YOUR ACTION CAN HELP STOP USE FEES
AS CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT EBBS, AGENCIES WAGE LAST-DITCH BATTLE TO KEEP FEE AUTHORITY

Thanks to the efforts of groups like the Access Fund, the controversial Recreation Fee Demonstration ("Fee Demo") Program, which allows federal land management agencies to charge and retain fees for virtually any use of national parks, forests, open space and recreation areas, may be curtailed. Recently, the Access Fund learned that key figures in the House and Senate are now opposed to Fee Demo, and that majority leaders may not vote to extend this program in 2000.

Now is a critical time—your help is urgently needed to convince congress that our public lands should be funded through our income taxes, not through unfair and discriminatory use fees.

The Demonstration Fee Program was adopted as part of the 1997 federal budget package. The program was given an initial three-year life to test its applicability and benefit to agencies and public lands visitors.

The program was expressly intended not to replace Congressional appropriations, but to supplement these revenues to allow land managers to address administrative needs not being met due to budget constraints.

From its inception, Fee Demo has had serious problems. Although individual parks, forests, and recreation areas were permitted to keep a large percentage of the revenues they collected under Fee Demo, the administrative costs of collecting the new fees were often significant, and the process of collecting and disbursing them complicated. People like Yvon Chouinard and David Brower, as well as the City of Los Angeles, weighed in against the program, claiming among other things that it was inherently unfair to lower-income people and would lead to continued reductions in funding for the agencies through appropriations.

Recreation advocacy groups like the Access Fund, the Public Access Coalition, American Whitewater, and the Sierra Club quickly took positions opposing Fee Demo, and supporting the principle that the administrative needs of the federal resource management agencies should be paid for out of annual budget appropriations, and through sources such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We have distinguished between fees for access, which we oppose, and fees for use of developed facilities such as campgrounds, which we do not oppose.

More recently, groups such as the Mountaineers and the International Mountain Biking Association have adopted positions against Fee Demo, and the American Hiking Society has withheld support pending substantial changes to the program.

Last year, two bills were introduced in the House of Representatives to terminate Fee Demo. We encouraged Access Fund members to support these bills. At this point, however, it should not be • continued on page 5
Looking for the Magic Bullet in the Midwest

by Sally Monier, executive director

The alarm clock screeched rudely after a late night of playing cards with my family in Milwaukee, Wisc., but duty called. Some 200 miles down the road, Illinois climbers were gathering that Saturday afternoon in hopes of protecting access to their local areas and influencing the future of climbing there. Heartland craggers were looking for ways to make a difference. A big part of the Access Fund’s mission is to support these grassroots groups, and I looked forward to the meeting.

I drove my dad’s old pickup truck (which had held tires with neither a spare or a jack, I later found out) to Jefferson, Wisc., and then hitched a ride south with Steve Frye, Access Fund regional coordinator and liaison with Wisconsin Outdoor Access. We swapped stories as he drove, and the conversation revealed that at one time Frye had been an Adventist preacher, a profession that undoubtedly aided his ministry as a climber activist.

As we drove into Bloomington, Ill., our destination was obvious: a multi-siloed grain elevator, the tallest thing for miles around, which had been converted into Upper Limits Climbing Gym. There we hooked up with Illinois Regional Coordinator Eric Uller, gym owners Pam and Chris Schmick and others, and caravanned to the meeting.

About 20 interested climbers showed up, Uller, access activist for almost 10 years and owner of a portion of Drapers Bluff in Jackson Falls in Illinois, etc.

Finally, Uller posed the million-dollar question to the group: “Do we want to form a group to represent climbers’ interests to local agencies?” Uller added “I can help organize and be involved, but I can’t run it; people need to step forward to do that.”

Those at the meeting shifted uncomfortably in their chairs and studied the carpet in front of them. This is a familiar scene for veterans of grassroots meetings, coming at the point when people realize “You mean I have to do something?” This moment has a way of slowing things down.

Finally, after some discussion, an organizing committee of four people jelled. Now, what were they going to do? Ideas flew: Have a logo. Buy t-shirts and sell them. Get members, hundreds of members.

I saw Frye smiling and shaking his head in the back of the room. “Steve,” I asked, “Given that Wisconsin Outdoor Access has gone through the same process last year, do you have any advice for the group?”

“First, you have to be who you are,” he said. And with those words of wisdom, the formulation of the mission statement began. After a minimal amount of head-scratching, they came up with the following: “The ICA is dedicated to preserving climbing access in Illinois through education, conservation and cooperation.”

With their mission hammered out, ICA’s course of action became clear: Get the names, address and phone numbers of everyone present. Have the organizing committee assign tasks to the group. Talk to local land managers. Plan to meet with state resource managers about climbing policy in the future. Demonstrate stewardship by getting involved in trail-building projects, clean-ups, etc.

After three hours, the meeting broke up. Frye and I returned to the Upper Limits allies to climb. Our job was over, but the Illinois Climbers Association’s work had just begun.

