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Organization: Southwest Montana Climbers Coalition

Title: Executive Director

Comments: The Southwest Montana Climbers Coalition (SMCC) has been in existence since 2003. Our exact membership numbers are hard to obtain, but an estimate of 500 was given 3 years ago during a membership drive. Through regular updates on social media, our network now extends to over 3,000 active participants. The primary goal of the SMCC is to work with land managers and owners to maintain access to the wide variety of climbing areas that exist throughout SW Montana. Most of these areas are on lands held by the Gallatin-Custer National Forest. Since 2003, the SMCC has kept an open dialogue with local Forest Service leadership to develop trail maintenance projects, mostly involving volunteer labor, but funding has also been provided for certain projects. The SMCC also provides funding, materials, and labor to replace permanent hardware on developed technical climbs.

The Custer-Gallatin Forest is host to some of the best ice climbing, rock climbing and mountaineering in North America. These activities draw both local residents as well as visitors from across the globe and help to support Southwest Montana's recreation economy. It is SMCC's stand that the Custer-Gallatin Forest must continue to provide these high quality climbing opportunities. Therefore, it is essential that the revised forest plan fully integrate sustainable recreation (e.g., climbing) management into all other aspects of forest management.

The Custer-Gallatin National Forest has played an important role in the history of North American climbing. A lifetime of future opportunities and challenges still exists in every climbing medium. From Winter to Summer and from the smallest boulders to the largest rock walls, the future of climbing on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest is almost endless. As Executive Director of the SMCC, I ask that Forest planners include current climbing along with the potential for development of new climbing areas into future forest management.

If you need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tom Kalakay-Executive Director-Southwest Montana Climbers Coalition

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