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Comments: Comment to Cibola National Forest Preliminary Draft Plan Revision

Plentiful access to recreation is a critical need met by our National Forests. This is especially important in the Sandia Ranger district which is adjacent to the large Albuquerque metropolitan area. Protection of existing and future rock climbing opportunities are important qualities that need to be included in the revised Forest Plan.

The Sandia Ranger District contains a balance of traditional climbing in Wilderness areas as well as bolt protected sport climbing in non-Wilderness areas. Maintaining the existing Wilderness boundaries as proposed in Alternative B would protect the continued access to existing sport climbing areas within the District.

The Magdalena Ranger District is home to the Enchanted Tower which is the most important sport climbing destination in NM. The proposed Wilderness boundaries in Alternative B would protect the unique climbing opportunities at this world class destination. There are also several popular bouldering areas and a few existing sport climbs in the proposed Sawtooth/Monument Rock MA. There is a vast potential for additional new climbing opportunities in this area. The management plan for this area should recognize the importance of allowing climbers the opportunity to develop additional bouldering and bolt protected sport climbs in the future as the volcanic rock is not well suited to protection with removable gear.

Under general recreation guidelines on page 108 line 30, rock climbing is the only specific recreational activity that is called out as requiring special management. While we agree that it may be appropriate to manage rock climbing as one of many forms of recreation in the forest, all forms of recreation should be treated equally. This statement should be broadened to include all forms of recreation in the Forest.

In Dispersed Recreation section on page 112, the plan needs to provide allowances for fixed anchors in the Desired Conditions section. We want a standard for Dispersed Recreation to include:

Judicious placement, replacement and use of fixed anchors for rock climbing is allowable in appropriate front-country, backcountry, and wilderness settings.

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