

THE UIAA ENVIRONMENTAL
AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
OBJECTIVES AND GUIDELINES

SUSTAINABILITY CHARTER



UIAA



<https://www.theuiaa.org/sustainability-charter/>

Suggested Citation:

UIAA (2024). The UIAA Environmental and Social Sustainability Objectives and Guidelines. Bern: The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA). 4 November, 2024 - <https://www.theuiaa.org/sustainability-charter/>

Credits

Authors, contributing co-authors, and reviewers (UIAA Mountain Protection Commission):

Carolina **Adler** (New Zealand Alpine Club, NZAC)
Maretha **Alant** (Mountain Club of South Africa, MCSA)
Hussein **Bagirov** (Western Caspian University)
Paul **Kwakkenbos** (Royal Dutch Climbing and Mountaineering Association, NKBV)
Tore **Lundberg** (Norwegian Alpine Club, NTK)
Irena **Mrak** (Alpine Association of Slovenia, PZS)
Valeska **Oliveira** (Confederação Brasileira de Montanhismo e Escalada, CBME)
Mary **Sanseverino** (Alpine Club of Canada, ACC)

Research:

Marta **Mills** (Independent Consultant)

Additional UIAA reviewers:

Peter **Muir** (Alpine Club of Canada, ACC; UIAA President and UIAA Executive Committee member)
Young **Hoon Oh** (Korean Alpine Federation, KAF; UIAA Management Board member)

External reviewers:

Ansgar **Fellendorf**
United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment)

Thiago **do Val Simardi Beraldo Souza**
Ernesto **Viveiros de Castro**
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group

UIAA Office support:

Carol **Kahoun-Kauer**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
About these Guidelines: A changing context for climbing and mountaineering	5
The UIAA Social & Environmental Sustainability Objectives and Guidelines	7
1. Preamble	7
2. Foundational Documents	9
3. Key issues of concern for the environmental and social sustainability of climbing & mountaineering	9
Climate Change	9
Environmental impacts of climbing and mountaineering	10
4. Responses and Actions	13
Addressing climate change	14
Reducing impacts to the natural environment	16
Cross-cutting actions that address environmental and social impacts and promote positive change in climbing and mountaineering	17
Annex I - Foundational Documents	19
UIAA foundational documents since 2022	19
Other external foundational documents	20
Annex II - Guidelines and resources issued by UIAA Member Federations	21
Annex III - Key information sources and references	22

INTRODUCTION

In 2022, and as a contribution from the UIAA to the observance of the UN-declared International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, the General Assembly of the UIAA adopted the proposal made by the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission to review and update the UIAA's 'Environmental Objectives and Guidelines', which were first published in 2002 to observe the first International Year of Mountains. Looking back at the original guidelines, they have indeed stood the test of time and have remained highly relevant for the UIAA. However, climbing and mountaineering have undergone considerable changes in the 20 plus years since then, and so have the conditions in which we exercise these activities in the mountains.

The UIAA's Mountain Protection Commission delegates, as well as other UIAA colleagues, past and present, have contributed to the review and update of these guidelines, which take stock of these changes and the role that climbers and mountaineers need to play in how we respond to the ensuing impacts, and conversely, how we affect these trends. My hope is that we as an organization, our member federations and the many climbers and mountaineers gathered through them, take heed of this advice and reflect them in all aspects of our operations and activities.

By acknowledging and adopting these recommendations, we take a concerted step towards operationalizing our own commitments towards sustainability, as per our strategic goals for 2020-2024. More generally, by promoting these objectives and guidelines we demonstrate the responsible mindset and stewardship expected of us as climbers; not only towards our own sport and its rightful place in promoting human wellbeing and awe-inspiring connection with nature, but also in engaging in the decisions and policy processes that shape the future of our mountains.

As the UIAA reflects on the outcomes of its strategic goals set for the 2020-2024 period, and prepares to define its next strategic objectives for 2025-2028, I trust that these guidelines, and how we implement them, also contribute towards the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions in 2023-2027.



