2021 Climbing Advocacy Report
SHOWCASING THE IMPACT OF YOUR GENEROSITY

Protect America’s Climbing
We are the national nonprofit climbing advocacy organization that leads and inspires the climbing community to fight for sustainable access, protect and conserve the land, and build a community of inspired advocates.

Access Fund was founded in 1991 to fight for legal and physical access to the places we love to climb, and while there’s always work to be done here, we’ve largely won that battle and established climbing as a legitimate use of the land. But the explosive growth of climbing has given rise to a new set of challenges as well as opportunities.

Today, the challenge is whether the tremendous growth in the number of climbers is sustainable—whether land managers can provide access while also protecting the environment. And as climbers, we have a growing opportunity to protect the land that we care for—not just the places we climb but also the larger landscapes that sustain us.

Access Fund is working to ensure a sustainable future for climbing by scaling up our efforts to bring climbers together to protect climbing landscapes and the incredible experiences they offer.
2021 marked Access Fund’s 30th birthday—and what a year it was.

We spend most of our time looking forward, but this year, we took some time to reflect on how proud we are of the work we’ve done: climbing areas we’ve helped purchase, public lands we’ve helped protect, trails we’ve improved. But in that reflection, we found that what we’re most proud of are the people, the community, and the culture we’ve helped to nurture.

Access Fund is still kicking butt 30 years after it was founded by a visionary group of dedicated climbers. Some advocacy victories can only be won over the long haul, and that’s where Access Fund really shines. Last year alone, we marked two huge wins that were years in the making: celebrating on the North Lawn of the White House as President Biden signed a new proclamation protecting Bears Ears National Monument and permanently protecting the historic Thumb and Needle crags in our Colorado backyard. We also launched the Access Fund Climber Stewards to inspire climbers to care for the places they love.

Behind these accomplishments is a dedicated network of climbing advocates that is putting in the hard work, day in and day out, to effect positive change on the ground. There are so many unsung heroes who make it possible for Access Fund and the climbing community to do this amazing work. Our staff and our board work long hours behind the scenes, all with their sights set on long-term goals that don’t materialize overnight, knowing that one day they’ll get to celebrate with the community when it all comes together. And the backbone of all this incredible work is our generous supporters—you—who dig deep to empower Access Fund. Your support and confidence give us the space to envision those long-term goals and do the critical work of protecting America’s climbing.

Our community—donors, partners, staff, board members, volunteers, and everyone who’s ever picked up a tool at an Adopt a Crag or responded to an Action Alert—are the true secret to our success. And what binds us all together is a shared passion for climbing and a shared commitment to protecting the land. That’s an amazing and totally unique thing we have going here at Access Fund. With your support, we’ll be looking back together in another 30 years and be even more proud of where that has taken us.

Chris Winter
Executive Director
A Thriving Network of Climbing Advocates

The climbing advocacy movement is thriving from coast to coast, brimming with advocates who brought new and creative ideas to the table in the fight for climbing. Our movement is bigger than ever, and we are growing stronger every day.
Protecting America’s Climbing Areas

In 2021, Access Fund and our incredible network of local climbing organizations worked together to preserve access to 225 climbing areas across the country and open four new or previously closed areas to climbing.

