

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/23/2021 10:06:45 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Support for the plans. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on these important plans. As a climber, I generally support the plans and applaud DBNF for the thoughtful inclusion of climbing and climbing area management needs. I travel to the Red River Gorge multiple times per year from Wisconsin and have been doing so for over five years. In that time the Red River Gorge has become a second home to me. I fully support climbing access in the Red River Gorge - access that is sustainable and supported by climbers, climbing organizations and the forest service.

Trails and Access. I support the plans for a sustainable trail system and sustainable recreation. I also support providing new system trail access to climbing areas. I do not support decommissioning trails which provide climbing access. Some climbing area access relies on social trails and cross-country travel, so I oppose restriction of non-system access to climbing without site specific consideration involving DBNF, climbing organizations and the climbing community to analyze use and impacts and find balanced management solutions. Use of erosion control is one method of addressing unsustainable impacts at undesignated recreational sites and on non-system trails.

Support for education. I support using education as a management tool to minimize impact. Research shows the climbing community supports and follows LNT and Climber's Pact practices.

Partner with climbers. I support the priority these plan's place on partnership to accomplish planning, education and management goals. DBNF should continue to consider RRGCC, Access Fund and the climbing community as partners. This partnership is proven, longstanding, and recorded in both a DBNF and USFS MOU.

Managing Cliffside Access. Climbers rely on cliffside access and generally support work and direction outlined in the plan to stabilize, rehabilitate and make resilient these heavily used and highly valuable climbing and recreation sites. I also support DBNF working with RRGCC and Access Fund to prioritize and accomplish work at these highly valued climbing sites. I applaud DBNF for including cliffside access in the plan and creating a framework for stewardship work to improve sustainability and access.

Clifty Wilderness Fixed Anchors. Clifty Wilderness is home to many popular and historic climbing areas and nearly 200 climbing routes which rely on fixed anchors for ascent and descent. I understand the Forest Plan prescribes no new climbing routes with fixed anchors, but still allows maintenance or replacement of fixed anchors on existing routes. I support Wilderness climbing, continued access to climbing in Clifty Wilderness, and the essential ability to maintain or replace fixed anchors by non-mechanized means. Fixed anchor maintenance protects the climbing resource and ensures safe, sustainable Wilderness climbing experiences.

Roads and Parking. DBNF's roads and parking are critical to climbing access. I support further work in the plan to find or create sufficient parking to provide access to all 50 climbing areas along Indian Creek, KY 715 and KY 77. Closure or restriction of parking in undesignated areas should be carefully considered with climbing organizations and the climbing community if doing so restricts climbing access.

New Climbing Routes and Areas. DBNF should also address the need for new climbing areas and routes in these plans. We recognize the plans address outstanding planning, mitigation and restoration needs, in part related to high levels of recreational use. As a climber I am committed to helping the Forest address these needs. However, the general Forest Plan and the Limits of Acceptable Change process also set the goal of providing new climbing opportunities, and providing a process for possible authorization of new climbing routes or areas. The climbing community has long advocated for implementation of this guidance, which should be addressed in the current draft plans.

Maintain and enhance climbing. These plans follow from DBNF's general Forest Plan's direction to maintain and enhance recreation, including climbing. We support sustainable climbing access and the work these plans do to fulfill this Forest Plan direction.