in Calico Basin is paramount. We would also like to see a plan to maintain and develop further rock climbing resources in the Calico Basin area.
2. Additional infrastructure is needed within Calico Basin to improve congestion and parking issues, and mitigate other impacts on the area. A developed parking lot and pit toilets at the trailhead for Kraft Mountain would be hugely beneficial. We are interested in being a part of the discussions surrounding these infrastructure improvements and how

they are implemented as the BLM develops this management plan. We believe that these improvements will help mitigate impacts caused by users of the area.

3. We request to be involved and informed on future developments regarding implementing a fee structure or reservation system at Calico Basin, if such changes are considered for the area. We would like to see the BLM offer a comment period for the general public before implementing a fee structure or reservation system within Calico Basin.
4. Many climbing areas in Calico Basin and beyond are accessed by social trails. While we appreciate the need to evaluate the impact of social trails on the environment, and in some cases close them to prevent impact, we do not want the closure of social trails to lead to a loss of climbing access. We would like to work with the BLM to find solutions to this issue, whether that means bringing certain social trails into the official trail system or finding alternate access routes that mitigate impacts to sensitive areas.

### **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI)**

We urge the BLM to work with the local community to advance inclusive and equitable access to Calico Basin, Cottonwood Valley, and Red Rock Canyon at large. It is well documented that people of color often use outdoors spaces at lower rates than their white peers. In addition, people from other marginalized communities, such as the LGBTQ and differently abled communities, can face additional challenges to getting out on public lands. As an outstanding natural area located in a densely populated and diverse community, Red Rock Canyon should be accessible to people from a true diversity of backgrounds. Access Fund has staff dedicated to JEDI issues, and is more than willing to offer our time and resources to assist the BLM in applying JEDI principles to their lands in southern Nevada and beyond.

### **Access Fund and SNCC Assistance**

The Las Vegas climbing community and the Access Fund are ready, willing, and able to help planners identify and improve the climbing related infrastructure, trail system, roads, and other management needs the BLM may require to provide for the outstanding opportunities found in Cottonwood Valley and Calico Basin. In addition, some aspects of this planning initiative may qualify for the Access Fund Climbing Preservation Grant Program or assistance from our Conservation Team which helps maintain<sup>1,2</sup> climbing areas throughout the United States by assessing climbing area conservation needs, working with locals to address those needs, and providing training on planning and stewardship best practices to keep those areas healthy.

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Thank you for your consideration of these preliminary comments on the BLM's RAMP process for Calico Basin and Cottonwood Valley. SNCC and Access Fund have the experience, local contacts, and resources to help planners craft management strategies that encourage climbing

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.accessfund.org/take-action/apply-for-funding/apply-for-a-climbing-conservation-grant>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.accessfund.org/pages/conservation-team>

while sustaining the health and integrity of the landscape and the recreation experience. Access Fund looks forward to continuing to work with the BLM. Please keep us informed as the planning process proceeds. Feel free to contact us via telephone at (303) 552-2843 or via email ([leicihendrix@gmail.com](mailto:leicihendrix@gmail.com); [taimur@accessfund.org](mailto:taimur@accessfund.org); [erik@accessfund.org](mailto:erik@accessfund.org)) to discuss these matters further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Taimur Ahmad', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Taimur Ahmad - Access Fund, Policy Associate

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leici Hendrix', with a stylized, cursive script.

Leici Hendrix, Southern Nevada Climbers Coalition, President

Cc:

Chris Winter - Access Fund, Executive Director

Erik Murdock - Access Fund, Policy Director