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Comments: I am quite thankful to the Forest Service for providing an opportunity to comment on the management plans as they relate to climbing. I am from the Louisville area but also attend Eastern Kentucky University so I am frequently in the Red River Gorge and DBNF. I have been climbing in the RRG for over two years now and plan to continue for decades. I aim to help preserve climbing access for both myself and others so I hope the Forest Service helps me achieve this goal with their plans.

In terms of trails and access to climbing areas within the DBNF, I am opposed to closing existing trails to climbing areas and favor expanded access to both current and new climbing areas. I believe managed and well planned trails are the best option to combat erosion and wear. Patrons and climbers of the RRG will find ways to access climbing areas regardless of existing trail access. Therefore, I believe the experts at the Forest Service should consult climbing community leaders such as the Red River Gorge Climber's Coalition (RRGCC) and use these community resources to better serve the climbing community. These climbing areas will be accessed with or without trails so it would be best to provide well made trails that minimize human impact and encourage use that does not impact the wilderness more than is necessary.

I support educational materials, classes, workshops and any other resources that the Forest Service deems useful to the general public. Education can be helpful tools to minimize human impact and can be more impactful when done in partnership with local community leaders.

As for partnerships with climbing organizations, I personally advocate for the Forest Service to utilize the RRGCC, Access Fund, and climbing community leaders and their knowledge. The MOUs between the DBNF and USFS between these organizations should serve to remind them of the benefits that these partnerships have shown.

Cliffside access is paramount to both maintaining and developing climbing areas and I am pleased that the management plans from the DBNF include this as a topic. I believe that it is in the best interest of both the climbing community and the DBNF to provide educational and physical resources that ensure uninterrupted access to these areas. I support work at these sites to achieve this goal and hope the DBNF utilizes the RRGCC and Access Fund for their knowledge and expertise.

The Clifty Wilderness is home to many historic climbing areas and routes, over 200. I understand that the Forest Service is opposed to installing more fixed hardware in this area. The current climbing areas rely on fixed hardware for safe ascent and descent. I believe it is in the best interest of the DBNF and climbers that this currently installed hardware be maintained in perpetuity. These areas will be climbed at whether or not this happens and climbing on older hardware that cannot be maintained poses undue risk to climbers. Personally, I am not opposed to the installation of new hardware but if the Forest Service won't allow that then I believe it is imperative that the current hardware be allowed to be maintained without unreasonable restrictions. This maintenance is a necessary wear on the environment to ensure safe access to climbing. Human life will be injured or lost if this is not allowed to occur.

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.

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. Anecdotally speaking, climbing areas in the wilderness are usually separate from the normal RRG and DBNF visitor areas. The trails in climbing areas are usually only for climbing access and I think that should be considered when making decisions about restricting access in the RRG.

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. Thank you for the work you are doing to help us sustainably maintain access to climbing areas in perpetuity.