

Wood, Lisa A (DFW)

From: Martha Lantz and Andy Fitz <fitlan@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, May 10, 2017 7:00 PM
To: SEPADesk2 (DFW)
Cc: fitlan@comcast.net; Joe Sambataro
Subject: Comment on SEPA No. 17015

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To Whom it May Concern:

On behalf of the Washington Climbers Coalition (WCC) and the Access Fund, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft update of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan. The WCC (www.washingtonclimbers.org) is a Washington non-profit organization whose mission is to make Washington a better place to climb through advocacy, stewardship, and education. The Access Fund (www.accessfund.org) is a national advocacy organization that keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment.

As the draft plan identifies, there are a number of established and popular rock climbing areas within the Tieton River Canyon (Oak Creek Unit of the Wildlife Area). These include the Royal Columns, the Bend, Moon Rocks, the Chunkyard, the Oasis, and Rainbow Rocks, among other locations.

Appendix A to the plan (Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures) addresses climbing twice under Goal 11, which is to "Support and maintain appropriate recreation opportunities." First, the plan identifies an objective to "Maintain access [to] Tieton River rock climbing" with three tasks: 1) coordinate with the WCC to implement a 2017 REI grant for trail maintenance; 2) meet with user groups to develop trail maintenance projects; and 3) perform trail maintenance as needed. Second, the plan identifies an objective to "Include climbing group representation on [Wildlife Area Advisory Committee] and partner on stewardship opportunities," with one task: "Work with local users and Washington Climbers Coalition to identify potential members."

The WCC supports both of these objectives. As identified, the WCC has already secured grant funding for trail maintenance projects in 2017. This work is intended to mitigate erosion and concentrate climber impacts so that rock climbing remains a compatible use within the Wildlife Area. We also support adding a climbing representative to the Wildlife Area Advisory Committee. Climbers have been exploring the Tieton River area since at least the 1950s and are a major recreational user group within the Wildlife Area. We would appreciate adding our voice to the committee.

Beyond the strictly climbing-related objectives, we also want to voice our support for the other principal goals of the plan, which focus primarily on maintaining, and ideally improving, the natural function of the area. For many climbers, the landscape and unique habitats of the Tieton River (including its Oregon white oak woodlands and ponderosa pine transition zones) are as much a draw to the area as the climbing. We want to continue enjoying a special place.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the draft Oak Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan.

Sincerely,

Andy Fitz
Member, Board of Directors
Washington Climbers Coalition

Joe Sambataro
National Access Directory & Northwest Regional Director
The Access Fund