

# VERTICAL TIMES

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## 25 Epic Saves

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Curious what we were able to achieve with your support last year? Check out our digital annual report at [www.accessfund.org/annualreport](http://www.accessfund.org/annualreport).

In this issue of the *Vertical Times*, we are taking a moment to reflect on 25 years of climbing access and conservation work. We had a great time reconnecting with our founders, former staffers, board members, and volunteers to identify 25 Epic Saves that have had the greatest impact on American climbing over the last quarter century. Wining the list was a brutal process, so if your favorite save didn't make the list, please forgive us. As a community, we have a lot to celebrate. None of these saves would have been possible without the help of our members, partners, and incredibly dedicated network of local climbing organizations (LCOs) across the country.

We're also excited to showcase the work of an incredible photographer in this issue—Kiliii Yuyan. One of the things we love about Kiliii's composite style is that it elevates and idealizes the climbing experience. In his art, I see the natural world not exactly as it is, but as I might remember it after a perfect day on the rock. In an age when our wild landscapes are under constant threat, his photos remind me of an ideal that hangs in the balance.

One such threatened place is the iconic Indian Creek and the surrounding areas known collectively as Bears Ears. There is a battle going on in Washington, DC, over how to manage and protect these lands. On the table is a National Monument designation that would protect the landscape but that could result in additional restrictions on climbing access, as well as a controversial piece of legislation called the Public Lands Initiative that could result in unacceptable impacts to the environment.

Both of these alternatives would not only affect climbing at the Creek but also determine how an incredibly important and vast tract of largely undeveloped federal land will be managed for generations. Of course, climbers are not the only people interested in the outcome. Conservation groups; the oil and gas industry; other recreation interests; a tribal coalition of Hopi, Navajo, Ute Mountain Ute, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ute tribes; and many other stakeholders are weighing in. It is a fascinating issue to me, and one that Access Fund continues to be involved in to ensure that climbers' interests are represented and that the area is ultimately protected.

At the time we went to print, the future of Bears Ears was still up in the air, but a lot can happen in a couple of weeks. Keep an eye on our website for the latest news.

See you out there,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brady Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Brady Robinson  
Access Fund Executive Director

P.S. Join us in Westminster, CO, on October 22 to celebrate our 25th anniversary! See the back cover for more information or visit [www.accessfund.org/25years](http://www.accessfund.org/25years)

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### Climbing Stewardship in Texas

Central Texas Mountaineers (CTM) continues to lead the way for climbing stewardship in the Lone Star State. In March, CTM and the Access Fund-Jeep Conservation Team partnered for an Adopt a Crag event at Reimer's Ranch, where a crew of volunteers built stone stairs and added erosion control measures to the access trail. The Adopt a Crag was part of Austin Parks Foundation's citywide "It's My Park Day," a massive annual stewardship event that engages thousands of volunteers in stewardship work across 115 parks. Nice work, CTM!

### Mid-Atlantic Gets a New Bouldering Area

The Mid Atlantic Climbers (MAC) and Access Fund applaud Catocin Mountain Park in Thurmont, Maryland, for opening the park to bouldering. An hour from the Washington, DC, and Baltimore metro regions, Catocin Mountain Park offers a large community of urban climbers a nearby option to escape from the city and get outside on our public lands. MAC and Access Fund worked with the park to shape the new policies, and we look forward to a strong partnership with the park that will involve stewardship projects and education on responsible climbing.



### Advocates Convene for Second Fixed Anchors Conference

In April, Access Fund and Petzl teamed up to bring together climbing advocates, land managers, outdoor industry professionals, route developers, and volunteers who are actively managing and replacing fixed anchors around the country. The group of 60+ attendees addressed aging climbing bolts and outlined a vision for sustainable fixed anchor maintenance and replacement in the United States. Highlights included best practices from local climbing groups, new techniques in bolt replacement, and an update on UIAA's upcoming hardware standards. For conference proceedings, visit [www.accessfund.org/ffa](http://www.accessfund.org/ffa).



## LCO 101: Which insurance is right for your LCO?

Insurance is one of many risk management tools that local climbing organizations can use to support their work. While it's always best to seek qualified legal counsel, here are some basic guidelines to help determine which type of policy is right for your LCO.

**General liability (GL) insurance:** If your LCO regularly organizes stewardship projects and community events, land managers and event venues may require event insurance or a GL policy. The most common coverage requirement is \$1 million per occurrence and \$2 million aggregate. If your LCO owns climbing areas or holds recreational agreements for public use, Access Fund strongly recommends a GL policy to protect the LCO from potential claims (frivolous or not) by visitors and other parties entering the property. Not all policies are the same—some cover climbing activities but not commercial guiding or instruction. Make sure your policy is worth the paper it's written on.

**Director & officer (D&O) insurance:** D&O provides coverage in the event that legal action is brought against a board director for alleged wrongful acts. If your LCO has significant financial assets, D&O can protect the organization if a board member breaches his or her duties and action is required against the individual or organization. A common myth is that D&O insurance protects an LCO's board members from liability. However, a GL policy is often the preferred tool for protection from liability claims. In addition, some states have legal provisions that help protect volunteer nonprofit board directors.

**Where do you start?** Access Fund can help your LCO navigate the ins and outs of insurance. For assistance, contact [localsupport@accessfund.org](mailto:localsupport@accessfund.org).

# Removing Tick Marks



Chalk was introduced onto the climbing scene in the 1950s, and today you are likely to find tick marks on everything from boulders to big wall free routes. And there is no shortage of opinion on chalk etiquette. While the majority of climbing areas in the United States allow the use of chalk, it does create a visual impact, and many land managers are beginning to take notice.