Peter Muir
UIAA President



ABOUT THESE GUIDELINES - A CHANGING CONTEXT FOR CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING



The protection of the mountain environment has always been a chief priority and concern for the UIAA. Since it was founded in 1969, the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission (MPC) has worked to guide action and be the voice of the UIAA for advocacy on mountain protection – the mountains being key spaces of significance on Earth. Our goal is to support the UIAA in ensuring the mountains’ unique environment and cultures will still be there for the benefit of future generations of mountaineers and wider humanity. We also seek to promote and share the lessons learnt from the work and positive contributions made from UIAA members and the broader mountaineering community towards sustainable mountain development.

In fulfilling these goals and role, the **UIAA Environmental and Social Sustainability Objectives and Guidelines (2024)** represent a key product and contribution from us as MPC to the UIAA that provides overarching guidance and advise to the UIAA and its members in meeting mountain protection and broader sustainability objectives within the remit of their activities. These guidelines are a compilation of years of deliberations among Commission delegates on how best to update and modernize the UIAA’s *2002 UIAA Environmental Objectives and Guidelines*. Not only was this update considered necessary in view of fast-changing environmental and social impacts that affect climbing and mountaineering, but also in view of the impacts that our activities themselves have in mountain regions and beyond. Furthermore, given the observance of the UN-declared International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development in 2022, the timing for such an update was imperative.

Based on the UIAA’s 2002 guidelines, this update reflects the responses needed from the climbing and mountaineering community in view of issues such as the “triple planetary crisis” faced today on climate change, nature (ecosystems and biodiversity) loss, and pollution, whilst also upholding and responding to the UIAA’s own strategic objectives and priorities on sustainability.

For these guidelines, **sustainability** is broadly applied as an overarching principle that guides the responsibilities and actions that the UIAA, its members, and its community of climbers and mountaineers can take when pursuing and promoting climbing and mountaineering, considering the potential environmental, social, and economic impacts that these activities can have on the mountains and beyond. We focus on the expected practical actions that the UIAA can take at the organisational level, plus those of its members, and the broader climbing and mountaineering community in taking collective action.

Going forwards, the UIAA MPC stands committed to offering its expertise, service, and support to the UIAA and its members in accompanying the ongoing practical application of these guidelines through concrete actions. Conversely, the MPC also encourages the active engagement and contributions from the UIAA, its members and their communities in sharing experiences and lessons learned that offer insights for improving these guidelines as part of their ongoing application and review.

Carolina ADLER, PhD
New Zealand (NZAC)
UIAA Mountain Commission President
April 2016 - April 2024

Paul KWAKKENBOS
Netherlands (NKBV)
UIAA Mountain Commission President
Since May 2024

On behalf of the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission (as of 11 April 2024)

Maretha **ALANT** South Africa, (MCSA)
Hussein **BAGIROV** Azerbaijan, (WCU)
Jan Ivar **BØE** Norway, (NTK)
Harshwanti **BISHT** India, (IMF)
Jan **COOLS** Belgium, (CMBel)
Toba **DYSION** Indonesia, (FPTI)
Namaraj **GAULI** Nepal, (NMA)
Ganesh **GURUNG** Nepal, (NMA)
Juan Ignacio **INZA** Argentina, (FASA)
Miyoung **JEONG** Republic of Korea, (KAF)
Tore **LUNDBERG** Norway, (NTK)
Irena **MRAK** Slovenia, (PZS)
Arda **ODABASIOGLU** Turkey, (TDF)
Valeska **OLIVEIRA** Brazil, (CBME)
Zuleyma Berenice **RINCON SAUCEDA** Mexico, (FMDMYE)
Mary **SANSEVERINO** Canada, (ACC)
Doma **SHERPA** Nepal, (NMA)
Dave **TURNBULL** United Kingdom, (BMC)
Mario **VACCARELLA** Italy, (CAI)

THE UIAA ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES AND GUIDELINES

1. PREAMBLE

1.1

These environmental and social sustainability objectives and guidelines (henceforth “guidelines”) reflect and operationalise the sustainability-oriented goals stipulated in the 2021-2024 UIAA Strategic Plan. On the one hand, the guidelines provide an outline of the main environmental and social sustainability issues that concern the UIAA – particularly on matters such as climate change, nature (ecosystems and biodiversity) loss, pollution and waste, and social wellbeing, among others. The guidelines also provide a basis for how the UIAA, and its members, can take actions to address these concerns.

