



January 17, 2023

Ted Willhite
 Chair
 Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
 PO Box 40917
 Olympia WA 98504-0917

RE: Support for RCO Grant #22-2001, Maintaining Washington’s Climbing Access Trails

Dear Recreation and Conservation Office Advisory Committee:

On behalf of the 19 undersigned local elected officials, conservation organizations and recreation groups, I am writing to express my support for a grant proposal submitted by the Washington Climbers Coalition’s (WCC), #22-2001 Maintaining Washington’s Climbing Access Trails.

Over the past several years, rock climbing has become an increasingly popular form of outdoor recreation in Washington State. As more users transition from climbing indoors at climbing gyms to experiencing the joys of climbing outside, the impacts climbers have on the landscape also increase. Unaddressed or without preemptive action, these impacts can have negative effects on wildlife habitat, water quality, and tribal rights and lifeways.

This grant would fund efforts to maintain and prevent erosion and other negative impacts on several important climbing areas around the state. WCC is the leading organization in mitigating Climbers’ impacts on the landscape in Washington State. The group has facilitated successful education campaigns, stewardship events and established substantive partnerships to help maintain climbing areas across the State.

Funding this project will help WCC expand its capacity to steward the climbing access trails at four climbing areas:

- **Tieton River Crags, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (Yakima County)** - The Tieton River crags are spread out along a twenty-mile stretch of the Tieton River drainage, on the east slope of the south Cascades. There are more than 400 routes, pretty much evenly split between trad and sport. Generally, the crags in the lower canyon (Royal Columns, the Bend, Moon Rocks) have more crack routes while the crags higher in the drainage (the Oasis, the Cave, Rainbow Rocks, Wildcat, Lava Point and South Fork) have more sport routes. Whether it's a reflection of

the rock or the primary route developers, the Tieton shines at the 5.10 grade for trad routes and 5.11 grade for sport climbs.

- **Index Lower Town Wall, Washington State Parks & Washington Climbers Coalition (Snohomish County)** - The Index Town Walls of Washington feature some of the best concentrations of steep, clean granite cracks and face climbs in Western North America. Prior to its 50-year climbing history, parts of the Lower Town Wall were quarried for granite before the Burlington Northern railroad moved closer to the wall in the 1960s. There are easier routes on the Great Northern Slab as well as more difficult routes and aid routes on the Main Wall and The Country.
- **The Craggs at Exit 38, Washington Department of Natural Resources & State Parks (King County)** - Exit 38, home to an abundance of sport routes, is nestled in the I-90 corridor just out of Seattle. It consists of 3 major sub-areas, each with its own parking area: Mt Washington, Deception Craggs and Far Side. Each area has many small craggs of metamorphic, oft-chossy rock to be found in the hills.
- **Big Rocks, Spokane County (Spokane County)** - This is the obvious Big Rock outcropping at the center of the Rocks of Sharon area. The Standard Route (4th class to 5.4) is the classic Spokane scramble that many non-technical climbers do regularly. Many traditional crack routes are scattered all around this large outcropping and many first ascents were claimed in the 1960's. Big Rock also hosts a few excellent sport climbs on solid stone.

Focusing on these four areas will serve a wide range of ability levels and geographic interests. Climbing access trails were never designed to a sustainable standard, and insufficient maintenance of these trails has led to severe erosion at the climbing areas listed in this project and several other popular destinations.

Funding this project will help to address the erosion on these trails improving the landscape for all users. In 2017 WCC started the Washington Climbers Conservation Initiative, a program to preserve access trails across the state's various climbing areas. WCC has brought professional trail crews from the Access Fund to the state for several weeks every summer since 2017. This program has hardened approach trails at several climbing areas and reduced the impacts of countless rock climbers. These projects have reduced climbers' impacts on trails outside Darington, Gold Bar, Leavenworth, Yakima, and North Bend.

As a result, climbers can enjoy the wonderful rock-climbing resources at these areas with minimal impact on the landscape. Funding this project in full will help the WCC to expand the Washington Climbers Conservation Initiative and improve the outdoor recreation experience for residents and visiting rock climbers.

We support responsible recreation and this project and encourage the Recreation and Conservation Office to consider it for full funding.

Sincerely,

Matt Perkins
President & Founder
Washington Climbers Coalition

Tom Uniack
Executive Director
Washington Wild

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director
The Mountaineers

Megan Birzell
Washington State Director
The Wilderness Society

Yvonne Kraus
Executive Director
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

Sarah Shaffer
Executive Director
Wenatchee Outdoors (Wenatchee)

Paul Fish
Founder
Live To Play

Louise Lindgren
Board Member
Friends of Heybrook Ridge (Index)

Andrew Puhl
Policy Coordinator
American Alpine Club - Cascade Section

Kathy Corson
Co-Owner
Outdoor Adventures (Index)

Bruce Albert
Mayor
Town of Index

Norm Johnson
Council Member
Town of Index

Bert Shepardson
Council Member
Town of Index

Amy Brockhaus
Deputy Director
Mountains To Sound Greenway Trust

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

Jack Cornish, Climbing Committee Chair
Gina Claeys, Conservation Committee Chair
Spokane Mountaineers (Spokane)

Ty Tyler
Stewardship Director
Access Fund

Mike Town
Chair, State Forest Committee
Washington Chapter of Sierra Club

Kurt Hellmann
Advocacy Associate
Conservation Northwest