### Here are some tips to reduce your impact the next time you climb:

- Brush off tick marks after each session, especially on overhanging routes and in drier climates where rain is less likely to wash them off.
- Clean up spills if your chalk bag or pot tips over.
- Research local ethics and regulations before you climb, and act accordingly.
- Organize or participate in a chalk clean up at your local area.

In some area, such as Arches National Park in Utah and Garden of the Gods in Colorado, white chalk is prohibited by land management agencies due to its visual impact. It's also a topic of frequent discussion with land managers and stakeholders at Hueco Tanks. If climbers self-regulate, we will experience fewer regulations and preserve the climbing experience for everyone. ■

# THE INSIDE SCOOP: SMITH ROCK

Smith Rock State Park, OR | © Elena Suvorova

If you're like most climbers, you pore over guidebooks for weeks or even months when planning a climbing trip. You educate yourself on routes, descents, gear, and camping. But what about the local ethics, issues, and challenges at your destination crag? Part of being a responsible climber is knowing how to tread lightly—both socially and environmentally. In the *Inside Scoop* series,

we connect you with local climbing access leaders at some of the country's top climbing destinations for valuable insight into local ethics and issues.

**Destination: SMITH ROCK, OR**

**Local expert: IAN CALDWELL, BOARD MEMBER, SMITH ROCK GROUP**

## What challenges does the Smith Rock climbing community face now?

The word is out about Smith Rock. While climbing visitors have increased at a moderate rate, hiking activity has gone through the roof over the last two years. Most weekends in spring and fall, the parking lot is completely full and you have to walk a mile just to get to the park. This increased use has affected trails and hillsides.

## Got any beta on parking?

On weekends in the spring and fall, it is best to arrive before 10 a.m. or after 3 p.m. to find parking. The park is actively working to create an overflow parking lot in a grass field, which would be used only when the rest of the parking is full.

## How crowded does the climbing at Smith get?

We do see overcrowding on the easier routes. When temps are cooler and the days are shorter, climbers tend to stay in the main areas. You can avoid the heavy crowds by heading to the Backside, Marsupials, or the Student Wall. It's a bit more walking to get there, but only a fraction of the time you will spend waiting in line at the more popular areas.

## What's the camping situation?

The Bivy site in the park has walk-in tent sites and showers. Park staff just installed a charging station for

phones, laptops, etc. These sites fill up quickly on busy weekends. Keep in mind that you can't sleep in your vehicle at the Bivy site. Skull Hollow Campground is about 10 miles east on United States Forest Service (USFS) land and is better for camping in your rig.

## What's the best way to dispose of human waste at Smith?

Smith Rock has a number of composting toilets, and park staff does an awesome job at keeping them clean and removing the waste. You'd be blown away by how much effort the rangers put into managing these toilets—use them!

## How is the relationship between climbers and the land managers?

Pretty good. Climbing is fully accepted at Smith Rock. The park is going to be working on a Master Plan that will govern all recreation uses in the park. Climbers will be very involved in the planning process, and we expect a good outcome. We also host an annual Spring Thing event with the park. We sit down with park staff and determine different projects to work on. The park can only get so much done, but we can go in and blitz a ton of projects in a single day. This year, we had 260 volunteers and we helped purchase about \$4,000 in materials such as pressure-treated wood and rebar to build steps.

## Any words of wisdom for folks visiting Smith for the first time?

Remember that there are a lot of people at Smith Rock—climbers, hikers, bikers, anglers, birdwatchers, horseback riders. Consider how your actions will affect others. Dogs off leash, excessive yelling, radios, large groups, and going off trail all have huge impacts and are frowned upon by locals.

## What projects are you currently working on at Smith?

We are starting to deal with aging anchors. Plated steel will last around 20-30 years at Smith, depending on how much moisture they see. Most of the bolting from the 80s is right at that 30-year mark. The American Safe Climbing Association (ASCA) has been helping by providing bolts and glue for replacement. Smith Rock Group has started installing steel carabiners at anchors for convenience, speed in cleaning routes, and safety. These efforts take a tremendous amount of funds and volunteer labor, and we will be taking more of a lead role in collecting funds and replacing bolts.

## How can folks support Smith Rock Group?

Visit our website [www.smithrockgroup.org](http://www.smithrockgroup.org) for volunteer opportunities or to donate. ■



# NAVIGATING ACCESS AT CITY OF ROCKS AND CASTLE ROCKS

The internationally renowned climbing at City of Rocks and Castle Rocks in Southern Idaho sits amidst a patchwork of complicated land ownership and historical and cultural resources. Climbing in this region dates back to the 1960s, with varying levels of legal access.

Today, climbing access and regulations in the region vary greatly and can be tricky for climbers to navigate, as the boundary between land ownership is not always clear. Use the provided table and map to help guide your access decisions. Access Fund is actively working with all four land managers on climbing management strategies.

| CLIMBING AREA  | LAND OWNER     | CLIMBING ACCESS | SPECIAL REGULATIONS  |
|--|----------------|-----------------|--|
| City of Rocks  | NPS            | Allowed         | Areas along the California Trail closed to protect cultural and natural resources. Developers must submit applications for each new route.                                   |
| Castle Rocks State Park                                      | ID State Parks | Allowed         | Select areas closed to protect cultural and natural resources. Developers must receive orientation and a permit prior to installing new hardware or establishing new routes. |
| Crags west of Bracksieck's Pillar and north of Upper Brother | BLM            | Prohibited      | Closed to all climbing.  |
| Crags northwest of Graham Peak and north of Tidal Wave Wall  | USFS           | Allowed         | Climbing permitted. Fixed hardware (bolts) prohibited.   |



# 25 EPIC SAVES

In celebration of Access Fund's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we invite you to look back with us on 25 Epic Saves that have helped shape the course of American climbing. These victories would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of local advocates and climbing organizations.