Unfortunately, a painless, sure-fire way to protect access to your local area does not exist. The Access Fund can help, but needs committed area climbers to carry the battle. That’s why groups like the Illinois Climbers Association, Red River Gorge Climbers Association, Southern Sierra Climbers Association, Carolina Climbers Coalition, and Wisconsin Outdoor Access are crucial to protect access.

To deal with local access problems, climbers must organize as a group, establish a partnership with local resource managers and work together to find solutions to area-specific issues. The answer lies in the process, and a meeting like that held in Bloomington is part of the answer.

NORTHERN ARIZONA

The increasing popularity of climbing and a lack of time, experience, and funding has recently made it difficult for the Forest Service to gather information on rock climbing to plan for management in northern Arizona. To rectify this situation, the Access Fund’s Board of Directors approved a grant at its April 1 meeting for Regional Coordinator Kerry Nodal to survey climbers on their values relative to their climbing activities and management preferences for northern Arizona.

The Information Nodal gathers will help the local Forest Service officials, who have generally been supportive of climbing, make future land-management decisions, and with planning.

The survey will also foster a working relationship between local land managers and the climbing community and give climbers input on management decisions.

Pinnacle Peak, Ariz.

The City of Scottsdale has made recent progress on plans for the proposed three-acre parcel of land in the Pinnacle Peak. A conceptual site plan was submitted to the City’s Project Coordination Division for review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. The conceptual plan was being reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council at this time.

The conceptual plan is based on the three-acre parcel of land shown on the Context Map.

After approval, the next step is for Scottsdale’s Development Review Board to review and approve the more detailed architectural plans for the trailhead, including the office, restroom, and rama. Public input will be sought as part of this design process.

City Staff, along with representatives from the climbing community, have also prepared the Pinnacle Peak Park Rock Climbing Policy. The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the management of climbing activities within the designated climbing areas. These areas have already been identified and approved as part of the Management and Operations Plan.

Joshua Tree, Calif.

As part of the Access Fund’s ongoing support of grass-roots climbers’ organizations, the Board of Directors approved a $5,000 grant to the Friends of Joshua Tree (FOTJ) to fund a FOTJ administrative staff position. Joshua Tree is viewed as a crucial area by the Access Fund because it represents a good-faith attempt by federal land managers to implement climbing policy, in the form of Joshua Tree National Park’s Backcountry and Wilderness Management Plan. In short, the policies developed at Joshua may well have repercussions nationwide. With the grant, FOTJ will be able to initiate

and execute fundraising events, produce a substantive seasonal newsletter and manage a database of climbers from around the world.

Lumpy Ridge, Colo.

A new fence has been installed along the narrow road leading to the parking lot at the Black Canyon trailhead located near the McGregor Ranch at Lumpy. While “No Parking” signs along the road have been in place for some time, the fence has the effect of ensuring that no one can park there.

The fence effectively means that once the Black Canyon lot and the small lot at the Gem Lake trailhead one mile away are full, climbers, hikers and birders that frequent this part of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMP) will have no designated place to park at Lumpy Ridge.

The Access Fund is working with local climbers and RMP to evaluate options for improving the situation.

No Name Canyon, Colo.

A $5,000 grant for trail work at No Name Canyon near Glenwood Springs, Colo., was approved by the Fund’s Board of Directors in April. Climbing Name approaches are made via small, steep trails that are marked by areas of eroded rock and dirt. To rectify this, the Fund will once again bring in trail guru Jim Angell to redesign trails, and the local climbing community will provide the labor. Kudos to Bryan Gall for organizing this effort, and for opening a constructive relationship with the local Forest Service officials who manage No Name.

Penitente Canyon, Colo.

The BLM, Casa de Madera Sports
The Access Fund is co-sponsoring a "trail enhancement weekend" at Penitente Canyon on May 6-7.

and the Access Fund will sponsor a "trails enhancement weekend" at Penitente Canyon on the weekend of May 6-7. The work is aimed at preparing the canyon for summer use by cleaning up the existing trail system and by installing cairns and signs. A loop trail from Penitente to Witches Canyon will also be built. Camping for the weekend is available at Penitente; motels are located in Saguache and Monte Vista. For more information, call Mark Marshall at the BLM at 719.655.2547 or Alex Colville at 719.657.2723.

Red River Gorge, Ky.

Due to a potentially significant archaeological site located near Military Wall, the question whether climbing should be allowed to continue in this area was being considered by Forest Service archaeologists. After discussions between Forest Service archaeologists Johnny Faulkner and Cecil Ison and Red River Gorge Climber's Coalition Executive Director/Access Fund Regional Coordinator Shannon Stuart-Smith, "a joint partnership" has been forged that will help keep Military Wall open for the time being.

The long-term fate of the Military Wall depends upon the success of climbers' and the Forest Service's joint efforts to protect archaeological sites while keeping as much climbing open as possible. If these archeological sites are not protected from further degradation from climbing impacts, eventually ALL climbing is in jeopardy.

