

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Good communication systems are essential to publicise access agreements and good practice. Information has limited value if it is not widely publicised. Systems should be set up to distinguish between information which can be freely publicised and environmentally sensitive information (e.g. the nesting site of a rare bird) which should not be publicised. Communication systems should:

- use a wide range of media including guidebooks, climbing magazines, leaflets, the local press, tourist brochures and the Internet
- target specific audiences (e.g. climbers, the press and broadcast media and the public)
- be on-going and use a consistent, recognisable format
- use key activists, guides, educational and training centres to spread information

### Case Study 1 PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

#### Botanical Survey, Joshua Tree - USA

In this one year project the US Access Fund, Joshua Tree National Park and the California Native Plant Society joined forces to assess climbing impacts on desert boulder plant communities at Joshua Tree, one of the most popular climbing areas in the USA. The project will employ a rock climbing botanist to survey boulder areas and to produce an inventory of rare plants and sensitive sites. Accurate baseline data will enable improved management of climbing areas, botanically rich areas and approach trails. Information leaflets will also be produced and the project will be publicised nationally to raise awareness amongst climbers.



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### Case Study 2 LOCAL LIAISON GROUPS

#### Lake District Mountaineering Liaison Group - England

This liaison group was set up in 1990 to address cliff management and nature conservation issues in one of the busiest National Parks in Britain. The group meets twice per year and comprises 10 individuals from the National Park Authority, English Nature, the National Trust, the military, outdoor education centres and the British Mountaineering Council. The group provides a regular forum for assessing the impacts of mountaineering, to identify measures to protect environmentally sensitive sites, to review seasonal bird nesting restrictions (for peregrine and raven) and to develop good practice initiatives (e.g. preparing leaflets to promote minimum impact practices amongst outdoor centres).

Photographs: Front cover – (top) Yosemite Valley; (bottom) sea cliff climbing, England; This page – (top) Cliff flora, Scotland; (left) Bolted limestone, France.  
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## ACCESS AND CONSERVATION STRATEGIES FOR CLIMBING AREAS



### .....what is this leaflet about

These guidelines have been produced by the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to help member federations and partner organisations to develop effective access and conservation strategies. The guidelines mainly apply to rock climbing on cliffs below the Alpine zone including those situated in valleys, woodland, moorland and on hillsides and coastlines. Many of the issues covered also apply to the Alpine zone however. The guidelines highlight the UIAA's fundamental principles of access and conservation, and describe how national, regional and local strategies can be developed and implemented. The importance of communicating access information to climbers is a key issue which is stressed throughout the guidelines.

### .....climbers and the cliff environment

Cliffs can be important for many different reasons including climbing, nature conservation and geological interest. Many important climbing cliffs have little wildlife or biological significance while many cliffs and steep places of importance for nature conservation are not significant for climbing. Where there is nature conservation interest, climbers would wish to maintain and support it, not only on the cliffs themselves, but also on the approach and descents routes and in the immediate neighbouring areas. The UIAA and IUCN recognise that many different activities, including climbing, may threaten any sensitive cliff flora or fauna, and consider that management decisions should be made in this context. Climbers should at all times aim to reduce their impact on the natural environment by adopting minimum impact practices. Prominent members of the climbing community have a particular responsibility for promoting environmental awareness amongst climbers.

### ...our rights and responsibilities

The UIAA and IUCN consider that:

- Freedom of access to cliffs, and climbing in a responsible and sustainable way, are basic human rights. Nature also has rights.
- Climbing and the enjoyment of the natural environment are essential for nurturing the human spirit.
- If climbing and nature conservation objectives come onto conflict, any access restrictions should be based on an objective analysis of information, flexibility, dialogue and co-operation between climbers and conservation organisations.
- Climbers should respect restrictions that balance human impact with wildlife protection provided they are supported by well-founded data.

## DEVELOPING NATIONAL & REGIONAL STRATEGIES

National and regional strategies should be based upon an analysis of sites, patterns and trends of use and upon a philosophy of partnership between climbers, land managers, conservation organisations and local communities. Strategies should aim to promote minimum impact principles and should include mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Developing a knowledge base and setting up management structures for decision making are the first stages in formulating national and regional strategies.