## 01 MOUNT ST. HELENS, WA

Long after the mid-1980s eruptions of Mount St. Helens in Washington, the USFS had still not reopened the mountain to climbing. Jim Angel, a legendary trail builder and early founder of Access Fund, had been playing it by the book with the Forest Service. The USFS had been involved in a planning process for two or three years, and it was all finished, but they would not open the mountain to climbing. Finally, in 1990, frustrated by the lack of progress, Jim planned an act of civil disobedience. He wrote a letter to the USFS telling them that on a mid-summer day—he gave them the date, which was about six months out—he was going to climb Mount Saint Helens. To provoke them into either arresting him or finally issuing a decision, he just told them, “I am going to climb that mountain.” He sent copies to all the local newspapers, and it worked! By summer, the USFS issued the plan and Mount Saint Helens reopened to climbing.

## 02 GUNKS, NY

In 1992, a now iconic piece of private land along the Shawangunk Ridge in New York hit the real estate market. Known as the “Browne Parcel,” the land included some of the Near Trapp’s finest lines and the cherished Millbrook Ridge Trail. Because the land was just an hour from New York City, developers were actively looking to build new homes in the area, putting a key piece of Gunks climbing at risk. Unable to stand by while

residential development encroached on one of America’s best crags, Access Fund signed an option to purchase the Browne Parcel, in partnership with Friends of the Shawangunks. The option agreement gave the climbing community 12 months to raise the funds to buy the property, or it would be sold to the highest bidder. Access Fund led a successful fundraising campaign, securing our first-ever grant from The Conservation Alliance to purchase the property and build a new parking area and trail. In 1993, the property was deeded to Mohonk Preserve for long-term protection and climbing access.



**ACCESS HEROES:** The Conservation Alliance, Friends of the Shawangunks, Mohonk Preserve, Open Space Institute



## 03 HUECO TANKS, TX

In December 1992, Hueco Tanks State Park in Texas closed to all recreational activity. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had noticed a dramatic increase in impacts at the premier bouldering destination and closed the park until it could address these impacts. Some local Native American tribes and archaeologists recommended eliminating all bouldering and recreational activities in the park, and climbers panicked. Access Fund established a relationship with park officials and worked with them and local climbers to implement balanced solutions that reduced climber impacts while allowing access. The park reopened to bouldering two weeks later. This compromise was eventually codified in the Hueco Tanks 2000 Public Use

Plan, which is still in effect. Access Fund continues to work with Hueco Tanks State Park and the Climbers of Hueco Tanks Coalition to balance recreational use with cultural preservation.

 **ACCESS HERO:** Climbers of Hueco Tanks Coalition



Hueco Tanks, TX | © Merrick Ales

 **FOSTER FALLS, TN**

In 1994, the popular Foster Falls sport climbing destination in Tennessee was threatened by a logging operation. Located across a patchwork of privately owned land in the Fiery Gizzard area of the Cumberland Plateau, Foster Falls was one of the first sport climbing areas in the region, boasting over 150 high-quality sandstone routes. The area is also home to many rare species and important plant and wildlife habitats, making it a high-priority conservation project. Southeast climbers quickly came together and began a campaign to protect the area permanently. Access Fund launched a letter-writing campaign to pressure the private landowner not to clear-cut the area. And Southeastern Climbers Coalition, Friends of South Cumberland, and South Cumberland State Park banded together in a citizen advocacy campaign that eventually convinced the landowner to donate the property to Tennessee State Parks for permanent protection and climbing access. Six years later, the same partners reunited to purchase another portion of cliff line that came under threat, adding it to South Cumberland State Park and permanently protecting the access trail and cliff line.

 **ACCESS HEROES:** Southeastern Climbers Coalition, Friends of South Cumberland, South Cumberland State Park, The Conservation Alliance

 **RUMNEY, NH**

Rumney was in the early years of becoming a sport climbing mecca, when in 1993 a 36-acre parcel of private land at the climbing area went up for sale. New England climbers were suddenly in danger of losing popular crags, including The Meadows, 5.8 Crag, and Monsters. Loss of this area to development would have changed the future of Rumney forever. The neighboring White Mountain National Forest tried to buy this critical holding, but the landowner was holding out for market value. The USFS came to Access Fund for help, and in 1994 we purchased the tract of private land. Local climbers formed the Rumney Climbers Association (RCA) to raise funds, build the main parking lot, and complete trail improvements. A year later, Access Fund transferred the property to the USFS for long-term protection as part of White Mountain National Forest. Twenty-two years later, in early 2016, the final set of privately owned crags at Rumney—the Northwest Crags—went up for sale. Access Fund loaned RCA the funds to secure an option agreement, giving climbers the exclusive right to purchase the Northwest Crags. RCA has a year to fundraise. Help protect this New England sport climbing gem by donating today at [www.climbrumney.com](http://www.climbrumney.com).