The Citadel, AL  •  Painted Bluff, AL  •  Valdez, AK  •  Hawk Creek, AR  •  Hudson Mountain, AR  •  Mount Magazine State Park, AR  •  Rock Creek, AR  •  The Homestead, AZ  •  Oak Flat, AZ  •  Windy Point, AZ  •  Alabama Hills, CA  •  Bishop, CA  •  Buttermilks, CA  •  Donner Summit, CA  •  Echo Cliffs, CA  •  Gold Wall, CA  •  The Grotto, CA  •  Handley Rock Park, CA  •  Holcomb Valley Pinnacles, CA  •  Inyo National Forest, CA  •  Joshua Tree National Park, CA  •  Kudos Cliff, CA  •  Lover’s Leap, CA  •  Luther Spires, CA  •  Malibu Creek State Park, CA  •  Mayhem Cove, CA  •  Old Camp Bluff, CA  •  Owens River Gorge, CA  •  Phantom Spires, CA  •  The Pie Shop, CA  •  Pine Creek, CA  •  Ring Mountain, CA  •  Stinson Beach, CA  •  Stoney Point, CA  •  Tahoe Basin, CA  •  Tahquitz, CA  •  Tollhouse Rock, CA  •  Truckee River Canyon, CA  •  Volcanic Tablelands, CA  •  Yosemite National Park, CA  •  Avalon, CO  •  Boulder Canyon, CO  •  Cascade Canyon, CO  •  Cathedral Spires, CO  •  Clear Creek Canyon, CO  •  Colorado National Monument, CO  •  Dalla Mountain, CO  •  Denny’s, CO  •  Eldorado State Park, CO  •  Etive Slabs, CO  •  Flatirons, CO  •  Never Winter Wall, CO  •  North Table Mountain, CO  •  Red Rock Canyon, CO  •  Tan Corridor, CO  •  Thumb and Needle, CO  •  Unaweep, CO  •  Cathole, CT  •  West Rock, CT  •  Ocala, FL  •  Tallulah Gorge State Park, GA  •  Kapena Falls, HI  •  Mokule’ia Wall, HI  •  Black Cliffs, ID  •  City of Rocks/Castle Rocks State Park, ID  •  The Fins, ID  •  Laclede, ID  •  Massacre Rocks, ID  •  Salmon-Challis National Forest, ID  •  Sheridan Ranch (City of Rocks expansion), ID  •  Swan Falls, ID  •  House Boulders, IL  •  Lehigh Park, IL  •  Big Sinking, KY  •  Coal Bank, KY  •  Red River Gorge, KY  •  RRGCC Lands, KY  •  Barren Mountain, ME  •  Buck’s Ledge, ME  •  Bureau of Parks and Lands, ME  •  Camden Hills, ME  •  Fletcher’s Bluff, ME  •  Great Ledges, ME  •  Jockey Cap, ME  •  Parks Pond Bluff, ME  •  Ragged Mountain, ME  •  Shell Pond, ME  •  Tumbledown Dick Mountain, ME  •  Twitchell Pond, ME  •  Northwest Branch, MD  •  Dorset Drive Crag, MA  •  Farley Ledges, MA  •  Hanging Mountain, MA  •  Rose Ledge, MA  •  AAA Walls, MI  •  Grand Ledge, MI  •  Silver Mountain, MI  •  Sugarloaf-Winoa, MI  •  Devil’s Elbow, MN  •  He Mni Can (Red Wing), MN  •  Bitterroot National Forest, MT  •  Bozeman, MT  •  Helena, MT  •  Lost Horse Canyon, MT  •  Rattler Gulch, MT  •  Red Rock Canyon, NV  •  Band M Ledge, NH  •  Cathedral Ledge, NH  •  Eagle Mountain Crag, NH  •  Holt’s Ledge, NH  •  Jackson Ice Mill, NH  •  Longstack Precipice, NH
• Orange Crush, NH  • Pawtuckaway, NH  • Rumney, NH  • Whitehorse Ledge, NH  • Mount Tammany, NJ  • Carson National Forest, NM  • Cibola National Forest, NM  • Lincoln National Forest, NM  • Taos, NM  • Tunnel Springs, NM  • Adirondack Park, NY  • Ant Lion, NY  • Beer Walls, NY  • Flatrock Boulders, NY  • Ice Pond, NY  • Potash, NY  • Powerlinez, NY  • Thacher State Park, NY  • Zoar Valley, NY  • Asheboro, NC  • Bald Mountain Creek Preserve (McKinney Gap Boulders), NC  • Big Lost Cove, NC  • Blue Ridge Parkway, NC  • Buckeye Knob, NC  • The Gulch Boulders/Whiteside Cove, NC  • Linville Gorge, NC  • Village of Chimney Rock Boulders, NC  • Mad River Gorge, OH  • Mill Creek, OH  • Sawyer Quarry, OH  • The Callahans, OR  • Central Cascades Wilderness, OR  • The Honeycombs, OR  • Klenger Spring & Pete’s Pile, OR  • Madrone Wall, OR  • Bauer Rocks, PA  • Birdsboro, PA  • Boxcar Rocks, PA  • Breakneck, PA  • Coll’s Cove, PA  • Donation Rocks, PA  • Ghost Town, PA  • Haycock Mountain, PA  • Mocanaqua, PA  • Ohiopyle State Park, PA  • PA DCNR Properties, PA  • Palisades State Park, PA  • Tilbury Knob, PA  • Bee Rock, TN  • Black Mountain, TN  • Castle Rock, TN  • Deep Creek, TN  • Dogwood West, TN  • Foster Falls, TN  • Jellico Craggs, TN  • Laurel/Buzzard Point, TN  • Leda, TN  • Lily Bluff Overlook, TN  • Little River Canyon, TN  • Lost Wall, TN  • Monterey Crag, TN  • Obed, TN  • Reel Cove, TN  • Stone Fort, TN  • Sunset Rock, TN  • Wauhatchie Boulders, TN  • Woodcock Cove, TN  • Continental Ranch, TX  • Hueco Tanks, TX  • Inks Ranch, TX  • Medicine Wall, TX  • Reimers Ranch, TX  • Crawdad Canyon, UT  • Donnelly Canyon, UT  • Hurricane, UT  • Joe’s Valley, UT  • Little Cottonwood Canyon, UT  • Lone Peak, UT  • Manti-La Sal National Forest, UT  • Ruth Lake, UT  • Supercrack, UT  • Zion National Park, UT  • Black Mountain, VT  • Bolton Dome, VT  • James River, VT  • Ben’s Branch Cliff, VA  • Breaks Interstate Park, VA  • Beacon Rock, WA  • Cushman/McCleary Craggs, WA  • Deception Craggs, WA  • Equinox, WA  • Farside, WA  • Gold Bar, WA  • Icicle Canyon, WA  • Lower Town Wall, WA  • Mount Washington Craggs, WA  • Okanogan National Forest, WA  • Ryan’s Wall, WA  • Substation, WA  • Wayne’s World, WA  • Devil’s Lake, WI  • Bridge Buttress, WV  • Hawks Nest State Park, WV  • Seneca, WV  • Summersville Lake, WV  • Fossil Hill, WY  • Fremont Canyon, WY  • Hohoback Shield, WY  • Rodeo Wall, WY  • Sinks Canyon, WY  • Ten Sleep Canyon, WY  • Wild Iris, WY
Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) in Climbing

