

Great Falls Climbers' Position Statement

- Great Falls climbers care about both the natural environment of the Park and the continuation of the long tradition of Great Falls climbing. Recreational rock climbing has a long history at Great Falls, and has been a tradition there for decades, and likely much longer.
- Climbing is an international recreational activity that brings income and jobs to the Great Falls community. The Great Falls cliffs are widely advertised in climbing guides and print media. This is one of the most magnificent climbing areas of the eastern United States—one that is highly valued by the climbing community. It also brings a diverse and multi-cultural cross-section of visitors to the Park.
- Climbers have a profound respect for the environment, and understand the importance of responsibly managing the Park's natural ecosystems.
- Rock climbers are committed to protecting the natural environment and leave an exceedingly small footprint on the Park's rock faces. Indeed, one of the "core values" of the sport is to actively enjoy the physical and natural environment while striving to leave no trace or material effect. Rock climbers are in fact among the smallest groups of users of the Park. Climbers also take an active role in cleaning up after themselves, and after other users of the Park as well.
- Some people believe that Great Falls should become a wilderness area, and that human/recreational use of the park should be minimized or eliminated to achieve this purpose. However, Great Falls Park has had human visitors for hundreds of years, and it should continue to be a resource for the use and enjoyment of all people in the National Capital area and beyond. People are an integral part of the natural environment of this Park.
- However, mandatory restrictions on access to the Park's climbing resources are unnecessary and unwarranted. Climbers should not bear a disproportionate burden of the Park's efforts to protect the environment.
- Climbers are willing to initiate and engage in voluntary educational programs to help protect the Park's natural environment. The Park Service could assist in promoting programs to educate people about the Park's natural environment by widely disseminating the scientific basis for any suggested changes in climbing techniques and access routes.
- The Park Service's approach to managing the Park's resources should rely on sound science.