 **ACCESS HEROES:** US Forest Service, Rumney Climbers Association



Rumney, NH | © Lee Hansche

 **DEVILS TOWER, WY**

In the early 1990s, climbers faced the possibility of severe restrictions and loss of access to the iconic climbing at Devils Tower. Considered sacred to a number of Native American tribes, Devils Tower is used for ceremonial purposes, and the tribes were pushing the National Park Service (NPS) to prohibit or restrict climbing access. Access Fund teamed up with local climbers to gain the trust of NPS staff and advocate for a balanced solution that would preserve climbing access and Native American values. For over two years,

Access Fund negotiated with the NPS, submitting legal interpretations, climber testimony, and comment letters. In 1995, we came to an agreement: NPS would limit the restrictions to June, the most sacred month of Native American ceremonies, and Access Fund would support and promote a voluntary climbing closure during June. This voluntary closure is still in place and is an excellent example of climbers showing deference to the spiritual significance of Devils Tower to the local tribes.



**ACCESS HEROES:** Bob Archibold, Carl Coy, Dennis Horning, Charlie Anderson, Hollis Marriot



Devils Tower, WY | © Jason Patrick Ross



### GOLDEN CLIFFS, CO

In the early 1990s, climbing at the popular Golden Cliffs (aka North Table Mtn) in Colorado became contentious, as neighbors in the suburban foothills complained of parking issues and involved the city council. Private landowner Mayford Peery had allowed climbing for nearly 30 years, but concerned with liability and the growing neighborhood tension, he closed public access. Access Fund reached out to Peery to help him with a long-term plan to reopen Golden Cliffs. In an unexpected act of generosity, Peery offered to donate the 29-acre property to Access Fund. We accepted, and after hundreds of hours of donated volunteer time and legal counsel, two parcel donations, subsequent annexation, extensive public planning, rezoning, trailhead infrastructure, and a new trail to the cliffs, the Golden Cliffs Preserve was born. In 2014, Access Fund donated Golden Cliffs Preserve to the climbing-friendly Jefferson County Open Space to carry forward Peery's legacy of protection and climbing access.



**ACCESS HEROES:** Mayford Peery, Jefferson County Open Space



### WICHITA MTNS WILDLIFE REFUGE, OK

In the early 1990s, Oklahoma climbers nearly lost access to the outstanding climbing at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma. Nestled in a region with few other climbing resources, the Refuge offers excellent granite in a remote wilderness setting, and losing access would have been devastating to local climbers. Managed by US Fish and Wildlife, the Refuge was not convinced that climbing fit within their mission to protect wildlife, and they were considering an outright ban. Local climbers established a relationship with the Refuge staff and began advocating that climbing and wildlife protection could coexist. Access Fund rallied local climbers to form an LCO—Wichita Mountain Climbers Coalition (WMCC)—that could assist the Refuge with climbing management, conservation projects, trail restoration, and fixed anchor maintenance. After an environmental assessment of climbing and years of divisive and contentious debate at the local, state, and federal level over the value and compatibility of rock climbing on the Refuge, we came to an agreement. In 1995, WMCC and the Refuge signed a Memorandum of Understanding that outlined a mutually beneficial working relationship between the local climbing community and the Refuge. Climbing at the Refuge remained open, and WMCC is still a critical partner in climbing management.



**ACCESS HERO:** Wichita Mountain Climbers Coalition



### USFS WILDERNESS CLIMBING

In 1997, the United States Forest Service banned all bolts in USFS Wilderness on the grounds that bolts violated the Wilderness Act of 1964. This national ban affected nearly half of the Wilderness climbing routes in the country and set a dangerous precedent for other public land managers, making it one of the greatest threats in American rock climbing history. A massive public outcry asserting the necessity of fixed anchors for climbing ensued, followed by debate over whether fixed anchors were even legal. Access Fund lobbied Congress to lift the ban because it was an inappropriate interpretation of the Wilderness Act and put climbers' safety at risk. We were able to get a Senate subcommittee to challenge the ban, and a rider to the USFS budget halted the national-scale ban until public input could be heard and the issue could be analyzed. With the immediate threat diffused, Access Fund continued to apply pressure to the USFS to formally allow fixed anchors in Wilderness. The USFS determined that a "negotiated rulemaking process" was necessary to recommend a

national policy to replace the ban. Although this process did not reach a consensus, it recommended that climbing be considered an appropriate activity in Wilderness and that some use and placement of fixed anchors is acceptable. The USFS has yet to issue a national-level Wilderness fixed anchor policy (Access Fund continues to work on this issue). However, the BLM and NPS have issued Wilderness policies, based on the negotiated rulemaking recommendations, stating that climbing is an appropriate activity and that occasional use of fixed anchors does not violate the Wilderness Act of 1964.



Linville Gorge Wilderness, NC | © Shannon Millsaps

## 10 CASTLE ROCKS, ID

In 1999, Castle Rock Ranch (known today as Castle Rock State Park) in Idaho was closed by the private landowner. Access Fund partnered with The Conservation Fund to buy Castle Rock Ranch, providing funding to enable their purchase and helping them find a long-term owner and steward for Castle Rocks. Access Fund provided Congressional testimony and helped broker a complex series of land transfers from The Conservation Fund to the National Park Service and eventually to the State of Idaho to be managed for recreation as Castle Rock State Park, which opened the area to climbing. Access Fund is still active in the region and recently formed a Climbing Resource Advisory Group to help Castle Rocks and City of Rocks staff with climbing management. See page 7 for guidance on navigating climbing access in this region.