Access Fund’s JEDI work continues to mature in both complexity and scope as we pursue two guiding principles: to support the incredible work and vision of the many grassroots affinity and advocacy groups in our community and to foster a deep and meaningful commitment to the well-being of our staff and board, on both the organizational and individual levels. Years of work went into our efforts to close the gender gap in workplace satisfaction, and our progress so far marks our biggest success this year. Other successes include new benchmarks in diversity across the organization and new JEDI initiatives that utilize everything from GIS data to traditional Indigenous knowledge to create stronger and deeper understandings of how to respect and care for the land and each other.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Closing the Gender Experience Gap

Access Fund’s first workplace experience assessment in 2019 showed a clear gender gap in workplace satisfaction—on average, staff who identified as women felt less respected and fulfilled than their colleagues who identified as men. Fixing that inequity has been our number one internal priority. Over the last three years, Access Fund implemented a combination of changes to internal policies and practices, including sustained organization-wide training in JEDI principles, intentional hiring and career advancement, and balancing the gender ratio on the senior leadership team. These changes have brought the levels of satisfaction for staff who identify as women and men to the same high level across the organization.

OUR 2021 WORK AT A GLANCE

• 850 hours invested in JEDI work in 2021.
• 35% of staff identify as people of color, up from 0% in 2018.
• 40% of senior leadership are women, up from 5% in 2018.
• 40% of senior leadership identify as people of color, up from 0% in 2018.
Protect Public Lands

Nearly 60% of climbing areas in the U.S. are located on federally managed public lands, which face threats that range from raging wildfires and other impacts of climate change to irresponsible energy extraction and attacks on environmental protections. Access Fund has the largest climbing policy team in America, representing the collective voice and interests of climbers to protect public lands. Working with lawmakers in Washington, D.C., and land managers across the country, we made significant advances in 2021, moving the needle to protect public lands and the exceptional climbing experiences they provide.

OUR 2021 WORK AT A GLANCE

• 9,289 actions taken by climbing advocates.
• 8 key pieces of federal and state legislation advanced.
• 32 management plans include hard-won protections for climbing.

Bears Ears Restored

Bears Ears National Monument is a sacred landscape to Native American Tribes and draws climbers from around the world. In 2017, President Trump enacted an order to reduce the size of the monument by 85% to open the area to mining and energy extraction. Just days later, Access Fund filed a lawsuit to block the reduction. While the lawsuit was awaiting a decision in Washington, D.C, District Court, President Biden was elected and Access Fund worked with the new administration to advocate for the reinstatement of Bears Ears National Monument and protections for climbing. In October 2021, Access Fund was invited to the White House to watch President Biden sign a proclamation that restored the size of the monument. For years, Access Fund has worked in close collaboration with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, as well as other conservation groups in its strategy to defend Bears Ears National Monument. Access Fund is thrilled to celebrate this victory alongside the Native American and conservation communities.
Restore Climbing Areas

The need to restore climbing areas is greater than ever. As the climbing community grows with every passing year, we must redouble our efforts to take care of the places we love. The Access Fund Conservation Teams traveled the country to help local climbers and land managers restore heavily impacted climbing areas and install infrastructure that will keep them sustainable for generations to come. Despite the ups and downs of the pandemic, most local climbing organizations still found ways to get some amazing conservation work done.

