



Protect America's Climbing

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**Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition and Access Fund
Strengthen Permanent Protections in the Red River Gorge**

September 7, 2017. Beattyville, Kentucky - The Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition (RRGCC) and Access Fund recorded permanent easements this month to strengthen conservation and recreation protections at three climbing areas in the Red River Gorge: Pendergrass Murray (PMRP), Miller Fork (MFRP), and Bald Rock (BRRP) Recreational Preserves.

The RRGCC owns all three properties, and Access Fund will hold permanent conservation and recreation easements on the properties, providing backup and support for RRGCC's long-term commitment. The easements are a legal agreement between Access Fund and RRGCC to protect these climbing areas, preventing any use of the properties that would significantly interfere with or impair their recreational and conservation values, which includes providing for public access and recreation with no cost or fees, specifically rock climbing, so that present and future generations may enjoy these preserves in their open space condition. Access Fund and RRGCC recorded one easement for the MFRP and a combined easement for the PMRP and BRRP, as they are adjacent to each other.

The easements allow for other compatible uses of the properties, like mountain biking and hiking. They prohibit residential development and subdivision and place restrictions on certain uses like forest management and facilities. Neither RRGCC nor Access Fund hold the oil and gas rights on the properties. However, both organizations are committed to working with the companies that manage active oil wells on the recreational preserves to ensure these uses remain compatible and safely managed.

In order to complete these easements, RRGCC Land Steward Curtis Gale-Dyer and Access Fund Southeast Director Zachary Lesch-Huie spent two days hiking, tracking, and photographing all three Recreational Preserves to document the properties, climbing areas, roads, trails, trailheads, improvements, and oil wells.

“It was an extensive effort,” says Curtis. “The RRGCC and Access Fund compiled 14 maps and 121 photos to provide a baseline of current conditions. We’ll use these as a tool to monitor changes in climbing impacts and help us prioritize needed stewardship in the future.”

Access Fund and RRGCC have a long history of working together to protect these properties. PMRP was acquired in 2004, the MFRP was acquired in 2013, and the BRRP was acquired in 2016. Together, we’ve worked to protect and secure access to 1,161 acres and 1,355 climbing routes in the Red River Gorge region of eastern Kentucky.

“Climbers can be assured that our extensive network of trailheads, trails, and climbing areas will be protected now and for future generations to enjoy free public access,” says RRGCC President Yasmeen Fowler. “The RRGCC is committed to preserving the legacy that the climbing community and its supporters have all helped build over the last two decades. We hope that all organizations who are able to will also partner with Access Fund to strengthen permanent protection of climbing access across the country.”

Access Fund is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, and both Access Fund and RRGCC follow national land trust standards and practices and share a unified mission to ensure open climbing access and conserve the climbing environment.

“Access Fund is thrilled to support RRGCC in permanently protecting and managing these recreational preserves,” says Access Director Joe Sambataro with Access Fund. “They have a great track record of land protection and are continuously taking steps to build upon their capacity as a local climbing organization and land trust.”

Land trust accreditation requirements mandate that the easement holder have funds set aside and restricted for emergency stewardship and legal defense. While fundraising campaigns are ongoing for the MFRP and BRRP, the RRGCC has pledged to raise \$20,000 in the next three years to cover Access Fund’s annual and future costs of this permanent responsibility. The Access Fund manages these funds for all [11 of its easements and land holdings](#), per land trust accreditation requirements.

The Access Fund conservation and recreation easements will help RRGCC ensure long-term stewardship, conserve these world-class climbing areas, and keep them open to public recreation for generations to come.

About the Red River Gorge Climbers’ Coalition

The Red River Gorge Climbers’ Coalition works to ensure open, public access to quality outdoor rock climbing opportunities in and around the Red River Gorge, Kentucky. The Red River Gorge Climbers’ Coalition works to encourage the conservation of the natural environment on publicly

managed and privately owned land by protecting, promoting, and ensuring responsible climbing. For more information, visit www.rgccc.org.

About Access Fund

Access Fund is the national advocacy organization that keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. Founded in 1991, Access Fund supports and represents millions of climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing: rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering. Six core programs support the mission on national and local levels: climbing policy and advocacy, stewardship and conservation, local support and mobilization, land acquisition and protection, risk management and landowner support, and education. Since 1991, Access Fund has supported 64 land acquisitions by land trusts, public entities, and local climbing organizations, totaling 17,188 acres across twenty-seven states. For more information, visit www.accessfund.org.

Regional Map of the RRGCC Recreational Preserves



Climbing in the PMRP



Climbing in the MFRP



Photo of the Purgatory climbing area in the PMRP