**ACCESS HEROES:** The Conservation Fund, National Park Service, Idaho State Parks

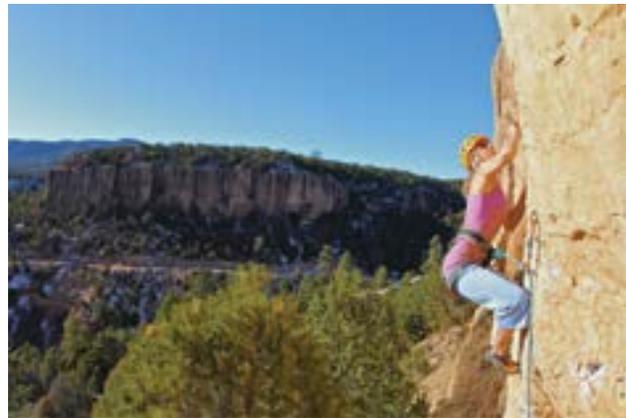


Castle Rocks, ID | © Wallace Keck

## 11 SHELF ROAD, CO

Climbers began exploring and unlocking the extensive limestone cliffs of Shelf Road in Colorado in the early 1980s but hit a roadblock in 1986 when a private landowner closed his property to climbing, denying access to the popular Cactus Cliff, Spiney Ridge, and portions of the Gym, Vault, Gem, and Cash Wall. The area remained off limits for 13 years until the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) initiated negotiations with the landowner to acquire this critical inholding. But the cost of the property far exceeded what the BLM could pay, and the area looked to be closed indefinitely. In 1998, the BLM asked Access Fund for help. We purchased the tract of private land, held the property for a year to design and build a trail around the base of the cliffs, and then sold it to the BLM at a reduced cost. The acquisition secured over 100 acres of cliff line and created the opportunity for climbers to develop more than 200 routes. This save is an excellent example of a land management agency collaborating with climbers to open an incredible area to recreational access.

**ACCESS HERO:** Bureau of Land Management



Shelf Road, CO | © Trask Bradbury

## 12 RED RIVER GORGE, KY

In 2000, Daniel Boone National Forest—home to some of the most historic and popular climbing areas in the iconic Red River Gorge of Kentucky—threatened to close climbing across the entire forest. Forest managers were specifically concerned about climber impacts to archeological and cultural resources at the historic Military Wall. This kind of closure would have set a harmful precedent for climbing in National Forests and public lands in the Red. Access Fund joined forces with Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition to build a relationship with forest staff and identify climbing management strategies and stewardship projects that

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would minimize climber impacts. Access Fund provided grant funding to allow the Forest Service to conduct archeological site assessments, as well as funding for trail building and restoration at Military Wall. Working together, climbers avoided a forest-wide climbing ban, and the threat helped galvanize the new Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition and set up a partnership with the USFS that continues to this day.



**ACCESS HERO:** Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition



### CASTLETON TOWER, UT

In 2000, a 224-acre tract of land at the base of Castleton Tower in southeast Utah was on the auction block. Home to the historic bivy site and trailhead access to the tower, this property was owned by the State Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA), which was auctioning it to the highest bidder. A developer was first in line to buy the property for an extensive subdivision that would have blocked access to the iconic tower. Climbers from around the world are drawn to Castleton Tower to scale its 400 feet of Wingate sandstone, which is home to the Kor-Ingalls Route, one of North America's 50 Classic Climbs. Losing access to Castleton Tower would have been a huge blow for the American climbing community. Access Fund teamed up with Utah Open Lands to save Castleton Tower, providing technical expertise and a grant to assist with the purchase. Utah Open Lands acquired the property and still manages it today. Access Fund and local climbers support the area with stewardship efforts.



**ACCESS HERO:** Utah Open Lands



Castleton Tower, UT | © Oscity



### BOAT ROCK, GA

In 2001, housing developers blew up a number of popular boulders at Boat Rock, an urban bouldering oasis minutes from downtown Atlanta. The boulder field was days from being destroyed by a planned subdivision, when a rallying cry went out to the southeast climbing community. Southeastern Climbers Coalition

(SCC) reached out to Access Fund, and we provided acquisition expertise and grant funds for a down payment on the boulder field. SCC acquired the boulder field and saved it from further destruction. This was SCC's first climbing area purchase, and it set a new course for climbing advocacy in the southeast—protect climbing areas by buying them. This partnership solidified the relationship between Access Fund and the SCC, and we provided additional grant funds to help pay off the property, ensuring that Boat Rock stays in climber-friendly hands forever.



**ACCESS HERO:** Southeastern Climbers Coalition



### OBED, TN

In 2001, climbing was developing rapidly in the Obed Wild & Scenic River area of Tennessee, home to hundreds of boulder, sport, and traditional climbs on fantastic sandstone. Managed by the National Park Service, the Obed was becoming one of the most popular climbing areas in the region, and yet climbing was entirely unregulated. The NPS grew concerned over the increasing number of climbers and began discussing closures and/or restrictions across the Obed and Clear Creek region. Local climbers brought in Access Fund to help develop a relationship with NPS staff and draft a climbing management plan that would balance access with protection of natural and cultural resources. This collaboration resulted in a climbing management plan that the NPS, local climbers, and Access Fund all supported, with virtually no restrictions on climbing. This threat brought the local community together to form the East Tennessee Climbers Coalition, which maintains an excellent relationship with NPS staff and helps with ongoing stewardship work in the area.



**ACCESS HEROES:** East Tennessee Climbers Coalition, National Park Service



Obed Wild & Scenic River, TN | © Melinda Fawver

## 16 NEW RIVER GORGE, WV

In 2002, climbers faced extensive closures at New River Gorge, including the famous Endless Wall, to accommodate potential peregrine falcon nest sites. While Access Fund agrees that rock climbing can sometimes disrupt cliff-nesting birds, no active nest sites had been identified. Extensive closures based on speculation would have set a terrible precedent where land managers could implement closures with no resource-based justification. The New River Alliance of Climbers called in Access Fund to help work with the National Park Service on a better management strategy. Access Fund urged the NPS to implement a monitoring program in lieu of a closure to determine whether, and where, peregrines were nesting at The New. The park agreed, and Access Fund worked with park staff to develop a climbing management plan that legitimized climbing and outlined a balanced policy for raptor habitat and climbing closures. We continue to work with the NPS to allow expanded route development.