OUR 2021 WORK AT A GLANCE

• 2 Conservation Teams on the road restoring climbing areas.
• 33 climbing areas improved.
• 7,506 hours of volunteer time harnessed to restore climbing areas.
• 23,332 feet of sustainable trail constructed or restored.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Restoring Bridge Buttress, New River Gorge, West Virginia

With easy roadside access and an array of classic routes, Bridge Buttress is one of the most popular crags in the New River Gorge, which also makes it one of the most in need of restoration and stabilization. In the spring of 2021, the Access Fund Conservation Team continued its work there in partnership with the New River Alliance of Climbers, the National Park Service, and the Appalachian Conservation Corps on much-needed restoration projects. Employing a host of advanced trailwork techniques to quarry, shape, move, and place large stone blocks and timbers, the crews removed a rapidly deteriorating set of wooden stairs and replaced it with a solid, sustainable stone staircase. The crews also reinforced several belay platforms and staging areas to protect tree roots and give space for native vegetation to thrive. This comprehensive restoration project will bring Bridge Buttress up to the high standard it deserves as the premier climbing area in one of our most iconic climbing destinations and newest national parks.
Buy Threatened Climbing

Some of our most iconic climbing areas—from the Red River Gorge to Jailhouse Rock—are located on private land. And when a privately owned climbing area is put up for sale, we must act quickly to ensure that access is not lost forever. Access Fund provides local climbing communities with the horsepower to swiftly protect threatened climbing areas, as well as purchase brand-new climbing areas for public access. We provide loans, grants, and acquisition expertise to place threatened land in climber-friendly hands.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

**Climbers Buy New Cliff in Tennessee: Woodcock Cove**

Woodcock Cove sits high on the rocky, western rim of Sequatchie Valley, a largely rural area dotted with small towns but dominated by undeveloped agricultural and forest lands. With the help of an Access Fund loan, Southeastern Climbers Coalition (SCC) acquired the property in 2021, permanently protecting 64 acres of undeveloped land and approximately 60 existing routes, with room for 100+ more on the property’s full mile of sandstone cliffline. The SCC’s permanent acquisition also preserves the forest land, streams, important wildlife habitat, and outstanding scenic views of the area. The project is a first step that gives SCC a solid foothold to further expand public access in the area, which is home to a mecca of privately owned and untapped natural resources.

*Image: Climbing the freestanding tower at Woodcock Cove, Tennessee, ancestral lands of Cherokee, Shawamwaki/Shawnee, and Yuchi. © Caleb Timmerman*
Replace Aging Bolts

Bolts have been a critical component of the climbing safety system for more than 80 years. However, a huge number of bolts placed during the ‘80s and ‘90s are reaching their end of life, and the stories of bolt failures are increasing. In the last 20 years, there have been significant advancements in bolt technology and replacement techniques, yet a startling number of old, substandard bolts remain. At Access Fund, we help local communities replace aging bolts using sustainable materials and practices to ensure that new bolts are safe and have the longest life span possible, helping to reduce impacts to the rock.

OUR 2021 WORK AT A GLANCE

- $15,000 awarded to local climbers to replace fixed anchors.
- Over 2,300 bad bolts replaced.
- 45 bolt replacement tools put in the hands of volunteers.

Rebolting the Obed & Black Mountain

Access Fund’s Anchor Replacement Fund helped fund the epic five-year mission of the East Tennessee Climbers Coalition to rebolt the entire Obed and Black Mountain climbing areas. The project wrapped up in 2021, clocking in with somewhere north of 3,500 aging bolts replaced with modern hardware. It’s an incredible accomplishment no matter how you look at it, and we’re proud to have supported not only such an ambitious project but also the kind of local climbers with the vision and commitment to carry out such a long-term project.
Mentor Responsible Climbers