At issue is the increasing numbers of climbers and the attending "impacts" that threaten unprotected archaeological sites near climbing areas. Archaeologists are first locating as many of these sites as possible, and then working through the Coalition and climbers to mitigate impacts as quickly as possible. This approach is an attempt to "balance interests with responsibility." The Forest Service is willing to work with climbers (i.e., not close ALL climbing areas when an archaeological site occurs), if climbers are willing to help through a combination of measures (e.g., voluntary closures, partial closures, temporary closures, "buffer zones," trail reroutes, signage, improved compliance with the "No Camping" in rock shelter restriction, etc.).

The success of this joint effort to protect these archaeological sites and mitigate impacts is critical to overall access of climbing at the Red. Please respect any signs regarding sensitive resources near climbing areas, DO NOT camp within 100 feet of any rock, and please spread the word to other climbers.

Also at the Red, as of April 1, 2000, all camping and campfires within 100 feet of cliffline, or the back of a rock shelter, are PROHIBITED by the Forest Supervisor’s order. Also, as of April 1, a new "overnight parking permit" is required in the Red River Gorge. All vehicles parked overnight from 10:00 pm until 6:00 am within the Gorge area will be required to purchase an overnight pass. Passes will be sold at Ranger District offices, at Gladie Historic Site, at the Forest Supervisor’s office in Winchester, and in stores near the Red River Gorge and in larger towns such as Lexington, Morehead, and London. The fees are $3 for one night, $5 for three nights, $10 for seven nights, and an annual pass for $30. For more information contact Ranger Jorge Hersel (606) 663-2852.

Crable Rock, N.J.

Access to the Beach (a.k.a. Bitch) and Lonesome Dove boulders at Cradle Rock has recently been made tenous by the construction of an upscale home close by. The owner of this home has made it clear that he does not want to allow climbing on his property. More study of property boundaries in the area is needed to determine whose land the boulders lie on, but it is certain that the boulders are on privately owned land. As access to the Beach and Lonesome Dove boulders is worked out, climbers are reminded to be on their best behavior there and maintain extremely low profile.

Updates on the current status of Cradle Rock access can be found on the New Jersey Climber's Coalition homepage at www.cub.yahoo.com/clubs/newjerseyclimbersonline.com.

Green Springs, Ore.

Regional Reports Continued...

Foster Falls, Tenn.

Recent concerns that budget cuts to the Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) budget would force the agency to shut down or sell Foster Falls have proved to be unfounded. According to the TVA's Lee Carter, there are no plans to limit climbing access in any way, and the TVA is even planning to put a new restroom at the day parking lot.

Despite budget cuts, the TVA has no plans to restrict access to Foster Falls.

Canyonlands, Utah

The Canyonsland Climbers Coalition, coordinated by Eve Tallman, is producing regular news updates about climbing issues in the Indian Creek, Castle Valley and Canyonlands areas. If you would like to be included on an email circular list, contact Eve at 435.259.5639 or e-mail evetreee@iasal.net.

Gibralter Rock, WI

The Gibraltar Rock Action Committee will hold a slide show and gear raffle at the Adventure Rock Gym in Brookfield, Wis. on May 19 to recruit volunteers. The committee plans to initiate negotiations with Columbia County to reopen Gibraltar in the near future. Everyone that attends the event will get a free pass to Adventure Rock. For more information, call Eric at Adventure Rock at 262.790.6800.

Fee Demo from page 1

necessary to pass this legislation as long as Congress does not approve a continuation of the Fee Demo program.

We are encouraged by these developments, but nonetheless urge our members to write to their House and Senate representatives immediately on this issue. Tell Congress that you want to pay for public lands use and management through your income taxes, not through entry fees. State that you are willing to pay for use of "developed facilities," but that general access to the public domain should be free, to the greatest extent possible. Ask your congressperson and senators to oppose making Fee Demo permanent. Ask Congress not to consider pay-to-play schemes a reasonable way to fund public lands management as long as you support for HR 701, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, which would permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, with $220 million annually allocated for resource and recreation management. State that the Access Fund opposes use fees primarily because they are discriminatory, and inherently a barrier to access. Our surveys show climbers want to help boost funding levels for the public lands agencies, but that we agree use fees are not the best way to do this. We need Congress to stop reducing lands management agency budgets and to increase funding for recreation and resource management programs, and to sustain these improved funding levels in the future.

Personal letters through regular mail are the best way to let congress know how you feel on this issue. To find out the names of your representatives and senators, call 202.224.3121, visit the congressional Web site at http://www.thomas.loc.gov/, or Access Fund Senior Policy Analyst Sam Davidson at 381.770.1523, or e-mail sam@accessfund.org.