 **ACCESS HEROES:** New River Alliance of Climbers, National Park Service

## 17 LAUREL KNOB, NC

Laurel Knob is the tallest unbroken cliff face in the East and was long regarded as the South's greatest and most forbidden climbing secret. It was privately owned and bordered by million-dollar homes, but an intrepid few had established routes there over many decades. Few climbers knew of its existence. In 2005, Carolina Climbers Coalition (CCC) made a move to acquire the property—their first land acquisition—and came to Access Fund for help. Access Fund provided three grants totaling \$25,000 to help CCC take ownership of the property. CCC's purchase garnered extraordinary support from across the country and even around the world. Laurel Knob remains one of the largest and most expensive private climbing area acquisition projects in the country. This project was the impetus for Access Fund to create our revolving loan program, the Climbing Conservation Loan Program, which gives local climbing organizations like CCC quick access to cash and transaction expertise to secure new or threatened climbing areas. CCC later used the loan program to purchase Rumbling Bald's West Side boulders.

 **ACCESS HERO:** Carolina Climbers Coalition

## 18 INDEX, WA

In 2009, local climbers saw No Trespassing signs suddenly posted around Lower Town Wall in Washington. The private landowner had revoked access to the property after quarrying companies displayed renewed interest in quarrying and granite removal. With their climbing area in danger, Washington Climbers Coalition (WCC) reached out to Access Fund for help. Using our new Climbing Conservation Loan Program, we helped WCC secure an option agreement, giving climbers the exclusive right to buy the property. In just over a year, climbers from all over the nation raised the funds to finalize the purchase of Lower Index Town Wall, ensuring that it stays in climber-friendly hands. This was the first project for Access Fund's Climbing Conservation Loan Program. WCC paid back the loan in 2010, allowing Access Fund to reinvest those funds to save another threatened climbing area and proving the effectiveness of the revolving loan program.

 **ACCESS HEROES:** Washington Climbers Coalition, American Alpine Club



Lower Index Town Wall, WA | © Ben Gilkison

## 19 JAILHOUSE ROCK, CA

In 2010, an impending subdivision threatened to block access to Jailhouse Rock in California. Arguably the best winter stamina sport climbing in the West, Jailhouse is a major resource for Bay Area, Yosemite, and Sacramento climbers. Local climber Tom Addison came to Access Fund for help, and we approached the landowner to discuss options. After months of negotiations, Access Fund reached an agreement with the landowner to protect Jailhouse Rock through a complex conservation development partnership. A short-term Climbing Conservation Loan secured conservation and access easements, ensuring permanent protection and access to Jailhouse Rock.

Once access was established, the Access Fund-Jeep® Conservation Team worked with local climbers to build a new parking area and trailhead for climbing access.



### ACCESS HERO:

Tom Addison



Jailhouse Rock, CA | © Derron Yuhara

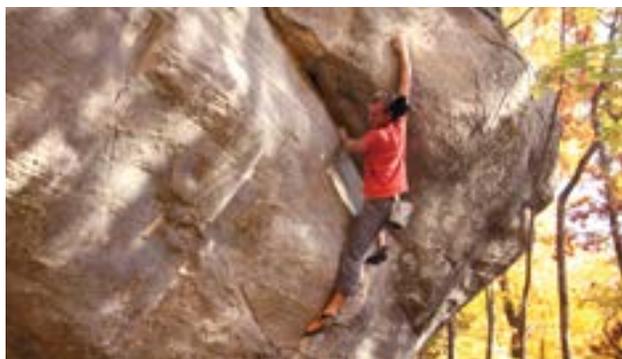


## HOLY BOULDERS, IL

Private landowners had historically allowed climbing access at the Holy Boulders in Southern Illinois, known for its Fontainebleau-like sandstone and aesthetic lines. But in 2012, they decided to sell the property, putting the boulders at risk of indefinite closure. The area is an important resource for local climbers, featuring 250 boulder problems that climbers of all abilities can enjoy. With a narrow window of opportunity, Illinois Climbers Association called Access Fund for help. Access Fund established a relationship with the landowners and reached an agreement to purchase the Holy Boulders using funds from the Climbing Conservation Loan Program. Access Fund took ownership of the property and is still fundraising to pay off the Climbing Conservation Loan so that the money can be reinvested to save another climbing area. But Holy Boulders is now in climber-friendly hands forever. Fundraising is ongoing. Visit [accessfund.org/holyboulders](https://accessfund.org/holyboulders) to donate.



**ACCESS HEROES:** Beta Fund, Illinois Climbers Association



Holy Boulders, IL | © Abbey Smith



## SANDSTONE, MN

Minnesota climbers had enjoyed access to the privately owned Sandstone bouldering area for nearly a decade. But in 2012, the private landowners decided to sell, putting climbing access at imminent risk. In a region with few other climbing resources, loss of the area would have been a blow to local climbers. The landowners generously agreed to give climbers the first opportunity to purchase the land, and the Minnesota Climbers Association (MCA) reached out to Access Fund for critical fundraising support and a grant to help purchase the area. Together, we worked with local climbers to fundraise for the acquisition costs and future improvements and to enable the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota (PTCM) to acquire the property in 2013. PTCM transferred the property to Minnesota State Parks for long-term stewardship and climbing access in 2015.