1.2

Sustainability is broadly understood and applied here as a concept that guides the responsibilities and actions that the UIAA, its members, and its community of climbers and mountaineers can take when pursuing climbing and mountaineering. In this context, sustainability is not only about protecting mountain ecosystems and conserving its natural resources; it is also about addressing the impacts of climate change, supporting the wellbeing of local communities and those who depend on climbing and mountaineering for their livelihood, and in being an exemplar and a positive influence for society at large. It is about minimising the negative and maximising the positive environmental, social, and economic impacts associated with climbing and mountaineering, thereby ensuring that mountains and climbing and mountaineering can thrive and continue to be enjoyed by current and future generations.

1.3

These guidelines refer to the terms “climbing and mountaineering”, as promoted by the UIAA and its member federations, and as practiced by individuals, which include all types of recreational activities that are carried out in mountainous terrain such as rock climbing, mountaineering (alpinism and expedition climbing), hiking and trekking, trail running and sky running, canyoning, ice climbing, snowshoeing and ski touring, among others.

1.4

The guidelines consider both the impacts on climbing and mountaineering associated with global, regional, and local changes taking place in mountain areas, as well as the effects and impacts of these activities on the mountain environment, local communities, and society at large.

1.5

The guidelines consider the differentiated roles and responsibilities that the UIAA as a federating global organisation, its member federations and associations, and individuals can take to help safeguard a future for climbing and mountaineering as a positive influence and contribution to society.

1.6

The guidelines outline key principles, expectations, and essential information that underpin the practical actions that the UIAA as an organisation and its member federations need to plan for and specify for their context.

1.7

While these guidelines set expectations of the UIAA and its members on how we as a community promote sustainability values through climbing and mountaineering, an important measure of their utility is in the continuous monitoring of actions that operationalise these guidelines into practice. The objective should be to support and create opportunities for exchange and collective learning as part of a community that shares common values and goals, plus the regular review and update of both the guidelines and the need to include relevant metrics and progress made via the [UIAA Annual Reports](#) and agenda at the General Assembly. Therefore:

1.7.1

The UIAA commits to ensuring these guidelines are regularly reviewed for consistency as part of strategic and operational planning processes and commits to ensuring that adequate resources and capacities are sourced for practical actions that respond to these guidelines. A standing agenda item and relevant activity (e.g. workshop) is recommended as part of the programme of the annual UIAA General Assembly, plus a brief account on progress made in implementing these guidelines as part of the [UIAA Annual Report](#).

1.7.2

The UIAA Mountain Protection Commission (MPC) commits to supporting the UIAA and its members in facilitating an annual review, stocktaking, and / or update of both the guidelines and the practical actions taken across the UIAA to implement them. It also commits to supporting the UIAA in applying these guidelines as part of training and facilitation of capacity development on mountain protection and sustainability priorities.

2. FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

2.1

These guidelines are based on and are consistent with numerous international guidance on climate change, mountain protection and conservation, and best practices aimed at minimising impacts from sports and recreation activities. They are also based on the UIAA's own declarations and policy statements, training handbook curricula and resources, plus external declarations (see Annex I). Furthermore, several UIAA member federations have their own policies and guidelines with sustainability goals, which are listed in Annex II.

3. KEY ISSUES OF CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING

Climate Change

3.1

Climate change is one of many key challenges that threaten mountain regions and the multiple and diverse ecosystems and people that depend on them. The UIAA recognises that our climbing and mountaineering community not only acutely observe key changes seen in mountains but also experience first-hand the negative impacts associated with a fast-changing climate.

3.2

Rising temperatures is a key driver of accelerated climate-related changes seen in mountains, with human-induced greenhouse gas emissions being the key contributor to this warming trend. Rising temperatures result in rising freezing levels in mountains, inducing changes to snow and ice conditions such as melting glaciers, thawing permafrost, and reduced snow cover extent and seasonal duration. Key impacts and risks to climbing and mountaineering that are associated with these changes, include:

3.2.1

Increased exposure to natural hazards such as landslides, rockfalls, (flash) floods, (rain-on-snow) avalanches, and unstable terrain, with many climate-induced hazards negatively affecting the access, seasonality, and condition of climbing and mountaineering routes.

3.2.2

Changes to the natural environment (ecosystems) and character of iconic mountain landscapes and their intrinsic value, with endemic plant and animal species that are adapted to high-elevations, and which are dependent on snow and ice cover, being displaced to higher habitats and mountain-tops, with risk of extinctions.