Write:
The Hon. Your Congresperson
US House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Hon. Your Senator
US Senate
Washington DC 20510
Help Wanted

ACE ACCESS FUND ACCESS AND ACQUISITION DIRECTOR

The Access Fund is looking for an Access and Acquisition (AAD) director to manage:

1. The Action Network of volunteer climbers and climbing organization liaisons around the country.
2. Acquisitions, which includes the negotiation, purchase and consummation of land acquisitions as well as the supervision and management of lands held by the Access Fund. In addition, as the first point of contact for climbing area closures and restrictions, the AAD promotes and supports Access Fund policy positions and statements.
3. The AAD is also the first point of contact for climbing area closures.

Requirements Include:

1. At least five years climbing experience, with diversity among various climbing disciplines (lead, sport, mountaineering, etc.) and a broad knowledge of climbing history and trends.
2. Advocacy skills such as negotiation techniques, public speaking and the ability to work well with volunteers, including recruitment, coaching and motivation.
3. General business skills such as conflict resolution, general contract, real estate and legal experience and supervision/management.
4. Experience with non-profit organizations through volunteer work or prior employment.
5. Strong work ethic including participation as a team player, self-motivation and a commitment to the Access Fund mission.

This is a full-time position in the Boulder, Colo. office. Salary range $35,000 to $37,500 depending on experience.

For more information, E-mail Sally Moest at sally@accessfund.org

PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR

The Access Fund is looking for a Publications Director (PD) to be responsible for writing, producing and distributing the Access Fund's educational and promotional materials, including this newsletter, advertisements, brochures, etc. via print and electronic media. The PD interfaces with print, pre-press houses, writers, photographers, graphic designers, magazine representatives, etc. as well as the Access Fund staff.

Good writing skills and knowledge of QuarkXPress, Photoshop and digital pre-press required.

This is a full-time position in the Boulder, Colo. office. Salary range: $25,000 to $30,000 depending on experience.

For more information, E-mail Susy Levin at susy@accessfund.org

Access Fund

RUNNING IT OUT WITH ACCESS FUND BOARD MEMBER ERIC HOBDAY

Pop quiz: what climbing area comes to mind when you think of 50-foot runouts from quarter-inch bolts on immaculate granite slabs? Answer: wrong if you guessed Twisted Meadows. And wrong if you answered Stone Mountain, North Carolina (but good try). But you'd be right if your answer was the Wichita Mountains of Oklahoma, where Access Fund Board of Directors member Eric Hobday cut his teeth on desperate climbing and dirty access.

Hobday, 39, of Salt Lake City, Utah, prefers trad climbing these days (some of his favorite climbing destinations include the Bugaboos and Yosemite), although he throws himself into the occasional sport route. Hobday got his start in climbing on the limestone cliffs of Canada's Niagara Escarpment, then moved to Dallas, Texas, where he became a local at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge (WMWR) and Baldy Point.

"Bold doesn't even begin to describe climbing here," Hobday says.

"If you'se the first one to own the WMWR, you'll see that a lot of the routes are either free solo or X-rated. When you start climbing there, you just have to figure out the routes that you dare get on and climb them a bunch of times. Then maybe you can push it a little."

After learning the tough love needed to climb at the Wichitans, Hobday and other local climbers (including current Fund board member Gary Guttman, currently the Oklahoma coordinator Marion Hutchison) were stunned when the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which runs the WMWR, announced complete climbing ban in the winter of 1994. The ban came from a strict interpretation the WMWR's mission, proclaiming it as a place to protect and restore wildlife over any form of non-wildlife-dependent recreation.

After the attempted ban, Hobday, John Junor (the Access Fund's executive director at the time), and the Wichita Mountains Access Association set out educating the Fish and Wildlife Service about climbing and rallied support for the sport from US Senator Don Nickles and the Oklahoma legislature. "We made numerous Freedom of Information Act requests to help us frame our response to the draft environmental assessment on climbing in the Wichitans," Hobday says. "Eighteen months and hundreds of hours of work later, the result was a three-inch notebook showing where the impact analysis was flawed. That, plus a change of management and attitude at the Refuge, helped turn the situation around. Now, really the only restrictions on climbing are a committee of climbers that oversees fixed anchors, a no-climbing area along a sensitive creekbed, and a ban on power drills in wilderness areas."

Hobday calls the pending Access Fund purchase of private property owned by Baldy Point in the Wichita Mountains (see area report in March '00 Vertical Times) "a great acquisition. It's one of the best climbing resources in the south-central region of the country, including the cities of Dallas/Fort Worth and Amarillo in Texas, Oklahoma City, and many of Kansas. The routes face south, making it a really good winter area. If the Access Fund had not stepped in, the landowners would have chosen to sell to a developer. Chances are that climbing wouldn't be allowed now."

Hobday has also been instrumental in the Fund's battle to save climbing at Hueso Tanks. "Hueso is an example of a situation that is so complex that it is beyond the resources of the local climbing community to turn it around," Hobday says. "The Access Fund is the only thing preventing the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) from banning the little bit of climbing that remains, and the only organization with the resources required to improve climbing access. The final outcome is far from certain, but Hueso is one of the areas where we'll go all out to protect climbers' access. The real shame of it is that climbing and rock art preservation are compatible, but TPWD simply chooses to ignore that fact."