**ACCESS HEROES:** Minnesota Climbers Association, Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, Minnesota State Parks



## YOSEMITE VALLEY, CA

Over the last 25 years, Access Fund has been a constant force working to preserve the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley—from helping Yosemite Climbers Association with the Facelift to protecting climbing opportunities in Yosemite's Wilderness. It's hard to choose just one Epic Save for Yosemite, but we are perhaps most proud of our work to preserve the world-class view shed beneath El Capitan. During development of the Merced River Plan in 2013, park planners proposed a large parking lot and new campground in the undeveloped area beneath El Cap and Cathedral Rocks—the most iconic view to rock climbers in the world. This would have brought campfire smoke, noise from campers, rumbling garbage trucks, and hundreds of glinting windshields to the experience of climbing The Nose, Central Pillar of Frenzy, and dozens of other iconic climbs. During the Merced River planning process, Access Fund applied constant pressure to preserve the climbing experience and worked with park planners on alternatives that would keep camping, development, and parking a few miles east. Through dogged advocacy, we preserved the climbing experience, improved Valley camping opportunities, and got rid of a large woodcutting lot beneath El Cap's Salathe Wall that bothered climbers with constant buzzing of chainsaws. Our work at Yosemite is ongoing, and we look forward to another 25 years of climbing advocacy in the Valley.



**ACCESS HEROES:** Yosemite Climbing Association, Bay Area Climbers Coalition, Yosemite National Park, American Whitewater, National Park Conservation Association



Yosemite, CA | © puttsk

## 23 EAGLE BLUFF, ME

In the summer of 2013, Eagle Bluff in central Maine closed to climbing. Local climber Donald Nelligan had purchased Eagle Bluff in the 1990s and kept it open for climbing access, but when he passed away unexpectedly, his family closed the property due to liability concerns. Treasured by local climbers, the area features excellent granite with over 130 cracks and sport climbs, as well as bouldering. Access Fund stepped in to secure an option agreement, giving climbers the exclusive right to purchase Eagle Bluff, as well as a recreational lease that reopened the area while local climbers fundraised. In just six months, climbers and conservationists from New England and beyond raised money to purchase the area, and Access Fund assigned the option agreement to Clifton Climbers Alliance to make the purchase and hold Eagle Bluff for long-term management and climber access.

 **ACCESS HEROES:** Clifton Climbers Alliance, Donald Nelligan, Land for Maine's Future, Maine Coast Heritage Trust

## 24 HAWAII CLIMBING, HI

In the spring of 2012, the water-locked Oahu climbing community was devastated when Mokuleia Wall (aka Moke) and Makapuu on Oahu were closed due to liability concerns after a girl was critically injured by falling rock while on a guided YMCA trip. Fearing liability, the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) extended the climbing ban to the entire state. Cut off from all climbing, the local community called in Access Fund to help. Together, Access Fund and a small group of dedicated local climbers started a fight for access that would last over two years. We fought the ban by working with the Hawaii

DLNR to address liability concerns, launching nationwide letter-writing campaigns, testifying at Senate hearings, and supporting several bills that would protect recreation access—but to no avail. Finally, 957 days after Mokuleia on the North Shore of Oahu was closed, we reached an agreement with the Hawaii DLNR: Local climbers would coalesce into the Hawaii Climbing Coalition and administer an online waiver system, respond to public safety concerns, and steward the climbing areas. Oahu's climbing access was reinstated, and a water-locked climbing community was once again able to climb.

 **ACCESS HERO:** Hawaii Climbing Coalition

## 25 THE HOMESTEAD, AZ

In 2014, climbers nearly lost access to The Homestead in Arizona when the bank foreclosed on private property that overlapped key portions of the access road, trailhead, and first few dozen routes. If sold to a non-climber-friendly buyer, access to the entire Homestead area would have been lost. With over 250 sport climbs on 12 limestone walls, The Homestead is one of the best winter limestone climbing areas in the country, boasting true “tufa” sport routes. LCOs across Arizona came together to help save the area. Access Fund began negotiations with the bank and used funds from the Climbing Conservation Loan Program to purchase the 360-acre property, saving the area from indefinite closure. Access Fund will hold the property while we secure access easements across adjoining lands and make stewardship improvements. Fundraising for this project is still ongoing. Donate today at [www.accessfund.org/homestead](http://www.accessfund.org/homestead).

 **ACCESS HEROES:** Arizona Mountaineering Club, Climbing Association of Southern Arizona, Concerned Climbers of Arizona, Queen Creek Coalition, and Southern Arizona Climbers Coalition

## EPIC LOSSES

Sometimes, no matter how hard we fight, access battles don't go our way.

- Cave Rock, NV
- Twin Sisters, ID
- Howard's Knob, NC

Learn more about these Epic Losses at [www.accessfund.org/epiclosses](http://www.accessfund.org/epiclosses)

# THE NEXT BIG Southeastern Climbing Destination?

Over millennia, the Russell Fork River has carved through the mountainsides of southwest Virginia and southeast Kentucky to form Breaks Canyon, nestled in the heart of Appalachia. More than a thousand feet deep, the canyon is lined with miles of long, stacked tiers of sandstone cliffs and spires begging to be climbed.

In the 1700s, explorer Daniel Boone came upon the area in search of a way through the 125-mile-long mountain that blocked passage to the promised lands of Kentucky and the Ohio River Valley. The Russell Fork gorge provided an opening, and because it was a break in the ridge, Boone called the spot simply, “Breaks.”