3.2.3

Alterations to the water cycle in mountains, including variable timing of glacier melt and snowmelt reflected in river stream flows, which have variable negative impacts on water availability for ecosystems and people and economies, especially in seasonally dry regions.

3.2.4

Changes to weather, seasons, and extreme events, such as enhanced weather conditions for wildfire, which can in turn exacerbate disaster risks through loss of lives and property, water and air quality, and negative impacts to wildlife and plant species such as loss of habitat.

3.2.5

Profound changes to ways of life and cultural identity, with loss of cultural values becoming increasingly more widespread in mountain regions, including cultural legacies and heritage.

3.3

Key contributions from climbing and mountaineering to human-induced climate change is mainly through the emissions of greenhouse gases associated with mobility (e.g. travel to mountain destinations), and to some extent the indirect links to fossil fuel-based energy use that is associated with the manufacturing and transport of equipment used in climbing and mountaineering - including technical clothing. Energy use for other ancillary activities associated with climbing and mountaineering that rely on fossil fuels can also contribute to these emissions.

3.4

Given current trends in greenhouse gas emissions, and the projected changes and impacts associated with climate change in the future, it seems sure that climate-related risks in mountains are set to increase and fundamentally affect the sustainability of climbing and mountaineering. These changing risks pose challenges for water supply, energy production, ecosystems, disaster preparedness, mountain cultural identity, and key economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry, tourism and recreation. Awareness and knowledge of climate-related risks should form part of what informs and guides actions to mitigate and adapt.

Environmental impacts of climbing and mountaineering

Nature - biodiversity and geodiversity

3.5

Mountains host high degrees of biodiversity concentrated in small spaces. High elevation habitats are not only home to endemic plant and animal species, but also play a pivotal role as refuges to species in lower elevations that are threatened by climate change and human-induced pressures such as trampling and land use. Mountains are also hosts to what is increasingly being recognised as "geodiversity", which entails the rich variety and diversity of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments, and soils, together with the natural processes that lead to their formation.

3.6

The damage and loss of bio- and geodiversity associated with climbing and mountaineering can have profound effects on the natural vegetation cover, richness and range of animal species, and the loss of soil and vegetation through erosion, and rock quality and overall landscape appeal. Consequently, the attraction and intangible value of mountainous landscapes could not only be diminished, but also the fundamental functioning of mountain ecosystems could be compromised. Examples of impacts to nature (bio- and geodiversity) from climbing and mountaineering activities, include:

3.6.1

Excessive overuse of sensitive areas through concentrated numbers of visitors or extended use in relatively small spaces (such as campsites and basecamps) or along trails, leading to nature degradation through the clearing or trampling of vegetation, compaction and erosion of soil cover, noise, wildlife disturbance (especially near hibernating or nesting sites) and their displacement.

3.6.2

Introduction of exotic (alien) species or pathogens, for example through contaminated soil in climbing shoes, boots, or tents, that can be invasive or damaging to endemic species thereby displacing them from their native habitat.

3.6.3

Altering, defacing, or scarring the surface of cliffs and rock walls through bolting, anchors, chalk use, or the installation of infrastructure to facilitate access and climbing, such as via ferratas or ladders.

3.7

The extent of damage and impact can vary significantly depending on the type of mountain activity being undertaken, the number of individuals in a party (or parties), the local climbing ethics and accepted practices, and the length of time spent camped in-situ in the natural environment, which can range from recreational day walks, hikes or climbs, all the way to multi-day treks or alpine and expedition climbing requiring base camps and camps at higher elevations above the treeline.

Waste and pollution

3.8

A well-documented and highly visible environmental impact associated with climbing and mountaineering pertains to waste in all its forms - human waste (excreta and urine); litter and rubbish; solid waste material associated with equipment and supplies (e.g., tin cans, glass, plastic wrappers and bottles, food packaging, oxygen bottles, batteries, plastic bags, drums, discarded ropes and tents, pharmaceuticals, personal and cleaning products such as detergents, etc.); scars from camp wood fires for cooking or warmth (especially during trekking to and from basecamps); and waste from pack animals.