Hobday, who says he has been "engaged for eight years," recently moved to Salt Lake City with his fiancée, Debra. As for the direction of the Access Fund's board in the future, Hobday says "We need to focus on understanding who our constituency is and how to address their needs. We need to look forward two, three, even five years and determine what key challenges climbers are going to face. We need to position the Access Fund today so that it can address those challenges and remain the driving force in the climbing community."
Policy Update Continued...

The new Yosemite plan reflects the Access Fund’s efforts to preserve Camp 4 and keep Yosemite Lodge development away from Swan Slab.

personal experience of standing in El Cap Meadow and watching climbers on the Big Stone, saying Yosemite is the flagship national park because it is a blend of “the pastoral and the sublime.” Babbitt also admitted that the Park Service had benefited by our lawsuit to protect Camp 4, and now understood that the historic campground is a “world climbing center.” The Yosemite Valley Plan was immediately praised by leading environmental groups such as the National Parks and Conservation Association and the Wilderness Society. The Sierra Club, however, criticized the plan, arguing that a different plan for protecting the Merced River corridor needs to be finalized before actions proposed in the Valley Plan can be considered. On balance, the Yosemite Valley Plan seems mixed blessing. The plan takes steps to reduce vehicular congestion in the Valley. It removes a number of facilities from the Valley, including some NFS and concessionaire employee housing. It provides for additional walk-in campgrounds and would restore the free flow of the Merced River. However, the plan raises numerous concerns, principally regarding the large scale of new development that could increase the cost of decreasing the number of cars in the Valley. The plan would reduce day-use parking (by as much as 60 percent) and camping opportunities, consider the development of IMAX-theater-based commercial operations at park entrances, allow an additional concession “attraction” at Lower Yosemite Falls, straighten and widen segments of all roads leading to the Valley to better accommodate buses and RVs, and allow the construction of a new, high-end hotel at Yosemite’s north entrance. It is unclear how these factors would affect climbers. A shuttle system may not run to enough locations and at the odd hours required by climbers. While some campgrounds will be built or rebuilt, the total number of campsites available in the Valley will remain below target levels provided for under the 1980 “master” plan for the park. Climbers have unique transportation and camping requirements in Yosemite Valley, and the Access Fund will continue to advocate strongly for these needs. We will review the Yosemite Valley Plan thoroughly and submit comments to the Park Service. Call senior policy analyst Sam Davidson for an update at 831-770-1523 or e-mail sam@accessfund.org.

All climbers are encouraged to consider the plan for themselves, and to respond with constructive comments to the Park Service.

Since the volun-

tary policy was adopted in 1995, the vast majority of climbers have responded positively. Climber visitation in June has dropped by at least 50 percent from voluntary closure levels each year since 1995.

On a related note, the Access Fund bids a fond farewell to Jim Schlinskamk, long-time Chief Ranger at Devils Tower and one of the architects of the voluntary closure policy. Jim is headed to Great Basin National Park (yes, there is a climbing there). Jim’s friendly demeanor and commitment to supporting both recreation protection and climbing in the national parks should be requisite qualities for all NFS personnel. Thanks, Jim, for a job well done.

Changes in Zion

As part of the National Park Service’s comprehensive effort to reduce vehicular traffic in national parks, Zion National Park in Utah is making changes in visitor access to the main canyon.

Beginning in May 2000, visitors (including climbers) will have to park their cars near the park entrance and ride shuttle buses in and out of the canyon. Initially, this policy will be
Policy Update Continued...

A shuttle system is being implemented at Zion; climbers will be able to obtain a special-use permit to leave a shuttle vehicle implemented for the high-volume visitation months of May through October only.

The shuttle buses will operate between 6:30 a.m. and 10 p.m. daily. Climbers who need to leave the park after-hours can obtain a free, special-use permit at the park headquarters the day before their climb. This permit will allow climbers to leave a car parked at designated parking areas in the canyon. However, even with this permit car will not be allowed into the park before 6:30 a.m.

In addition, the entrance fee to Zion is rising from $10 to $20. Mandatory permits for bivouacking on wall climbs can be obtained at park headquarters and will remain at $5 per person.

Call Zion at 435-772-3213 for more information.

HuEco Tanks: Final Decision by May 1

In March, representatives of the Access Fund and the El Paso Climbers Club attended an informal meeting with officials from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to discuss our suggestions for making the Public Use Plan for Hueco Tanks become more climber-friendly.

So far, TPWD's proposed adjustments to the Hueco plan include closing the popular Dragon's Den area to climbing, eliminating all camping from the park, and levying a $4 "reservation fee" to discourage visitors from making reservations, then failing to show up.

Unfortunately, as in numerous prior meetings, TPWD made no commitment to modify any element of the plan. The Public Use Plan is the most restrictive management plan the Access Fund has ever dealt with. State Parks Director Walt Dabney did say that TPWD had not yet made any final decisions, and that climbers should submit specific proposals for improving the plan. TPWD will accept comments from the public until the end of April, 2000, and expects to issue its final decision on revising the use plan by May 1.

