

Rock Climbing Management Plan Shenandoah National Park

Introductory Narrative

Purpose and Need

Rock Climbing Management Goals

Integrating Rock Climbing Management into Park Planning

Reference to Legislation, NPS Management Policies and Guidelines

NPS Organic Act of 1916

NPS Management Policies, 2006

Wilderness Act 1964/SNP Wilderness Designation 1976

NPS Director's Order #41 (Wilderness Management)

SNP Mission Goals

Reference to Government Performance and Results Act

NPS/SNP Strategic Plan

GPRA Goals related to Rock Climbing activity

Reference to SNP Backcountry and Wilderness Management Plan

Reference to Rock Outcrop Management Plan (TBD)

Description of the Rock Outcrop Climbing Resource

Physical Description of the Rock Climbing Resource

Old Rag Mountain

Little Stony Man Cliffs

Other commonly used rock climbing sites

Description of Recreational Activities and Potential Impacts

Day Use (hiking)

Social conditions/crowding/group size

Impacts to Vegetation

destruction/trampling

Impacts to Soil

disturbance/erosion

Visitor-created trails

Backcountry Camping

Impacts to Vegetation

destruction/trampling

Impacts to Soil

disturbance/erosion

Visitor-created trails

Rock Climbing

Social conditions/crowding/group size/commercial use

Impacts to Vegetation

destruction/trampling/cutting/removal

At staging areas

At climbing routes

At anchor points

Impacts to Wildlife/RTE Species

Peregrine Falcon

Shenandoah Salamander

Impacts to Soil

disturbance/erosion

Visitor-created trails

Impacts to Geological Resources

fixed anchors/chalk/gardening /gluing/visual intrusions/etc

Bouldering

Impacts to Vegetation

destruction (lichens)

Visitor-created trails

Impacts to Geological Resources

chalk/etc

Ice Climbing

Impacts to Vegetation

destruction (lichens)

Impacts to Geological Resources

Description of Visitor Use

**Social Science Research/Visitor Survey (2005-06 Virginia Tech Study)
(Summary - Major Findings DRAFT)**

Trip description

Previous rock climbing experience and involvement

The rock climbing experience

Rock climbing management

Visitor characteristics

Rock Climbing Management

Civic Engagement with Rock Climbing

Functions (eg. recommendations re: fixed anchors, routes, etc)

Climbing organizations

Shenandoah National Park Climbers Alliance (SNPCA)

(description)

Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), Mountaineering Section

(description)

American Alpine Club (description)

Potomac Mountain Club (description)

The Access Fund (description)

Resource and Social Standards

Monitoring

Commercial Use

A “Commercial Use Authorization (CUA)” permit is required for commercial rock climbing instruction or guiding. Maximum group size for commercial groups is 12 persons, including instructors. Additional

requirements and restrictions are stated in the CUA permit. The CUA is issued through the Superintendent's office by the Park Concession Specialist.

Management Actions

Education/Leave No Trace (eg. trailhead bulletin displays, brochure to promote information on "clean climbing" and LNT techniques and skills; post climbing information and educational messages at SNP website.)

Rock Climbing Areas (eg. established routes per Horst guide)
(brief, general information about climbing areas in Park; specific routes not identified and maps are not provided as part of this climbing plan)

Group Size (limit to 12 people? re: organized educational groups?)

Rock Climbing Practices

"Clean Climbing"

Clean climbing techniques should be the norm with LNT ethics and skills being routinely practiced. This type climbing includes use of temporary equipment/anchors that can be placed and removed without altering the environment (eg. cams, slings, nuts, chocks, stoppers, and removable pitons). Climbing activity should be directed away from "pristine" rock outcrop sites.

Fixed anchors (should be uncommon park-wide and rare in designated wilderness)

1. Authorization required for placement of new fixed anchors or fixed equipment (case by case review)
2. Authorization required for the replacement of existing fixed anchors or fixed equipment (case by case review)
3. Authorization required for removal of existing fixed anchors or fixed equipment (case by case review)

Motorized Equipment (eg. power drills)

1. Prohibited park-wide (36 CFR 2.12)

Practices including gardening, gluing, chipping, etc

The following activities are prohibited park-wide (36 CFR 2.1):

1. Chipping or gluing
2. "Gardening" or the intentional removal of vegetation to "clean" a route
3. Using trees as climbing anchors
4. Using trees for climbing
5. Leaving fixed ropes for extended periods for the purpose of ascending and descending (rappelling) rock walls
6. Other modification or alteration of resource features are prohibited.

Climbing Hardware and Chalk

1. Climbing hardware (slings, carabiners, etc.) are not permitted to be left hanging on walls unless absolutely necessary for safety reasons (see "fixed anchors").

Fixed anchors (bolts, slings, etc), as authorized, that may be left on a wall for an extended period of time should be of a color that blends in with the rock in the area.

2. Climbers are encouraged to use the minimum amount of chalk necessary to climb safely. The Park will work with climbers and climbing groups to coordinate chalk clean-ups for climbing walls and bouldering areas.

Area Closures to Rock Climbing Activity

(permanent area closure recommendations pending ROMP research results and recommendations, public scoping, and NEPA compliance with public involvement)

Temporary Closures: Peregrine Falcon

Shenandoah National Park Key Personnel (listing)

Bibliography