3.9

Expedition climbing and mountaineering - especially in remote and high-elevation regions - demand considerably longer periods of time on the mountain, requiring relatively large loads of equipment and supplies and therefore a high potential to generate considerable amounts of waste. In many cases, given poor waste disposal practices by climbing parties, and the lack of adequate waste removal and processing services or infrastructure available en route, means that a highly visible and persistent waste problem continues to affect some mountain destinations, particularly at base camps.

3.10

Human waste can introduce bacteria, viruses and other pathogens and can contaminate fresh water and soil surfaces. Coupled with waste from farm or pack animals such as cows, horses, and mules, this can also contribute to algal blooms and high toxicity levels in soil and freshwater.

3.11

In recent years there has been an increase in awareness of the extent and magnitude of plastic pollution and in particular single use plastics and micro-plastics, the latter now found even in remote mountain areas including freshwater bodies. Common sources of micro plastics include materials used to manufacture outdoor equipment such as climbing ropes, tents, and technical clothing, as well as discarded plastic waste.

Infrastructure development

3.12

Other key issues that should be considered in climbing and mountaineering, include infrastructure development, for example for the development of new or existing (expansion) of ski resorts through the installation of cable cars or road building, some of which are used by some climbers and mountaineers to facilitate their own access to the mountain backcountry. This infrastructure can lead to intrusive changes to the mountain landscape and its intrinsic value and can be particularly concerning when these types of development result from poor planning or unsustainably managed tourism development. Furthermore, such development can also include soil surface sealing (e.g. for building footprints, roads, or parking areas). Paved surfaces can heat up faster, do not absorb carbon or water, and can increase the likelihood of local flooding.

Social impacts of climbing and mountaineering

3.13

Local communities in the areas where climbing and mountaineering takes place can be very susceptible to impacts from activities undertaken by climbers and mountaineers visiting their regions, particularly in remote areas. For example, they can be disturbed by high levels and concentrations of visitor noise or campsite activity and can be affected by reduced availability of scarce shared resources such as fresh water or firewood. The COVID pandemic and the ongoing post-pandemic recovery has further highlighted the fragility of mountain areas and how these can be affected when subjected to increased pressures associated with large visitor numbers, including uncontrolled waste and pollution, crowding, erosion to access trails and damage to nature and campsites and surrounding areas, among other impacts.

3.14

Foreign traditions, customs, lifestyles, technology (e.g. drones), and products such as technical climbing equipment or clothing can also interact with and influence the unique culture, traditions, knowledge, and livelihoods of mountain communities, particularly in remote and Indigenous communities. In addition, lack of awareness and respect for local customs and traditions by visitors can cause tensions with the local communities. Recognising these interactions and realities is important for fostering good relations with local communities in destinations that are valued by climbers and mountaineers.

3.15

Conversely, climbing and mountaineering can also generate positive impacts. It can serve as supporting exemplars for peace building, health and wellbeing, promote cross-cultural awareness and understanding, foster pride in cultural traditions and support in heritage building, help avoid depopulation and urban relocation by creating local jobs and livelihood opportunities locally, and increase visitor awareness and appreciation of natural, cultural, and historical values and assets in mountains.

3.16

Climbing and mountaineering can also motivate other individuals, including from local communities, to participate in mountain recreation through adventure and fitness activities, thereby promoting healthy lifestyles and mental and physical wellbeing whilst appreciating the awe and value of the natural mountain environment. More recently, climbing and mountaineering have also been recognised as beneficial components of therapy programmes that seek to assist “at risk” groups of society and promote their connection to the natural environment as part of their recovery.

3.17

The social impacts of climbing and mountaineering can be far reaching and may reach not only those living on the mountains, but also outfitters, guides and leaders, gear manufacturers, policy makers, and other mountain enthusiasts, many of whom reside in urban centres or cities outside of the mountains. It is therefore important to recognise and consider how the impacts of climbing and mountaineering – both negative and positive – include both the environmental and social factors associated with the types of activities promoted by the UIAA and its members, and their potential influence beyond the mountains and its core constituencies.

4. RESPONSES AND ACTIONS

4.1

The UIAA believes that climbers and mountaineers can best meet their environmental responsibilities and help safeguard mountain regions and their local other communities, through actions that include (self) awareness, planning and implementing practical measures, advocacy, and the regular exchange of experiences and best practices to foster learning and improvement on an ongoing basis. In so doing, our community stands to protect and contribute positively to the places and communities that give meaning and essence to climbing and mountaineering – for today and tomorrow.