In addition, TPWD expects to hire a new, permanent park manager for Hueco Tanks by May 1.

Here are the basic changes to the Public Use Plan the Access Fund and the El Paso Climbers Club are suggesting:

1. The Public Use Plan should do more than just pay lip service to the fact that Hueco Tanks is one of the world's best climbing areas. The plan should include actions designed to promote this value so long as it does not demonstrably conflict with preservation of historic and natural resources.

2. The current large-scale access restrictions should be reconsidered. Specifically, limited, site-specific closures should replace the access-guided-tour-only policy for all areas of Hueco Tanks outside of North Mountain. TPWD's draft review of the use plan states that for the most part, visitors have honored area closures. We believe this would continue to be the case even if wholesale closures were ended and only partially sensitive areas closed. This approach has worked well for other climbing areas with significant archaeological values.

The trail system should be designed to support climbing access and protect sensitive sites. The Access Fund has offered to help pay for the new trail system.

3. The Volunteer Guides Program needs an overhaul. Specifically, guided tours for climbing should be optional, not mandatory, and guides should be able to participate in the activity of their tour. Limits on the length of a climbing tour should be up to the guide. Presently, rock art tours can look at rock art, and bird watching tours can watch birds, but climbing tour guides cannot climb. The Access Fund has offered to help pay for improvements to the guide program.

The Dragon's Den should be a "test site" for the site-specific restrictions strategy. TPWD should keep the Dragon's Den open to climbing, restrict or close those sites in this area which have significant resource damage, and allow unguided access (just to this area, not to all of East Mountain). This test area can be monitored for a year, and if the strategy is successful, it could be applied to other significant climbing areas within the park.

The Access Fund, the El Paso Climbers Club, and other climbing organizations are submitting these proposals as this issue goes to press. All climbers are encouraged to write in support of these ideas. Write to: Walter Dabney, State Park Director, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744-3921.

Conservation- Oriented Access Fund

by Kath Pyke

GOING BATTY IN BOULDER

The Boulder, Colorado Mountain Parks staff has announced a seasonal climbing restriction to protect a roosting bat colony. The restriction runs from April 4 to Sept. 1 and affects 3 routes on the east face of Der Zerkle on Dinosaur Mountain in the Flatirons. The reason this site has been singled out is because it is part of the state-wide efforts by Colorado Division of Wildlife to protect breeding female groups of bats, known as nursery colonies. Of the particular species, Fringed Myotis, frequently deep cracks in the rock face. The restriction is targeted to minimize noise disturbance on the East face, leaving the remaining routes on the West face open to year-round climbing. Boulder Mountain Parks have worked with the Access Fund from the start to share information on monitoring and outreach. Of the 43 species of bats living in the United States, more than half are federally listed as endangered species or are candidates for the list.

TRACKING TURTLES AT JOSH

Joshua Tree National Park has put out a special alert for climbers to report any sightings of desert tortoise with radio transmitters or numbers on them. Due to the fires in the Park in 1999, park biologists have set up some special monitoring projects around Lost Horse, Hidden Valley picnic area, Intersection Rock and the areas behind them. Climbers should report any tortoise sightings to the Visitor Center, or a Park entrance station. Any information will help with Park biologist assessments of the recovery of this threatened species. For more information contact Gillian Bowser, Park Biologist at gillain_bowser@ups.gov.

GET YOUR GRANTS HERE

In 2000, the Access Fund allocated $138,000 towards climbing conservation projects, and there are still some funds remaining. For a copy of grant guidelines, or simply to discuss a project idea in more detail, contact Access Fund staffer Kath Pyke at 888.863.6237 ext. 104. Submissions for major grants should be in to the grant committee review by June 15, with smaller applications processed on an ongoing basis.
To RB or not to RB?

I was surprised that the Access Fund chose to open the discussion about Removable Bolts (RBs) with such a negative editorial by Marion Hutchinson. RBs have not yet been involved in any real-life access issues. Why then is the API "removing support" before the implications of RBs are fully understood? (The opinions Hutchinson presented are not necessarily those of the Access Fund, as stated at the end of the editorial—Ed.) As a "tradar climber" I have taken long falls on bad gear, and I do not yet need to place a single bolt on those climbs. As a "sport climber" doing new routes, I have drilled hundreds of bolts. Each cliff I climb is different, and I tailor my actions and tools to each place. RBs are just another tool, not the savior or destroyer of climbing as we know it. Our access issues should be site-appropriate behavior, not which blob of aluminum or steel is politically correct. Check out all your protection choices, and let the route and your head decide which tool to use. - Paul Murphy, via the Internet

Speed climbing not the culprit in growing El Cap gear costs?

I think the healthy debate over rock preservation on El Cap and other big walls is overall, a positive thing that increases all of our awareness of the finite nature of our stone resource. Minimizing climber impact and preserving experiences for future generations seems a positive thing to be done by climbers and by the access bodies to do what will benefit our sport together.