Never heard of Breaks? That’s because it’s never been officially opened to climbing—until now. We’re placing our bets that it will become the next big Southeast cragging destination.

“It’s a special place,” says Zachary Lesch-Huie, Southeast Regional Director for Access Fund. “The mountain views and scenery are breathtaking. The sound of the river is never far away. The rock is awesome—beautiful colors and texture, like a combination of the Obed and New River Gorge.”

While the area has a history of climbing going back at least three decades, it has seen shockingly little attention from

climbers. This may be because of the park’s rural location, the stronger pull of nearby areas like the Red or the New, or because the park—lacking any official climbing policy—never much promoted the activity. Nonetheless, in the 1990s, the first single-pitch routes went up at areas along Prospectors Trail and the impressive overhanging wall of The Pavilion. Later, climbers established some fantastic traditional lines on the arêtes and faces of The Notches and the splitter crack systems of the Grey Wall. These early routes were done with an informal nod of approval from earlier park management, before they developed climbing policies. Now, even with only about 75 routes currently established—barely scratching the surface—the grade range and variety of climbing terrain make the area suitable for just about any sort of climber.

Access Fund began working with locals to establish legitimate access to Breaks Interstate Park in 2014, after local climber Kylie Schmidt brought the area’s potential to our attention and reached out to the park staff. Joining Kylie’s efforts, Access Fund partnered with Southwest Virginia Climbers Coalition (SVCC) and community stakeholders to advocate for climbing access and help the park formulate climbing management strategies.

“The park staff was incredibly collaborative and formed a great partnership with us,” says Lesch-Huie. “We worked very closely to draft a climbing management plan that balances access with protection of the park’s natural resources.”

Breaks Interstate Park officially approved climbing in early 2015, but the climbing community, park staff, and other stakeholders took some time to form an Advisory Group and develop a climbing management plan and official park climbing policies, which were completed in April of this year.

“We are very excited to welcome rock climbers and add climbing to our park’s many outstanding recreational opportunities,” says Austin Bradley, Park Superintendent.

Local residents and business owners may have reason to be excited too. A recent economic impact study at the nearby Red River Gorge by Eastern Kentucky University points to the millions of dollars and jobs that climbers can bring to rural areas with climbing resources. This region of southern Virginia and Kentucky is home to some of the poorest, most economically distressed counties in the country. The area’s longstanding economic base—coal mining and timber—is in steep decline, and tourism and outdoor recreation are being looked to for new economic opportunities.

“Climbers’ economic impact is real, and we hope more climbers visiting Breaks can benefit local communities,” says Lesch-Huie.

Thinking about visiting Breaks? The area is incredibly accessible. The climbing is within walking distance of great camping and has a network of well-established trails. If you’re not up for roughing it, you can enjoy the comfort of the park’s hotel, perched on the edge of the gorge.

Be sure to stop by the visitor center or lodge and get the free required climbing permit. Climbing is only open in approved areas of the park, and not all cliffs in the park are open—yet. The park is actively considering opening additional areas in the coming years, and there are some critical natural resource concerns to manage, like nesting peregrine falcons and sensitive cliff vegetation. The current closures in place protect these resources and are supported by Access Fund, SVCC, and local climbers.

Climbing route information is available at

[www.mountainproject.com](http://www.mountainproject.com). ■



© Gerry James

## Corporate Partners

For 25 years, **Outdoor Research** has been a champion for climbing access through its support of Access Fund and the greater climbing community. Believing that life gets better the minute we embark on a new adventure, no matter how big or small, Outdoor Research demonstrates its commitment to protecting our outdoor landscapes time and again. As a founding donor to the Access Fund's Conservation Loan Program in 2009, Outdoor Research has helped save 18 crags from Maine to Washington and challenges outdoor professionals to give back with every purchase. More than anything, Outdoor Research is convinced that if it inspires more people to get outside, the world will be a better place—and we think so too.



OUTDOOR RESEARCH

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Clockwise from top left: Self-portrait | Snoqualmie Pass, WA | Smith Rock, OR | Bouldering at Red Rocks, NV | © Kiliiii Yuyan

## Kiliiii Yuyan

**K**iliiii Yuyan is an indigenous (Nanai) photographer whose work is dedicated to Native cultures and wilderness conservation. He is a former wilderness guide and continues to teach the traditional skill of Native kayak building. He works on documentary projects that tell the stories of the voiceless—people and wilderness. As an indigenous person, Kiliiii’s relationship to nature is deep, utilitarian, and romantic all at once. In his composite style adventure photography, Kiliiii works to have no distracting elements in a photograph, putting the viewer in the same place as the adventurer—focused on the moment and on the sport, but also alone in a vast and beautiful living world. “Adventure sports like climbing and kayaking are helping people relate to and protect wilderness,” says Kiliiii. “As long as people are out in nature tromping around, they will have soul-lifting experiences with wild things.”

To see more of Kiliiii’s work, visit [www.kiliiii.com](http://www.kiliiii.com). ■



The Access Fund  
PO Box 17010  
Boulder, CO 80308

A photograph of a climber in a pink shirt and dark pants scaling a large, reddish-brown rock formation. The climber is positioned on the left side of the frame, with their body angled towards the rock. The background shows a vast desert landscape with more rock formations under a clear blue sky.

## JOIN US: 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Join us on October 22 in Westminister, Colorado, as we raise a glass to the past 25 years of climbing advocacy, celebrate old and new friends, and look toward the future together. Featuring keynote address by Tommy Caldwell!

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Reserve your tickets now and join us in Westminister this fall:

**[www.accessfund.org/25years](http://www.accessfund.org/25years)**

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