### Developing a Knowledge Base

build up local knowledge from climbers and partners

develop methods to collect information

use existing information and knowledge whenever possible

develop systems for storing, processing and accessing information

identify and fill information gaps

develop systems for reviewing and updating information



Liaison meeting - Derbyshire, England

### Partnership & Co-operation

Strategies should be based upon partnership and co-operation between land managers, conservation organisations, local communities and climbers. Partners may include:

*Mountaineering federations and clubs, individuals experts on climbing or conservation, landowners and their federations, national sports federations, equipment makers or shops, and other commercial operators.*

### Setting up Management Structures

identify key figures in the climbing community

identify partner organisations and individuals

assess the conservation interests of each climbing region

establish methods for conflict resolution

define codes of conduct and good practice for climbers

## SETTING UP LOCAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Local access and conservation strategies should be developed by local liaison groups comprising climbers, conservation bodies and landowners with guidance from Mountaineering Federations. Management decisions and strategies should be based on climbing trends, levels of use, ecological factors, land ownership and legal issues. Local liaison groups should encourage climbers to respect local communities and to support local businesses and conservation initiatives.

The Peregrine Falcon - a regular cliff nesting bird - photo RSPB



### Functions of Local Groups

explore transport and parking solutions (e.g. promoting public transport)

advise on facilities (accommodation, sanitation, waste disposal etc)

assess the costs and benefits of climbing

liaise and consult with landowners, conservation bodies etc

negotiate cliff access routes

advise on the management of cliff base areas (e.g. footpaths, trails and eroded ground)

determine zonation arrangements or seasonal restrictions (e.g. for nesting birds) when necessary

provide low-key site information (e.g. guidelines to reduce rock/vegetation damage)

define local policies and management options (e.g. for vegetation removal, fixed equipment or rappel anchors to protect sensitive cliff top areas)

monitor impacts on sensitive sites in partnership with conservation bodies (e.g. ecological survey work)

### Setting up Local Liaison Groups

decide if a local liaison group is needed (based on levels of use, ecological sensitivity and land management and environmental impact factors)

identify key organisations and individuals (e.g. climbers, local clubs, guides, mountain rescue)

define aims, objectives, scope and agenda

secure participation from local government officials, landowners, nature conservation bodies and NGOs

agree a meeting schedule, working methods, responsibilities and an action plan

identify priority areas or sites which need regular monitoring or sensitive management (e.g. ecologically important cliffs in national parks or nature reserves)

# GUIDELINES ON ACCESS AND CONSERVATION ON CRAGS AND CLIFFS

Outputs from the UIAA/IUCN workshop on  
“Climbers, Mountains, and the Environment”  
Barcelona, 1-3 May 1998

These guidelines are intended for the use of UIAA member federations and organisations with complementary interests. They have been formulated primarily for rock climbing on crags and cliffs below the Alpine zone, but may often have general application in the Alpine zone. The guidelines include three components: principles, strategies, and actions. Strategies should be defined and implemented through actions at two levels: national/regional and local.

## PRINCIPLES

The guidelines are based on the following **general principles**:

- 1) Freedom of access to all crags and cliffs, and climbing in a responsible and sustainable way, should be basic human rights.
- 2) While climbing and the enjoyment of nature are essential ingredients for nurturing the human spirit, nature also has rights.
- 3) Where potential, actual, or perceived conflicts between these rights occur, knowledge, flexibility, dialogue, and cooperation should be employed in order to establish whether any restriction on access is appropriate, and in implementing any such restriction.

These general principles are supported by other more **specific principles**:

- 1) Many crags and cliffs have considerable importance for the conservation of birds, animals, and plants.
- 2) The natural conditions of crags and cliffs are very diverse.
- 3) Climbing is only one of a number of activities that may endanger the survival of particular species of birds, animals, and/or plants on a particular crag or cliff.
- 4) Decision-makers should not misuse restrictions.
- 5) Climbers should accept restrictions on climbing in specific places and at particular times when these restrictions are supported by well-founded data.
- 6) Climbers should follow minimum-impact principles.
- 7) Active pioneers, group leaders, and guide writers have special responsibilities for fostering sustainable climbing through example, awareness-raising, and education.

## NATIONAL & REGIONAL STRATEGIES

At the national and regional levels, strategies relating to access and conservation should be based on appropriate **knowledge**:

- a national inventory of sites
- information on patterns and trends of use
- identification of stakeholders (see appendix 1)

**Structures** set up to implement strategies should:

- be based on stakeholder analysis
- define the responsibilities of stakeholders
- include capability to react to new information, events, etc.

Strategies should include well-defined **information and communication** components:

- internal (within the climbing community and those most directly concerned with defining and implementing a strategy)
- external (to all those others concerned)

Both internal and external communication should be:

- transparent (recognising that some information should not be publicly available, as it may endanger particular species, or lead to commercial gain)
- regular

Strategies should be based on **best practice** and finding **solutions**. They should include mechanisms for ongoing **monitoring and evaluation**.

## ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT NATIONAL & REGIONAL STRATEGIES

### Knowledge basis

The **knowledge basis** should be developed efficiently and effectively. Necessary actions are:

- development of common methodologies
- training in the use of manuals describing common methodologies
- development and implementation of efficient information processing, storage, and access
- use of existing information and knowledge wherever possible
- building up knowledge from the local level (involving climbers and partners - see Appendix 1)
- identifying and filling information gaps
- identifying potential and existing problems and conflicts

## Structures

Different **structures** should be set up to develop and implement strategies. At the **national** level, necessary actions are to:

- set up a national structure with representatives from the climbing community
- conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify partners (see Appendix 1)
- set up a national structure with representatives from the climbing community and partners
- establish mechanisms for conflict identification and resolution
- define climbing regions (according to cultural, geological, and/or any other appropriate criteria)

At the **regional** level, necessary actions are to:

- set up a regional structure with representatives from the climbing community
- conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify partners (see Appendix 1)
- set up a regional structure with representatives from the climbing community and partners
- establish mechanisms for conflict identification and resolution

In general, representatives from individual regions will participate in the national structure.

## Information and communication

Actions related to the external dissemination of **information and communication** regarding the principles, processes, and decisions of strategies should:

- use diverse media (brochures, leaflets, meetings, Internet, etc.)
- be targeted at different audiences (press and broadcast media, climbers, public, specialised, etc.)
- be on-going
- be consistent in content and format

Internal communication must be efficient, on-going, and consistent in content and format.

## Best practice/solutions

Actions to define **best practice and solutions** may include:

- definition of a code of conduct for climbers
- definition of processes for defining special measures, based on available knowledge

## LOCAL STRATEGIES

At local levels, strategies should be developed and implemented through **local networks**. This entails:

- identification of local climbers and climbing-related groups and organisations:
- individual active climbers, local clubs and club sections, commercial guides, trainers, education and training establishments, mountain rescue
- identification of other local actors:
- local authorities, landowners, nature conservation bodies and NGOs, etc.
- definition of local network
- establishment of local network
- definition of agenda:
- frequency of meeting, working method, action plan, responsibilities, funding, etc.

The activities of the local network must be based on current local **knowledge** regarding climbed and non-climbed crags and cliffs, with a survey of:

- climbing situation
- ecological features
- legal aspects, ownership

Higher priority should be given to crags in protected areas (national parks, nature reserves, etc.). Mechanisms must be put in place to:

- regularly update the survey
- develop and act on recommendations
- implement management actions (including rescue aspects)

**Information and best practice** must be communicated, using means such as:

- leaflets
- guidebooks
- signs
- climbing magazines
- local press and broadcast media
- NGOs and climbing and Alpine clubs

These activities should be complemented through educational activities, such as:

- informing and training group leaders
- training guides
- joint site visits and projects

All communication should be linked to activities at national and regional levels.

One emphasis of any strategy should be to stress the **benefits of climbing to local communities**, for instance through:

- encouraging development and use of local businesses ('local sell and spend')
- establishing or supporting local trust funds (e.g., for conservation work)
- support for local clubs, organisations, and projects (e.g., sale of stickers)

## LOCAL ACTIONS

One set of actions for the implementation of local strategies relates to **access**. This includes:

- a transport policy, including the promotion of the use of public transport
- a facilities concept, for accommodation, sanitary facilities, waste disposal, etc.
- relative assessment of benefits and problems associated with climbing
- provision of clear access routes to crags and cliffs
- contact with landowners, with emphases on respect for the immediate environment, local people and culture
- no waste
- car park security
- regular monitoring and reporting of all of the above

A second set of actions relates to **detailed measures on individual crags and cliffs**, based on survey and monitoring. When necessary, and based on current knowledge, zoning and/or seasonal restrictions may be implemented. On-site management actions should include:

- management of crag base areas (trails, etc.)
- provision of site information (the minimum necessary)
- definition of a policy on vegetation removal and fixed equipment
- installation of rappel anchors to avoid fragile top areas
- no waste
- regular monitoring and reporting of all of the above, as well as any conservation problems

## ***APPENDIX 1: PARTNERS IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STRATEGIES***

The following list of potential partners illustrates the range of partner organisations that should be included in developing and implementing national and regional strategies. Many of these groups would also be represented in local networks.

- 1) Mountaineering federations and clubs
- 2) The public
  - unaffiliated climbers and mountaineers
- 3) Landowner federations
  - private landowners
  - commercial landowners
  - foundations, trusts, charities
  - government
- 4) Sports and recreation
  - national sports federations
  - national outdoor sports federations
  - national Olympic committee
  - hunters' federations
  - automobile clubs/associations
- 5) Commercial
  - manufacturers
  - retailers
  - commercial operators