Without commenting specifically on the route on Ring of Fire, I think consensus and common sense shows that routes that can be installed are sometimes interpreted as routes that should be installed. The heavy backlash from the installation of Wings of Steel, for example, underscores the concern of first-ascent site and rock preservation. Style, however, is elusive and culturally impactful—hence the debate.

I think [in the Letters section, Vertical Times 3/93] Mark Smith has, perhaps unduly identified speed climbing and hammerless ascent as the culprits in the huddling fixed gear war on wall routes like the PO Wall. I don't believe that Fowler and Oax, taking huge whippers after whippers, were lacking in "greatness" when they climbed The Shield hammerless, nor do I believe that speed climbing solely fosters the destruction of hard aid lines. The climbing of aid routes is what causes their continuous evolution, especially by parties that are not well-versed in which placements will promote destruction of usable aid and which would be better left in place to minimize rock destruction.

Mike Guida
Balboa, Calif.

Why pay user fees when logging is subsidized?

After four years of user fees being collected in several hundred sites to repair needed maintenance neglected for years by outrageous budget cutting for public recreation facilities on public lands, overwhelming support to end the fees is coming from all repeatable persons and groups involved. (See related story, page 1—Ed.)

In the last month the 15,000-member Mountaineers, the nation's largest climbing group, has come out in opposition to extending the user fee program (commonly called the Temporary Recreation User Fee Demonstration program). "The Forest Service subsidizes things like timber, mining and grazing. And they want to charge us to take a walk," said Mountaineer president Ed Henderson.

Additionally, the International Mountain Biking Association's (IMBA) membership opposes the extension of the fees for several reasons, saying "It's the federal government's responsibility to fund the basic facilities and personnel necessary to assure public enjoyment and preservation of public lands."

And the fees are not staying at $5 for very long—now we are seeing $30 annual passes in the Northwest and extra costs for special events both inside and at other National Forests.

Mismangement of appropriating the fees intended for repairs and maintenance has brought Washington State Senator Slade Gorton to say publicly, "Excessive overhead and dubious national initiatives" is where the fees go.

What happens when the forests are too crowded and the fees to enter reach the cost of a ball game? There is only one sure way to stop this from happening: one way to stop the fleeing of the forests: Keep access funded from taxes, and most importantly keep them free to all citizens as equal shareholding stewards.

Doug Boeschen
co-developer of Polarisfeet/Polaritec

May

5/7 Robert M., Co—Penitente Canyon Climber clean-up & trail run. 6:30AM @ the Redondo (or) Ski Lift, 962-3043
5/7 Penitente Canyon, CO—Clean-up. Access Fund/BLM, Alice Covilla, 259-4723
5/8/9 Ten Falls, CO—Dream Lake Recreation Area clean-up, Adventure Outfitters, Debeau, 587-7854
5/15/26 Lexington, KY—Red River Gorge River party. Red River Gorge Climbers Coalition, Shannon Stewart / Sally & Judy, 605-351-0042
5/27 Mountaineer State Park, MD—Colonial Hill clean-up. Richard Doucet, 508-553-8247
5/27 Mulberry Falls, KY—ADC Trails maintenance clean-up. Dan Sutton, 781-353-7804
5/1 Boulder, CO—Black Portage slide show. Neptune Mountaineering, 303-496-0696
5/13 Santa Clara, CA—El Camito de Mayo. Planet Giazzini, Frank Sessions, 408-727-2777
5/13 Boulder, CO—Rapalje Chalk Clean-up. BB & slide show meet at Mountain Sports, Coloradoan at 8:30, 303-442-4100
5/13 Denver, CO—Annual Banquet and Auction. Sierra Club Rocky Mountain Chapter, 303-881-8819
5/18 Brookfield, WI—slide show, party. Climbing party. 926-0419
5/19 Bozeman, MT—Climbing party. Idaho Mountain Climbers, 258-3548
5/26 Red Rock Canyon, NV—Rock Trivia Night. 702-637-6462
6/6/28 Pacific Crest Trail, CA—slide show to benefit Black Canyon Fun Run. Chad Robison, chadbeth@nymspring.com
6/7/15 Pacific Crest Trail, CA—slide show to benefit Black Canyon Fun Run. Chad Robison, chadbeth@nymspring.com
6/18 Colorado Springs, CO—slide show to benefit Breast Cancer Fun Run. Chad Robison, chadbeth@nymspring.com

Eyes

Calendar

May


June

6/1 Boulder, CO—El Vizart Endurance 8000. Mountain Hardwear, ticket info. 303-574-0895
6/3 Lookout Mountain, TN—Scout Trail Day. Southeastern Climbers Coalition. Rod McLeod. 404-339-1319
6/10 Port Angeles, CA—Southern Sierra Climbers Association Annual Meeting. Bee Acres. 707-592-2419
6/17 Excavator Rock, TX—Trail Project. Meet at Compass Parking Lot, Michael Lewis. 253-695-2646
6/17-18 No Marie Canyon, CO—trail build (National Trails Initiative). Bryan Galt at Summit Canyon Mountaineering. 303-960-6944
6/24-25 (tentative date) Paddletown Mountain, CO—trail build (National Trails Initiative). Dave Turner. 303-880-9654