We envision a world where climbers are also stewards of the land. As climbers, we have a personal stake in the health and integrity of our outdoor landscapes—without them, we have no place to climb. But just loving our climbing areas is not enough. That’s why a large part of Access Fund’s mission is to help climbers understand the sensitivities of each unique climbing environment and provide the knowledge and tools to help them reduce their impacts. In 2021, we stepped up our education efforts by taking the model of human-presence education programs from Yosemite and Joshua Tree national parks and applying them to Access Fund’s own Climber Stewards program.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Indian Creek Climber Stewards

Access Fund deployed two Climber Stewards on the ground at Indian Creek in Southeast Utah in the fall of 2021. The program is designed to provide visiting climbers with information and resources to help them minimize their footprints at this hugely popular and sensitive area. Land managers across the country are struggling to bring on permanent staff to help educate and manage impacts on the ground, and Access Fund sees this as a critical gap that our community can help fill. Taking an active role in managing our own impacts and creating a culture of conservation within the climbing community will lead to long-term positive improvements on the climbing environment and future advocacy efforts. Upon seeing the success of the inaugural season, Access Fund resolved to make the Climber Stewards a seasonal fixture in the Creek along with expanding the program to more climbing areas nationwide.
Support Local Advocacy

When an access issue occurs in your backyard, who will be there to help? The first and best line of defense is almost always the local climbers who are familiar with the area and the issues. That’s why a critical piece of Access Fund’s work is inspiring and organizing local climbers to join together and be effective advocates for climbing access and conservation. 2021 was another stellar year for local climbing advocacy—a powerful movement is gaining momentum, driven by advocates who are committed to the work of protecting their climbing areas.

2021 Climbing Conservation Grants

Our Climbing Conservation Grants Program awards funds to local climbing organizations and other partners working to protect and conserve climbing areas around the country.
Major Trail Reroute by Salt Lake Climbers Alliance

Lone Peak Cirque, a prominent feature that can be seen from north Salt Lake City to Provo, Utah, attracts both climbers and hikers. The proximity to a major urban area and the growth of climbing in the last decade have pushed this approach trail to its limits, leaving it in dire need of rerouting. Access Fund awarded Salt Lake Climbers Alliance funding to help build 4,000 feet of sustainable trail, redirecting hikers around some of the steepest, least safe terrain on the trail.
By the Numbers

2021 was another year of growth for Access Fund. Total revenue increased 13% to $4.3M, allowing Access Fund to continue to protect and conserve America’s climbing.

REVENUE
- Individuals, Foundations & Organizations.................. $1,229,000
- Member Dues............................................................... $460,000
- Corporate Support..................................................... $1,564,000
- Stewardship Contract Revenue & Project Funding......... $384,000
- Events........................................................................... $125,000
- In-Kind Contributions............................................... $106,000
- Other Income............................................................. $439,000
Total............................................................................... $4,307,000

EXPENSES
- Development.............................................................. $477,000
- General and Administration....................................... $304,000
- Program Expenses
  - Stewardship.......................................................... $929,000
  - Policy...................................................................... $781,000
  - Acquisition & Access............................................. $263,000
  - Local Support......................................................... $369,000
Total............................................................................... $3,123,000

HIGHLIGHTS
- 75% of revenue spent on mission-related programs.
- $929,000 spent on stewarding climbing areas.
- $781,000 spent on policy initiatives.
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Supporting Partners

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
Chrysler Group LLC
Omaze, LLC
REI

**DIAMOND - $25,000+**
adidas Five Ten
Backcountry
Outdoor Research

**PLATINUM PLUS - $15,000+**
VF Corporation, The North Face

**PLATINUM - $10,000+**
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Touchstone Climbing Inc
Trango
YETI

**GOLD - $5,000+**
American Alpine Club
Arizona Wilderness Brewing
Escape Climbing
Metolius
Microsend
Parks Project

**SILVER - $2,500+**
Pacific Edge Climbing Gym
Petzl America
Planet Rock
SCARPA North America
Variner

Yosemite, California, ancestral lands of Me-Wuk. © L. Renee Blount
Individual and Foundation Donors

Every contribution Access Fund receives helps in the fight to protect and conserve America’s climbing. These individuals and organizations made especially generous contributions in 2021. We do our utmost to ensure that all donors are recognized properly. If you find an error on this list, please accept our apologies and contact development@accessfund.org to make a correction. Thank you for your support.

$250,000+
Heath Dieckert and Evening Galvin

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Bouldering in Mammoth Lakes area of Eastern Sierras, California, ancestral lands of Northern Paiute and Mono. Photo courtesy of © Kyle Queener.