July

7/1/2 Elsinore Reservoir. Rick Collins, CO—trail build (National Trails Initiative). Ken Green. 760-477-9776
7/6-7/8 Landes, WV—7th Annual International Climbing Festival. Leslie Van Osman. 304-322-5971
7/6 Landes, WV—Scenic Canyon Trail Project. Leslie Van Osman. 304-322-8962
7/8 Blood River, OB—7th Annual Gorge Games, Adventure Awaits! 367-6628
7/15 Colorado Springs, CO—slide show to benefit Breast Cancer Fun Run. Chad Robison, chadbeth@nymspring.com
7/15 Pacific Crest Trail, CA—slide show to benefit Breast Cancer Fun Run. Chad Robison, chadbeth@nymspring.com
7/27 Aspen, CO—International Outdoor Festival. Peter Johnson, johnfmr@msn.com

August

8/4-16 Aspen, CO—International Outdoor Festival. Peter Johnson, johnfmr@msn.com

Charts these events raised at least $30 or gained 15 new members for the Access Fund. Many thanks!

$231.00 Mike Libecki slide show tour
$1,039.15 Jim Donini slide show tour

Events, Pinnacle

$636.28 Adirondack International Mountain Keene, NY
$536.00 Arano Macenola Cumba Libre slide show tour Teton Seminar, Jackson, WY
$426.00 Mike Libecki slide show tour
$410.00 Skinny Skid show tour
$432.00 Mike Libecki slide show tour

$318.00 3rd Annual Barn Burner Comp. Boulders Climbing Gym, Madison, WI

$410.00 Crankm in the Millennium Rockyview, Davis, CA

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE INTERNATIONAL OUTDOOR FESTIVAL COMING UP AUGUST 24-27, 2000

Scheduled for August 24-27, 2000 in Aspen, Colorado, the International Outdoor Festival is a sports and cultural festival that will bring together the industry, consumers and world class athletes. The IOF provides participants with the opportunity to learn from the best guides, outdoorsmen, experts and world class athletes in climbing, trail running and mountain biking, kayaking, fly fishing and para-gliding. The Access Fund will conduct a trail clean up and will benefit through a silent auction. For more on the IOF, check out www.outdoorfestival.com.
The Big Story: Your letter can stop use fees .... p.1

Spray: Looking for the magic bullet with the Illinois Climbers Association .... p.2

Area Reports: The access situation across the nation ............... p. 3

Meet the Access Fund: Running it out with Eric Hobday .. p. 7

Policy Update: Devils Tower policy OK, Yosemite plan, Wilderness anchor update, Hueco decision due, Zion changes ...... p. 8

Conservation Update: Bats and other assorted beasts .... p. 11

Hot Projects and Events: Sizzling summer access events near you ................. p.13

Flashes: Adopt a Crag day, monthly donor honor roll, letters and Regional Coordinator update ........... p. 14

The Access Fund is a national, non-profit dedicated to keeping climbing areas open & conserving the climbing environment.

Since its incorporation in 1990, the Access Fund has provided more than $1 million for climbing conservation and education across the US. We’ve paid for land purchases, climbers’ campgrounds, educational brochures, toilets and signage, and scientific research on climbers’ impact on birds of prey and cliff-dwelling plants.

For more information

CALL US AT: 303-545-6772

Vertical Times is the membership newsletter of the Access Fund and is published six times a year in January, March, May, July, September and November


Exceeds 50 percent recycled content

MEASURING SUCCESS ONE TICK LIST AT A TIME—SEE PAGE 6

In the March Vertical Times, Access Fund members received a TICK LIST encouraging them to complete 10 proactive access actions, such as packing out a bag of trash from a climbing area, volunteering for a trail project, or writing a letter to Congress.

Droves of TICK LISTS have been coming into the office in the past few weeks, and we hope the trend continues. If we all are successful, the result will be the most impressive compilation of climber activism ever by the end of 2000, and the US climbing community will have demonstrated an amazing amount of concentrated advocacy. In addition to helping access, your completed TICK LIST is also a raffle ticket for phenomenal climbing and outdoor gear and prizes that will be awarded in the second half of this year.

Even if you don’t think you have enough time to complete 10 actions on the TICK LIST, try a couple of the easy ones such as properly disposing of your waste at the crag (100 steps from the trail and six inches deep). Another easy action is to find more information about one of your climbing areas. The next time you go out, read up on the area, find out about closures, access issues, and who owns the land you are climbing on.

Increasing your awareness, multiplied with the efforts of other climbers, could someday save the access. So send it (see TICK LIST on page 6). You can even e-mail your acts of random activism to ticklist@accessfund.org.