4.2

Through its member federations and associations, partners, and community of climbers and mountaineers at large, the UIAA can also stand to benefit from the expertise and recommendations from others through learned experiences, initiatives, projects, as well as the opinions and suggestions made by its member federations and Commissions. The UIAA can play a key role in facilitating and bridging these exchanges between these key stakeholders, among others, to foster these fruitful two-way dialogues.

4.3

Given that many of the topics covered under key issues of concern are interlinked and do overlap, these guidelines should be translated into and operationalised through relatively simple, practical, and integrative approaches that are adaptable and suited to the situation, context, and intended audience(s) or group(s) of participants.

These are the key requirements:

Addressing climate change

4.4

Consistent with the strategic priorities of the UIAA, addressing climate change through mitigation and adaptation actions and advocacy are important contributions that the climbing and mountaineering community can make, acknowledging that the global climate crisis is also about equity and justice and there is a need to offer opportunities to future generations of climbers and mountaineers – and local and other communities – to enjoy and thrive in the mountains.

These actions can include:

At the UIAA organisational level

4.4.1

In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with UIAA core activities, and consistent with the UIAA's commitments as signatory to the Sports for Climate Action (S4CA) Initiative of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UIAA commits to not only continue measuring and reporting on its carbon footprint (operations and core events), but it also to regularly review and improve its data collection and reporting methods to align with best practices endorsed and vetted by the UNFCCC.

4.4.2

Based on the insights gathered from its carbon monitoring and reporting, the UIAA commits to formulating an organisational climate policy within its strategic goals in 2025-2028 that includes mitigation actions by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Examples of such actions include prioritizing the use of public transport and minimizing the use of air transport to access climbing destinations as much as possible or reducing climbing equipment replacement and overconsumption while considering the necessary safety considerations. Collectively, these actions should align with the principles of “avoiding”, “reducing”, and “compensating” for emissions (in that order), and contribute to meeting the set targets posed by the S4CA – i.e., reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% from a set baseline by 2030, and a long-term target to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. Formulating and implementing this policy counts on the technical support and inputs from the UIAA MPC, the UIAA Climate Change Task Force, and its member federations, thereby fostering and maintaining institutional memory, capacities, and expertise.

4.4.3

The UIAA climate policy and activity plans need to include and address adaptation actions that are critical for the organisation and its member federations. This can be achieved through communication, education, and support for skills training. For example, by developing content in publications such as skills handbooks, informing on key objective risks associated with hazards in mountains in a changing climate, as well as content on climate change adaptation in syllabus and skills training in courses conducted by or certified by the UIAA.

4.4.4

External communication, advocacy, engagement with key partners and stakeholders, and representation and participation in global processes that specifically address the impacts and climate-related risks affecting mountain regions are key tasks for the UIAA to take and lead with and on behalf of its member federations, thereby promoting the voice of climbers and mountaineers at these key deliberations and outreach.

Member federations

4.4.5

The UIAA encourages its member federations to formulate their own policies and actions to help understand and reduce the carbon footprint associated with the operations of their organisations, as well as adapt to climate impacts and risks, and in turn help inform and support their individual members in reducing their carbon footprint and adapting to the negative impacts of climate change to climbing and mountaineering. These policies and actions need to align with an organizational statement on the climate crisis to help their community understand why addressing climate change is integral to their work and mission, as well as state goals and targets to be achieved.

4.4.6

Understanding that travel-related emissions represent one of many environmental impacts associated with climbing and mountaineering in terms of carbon emissions, member associations can address this by developing place-specific content and leveraging on existing information and tools¹ that encourage individuals to measure and learn on how to reduce the carbon footprint of their trip.

4.4.7

Member federations commit to sharing experiences and lessons learned regarding methods used to reduce organizations' carbon footprint including mitigation, adaptation and compensation techniques.

¹ For example, via tools and resources such as those available at <https://www.climberscuttingcarbon.org>

Reducing impacts to the natural environment

4.5

The UIAA recognises that travel through, and being in awe-inspiring places, is an essential element in many climbing and mountaineering experiences, and climbers and mountaineers should endeavour to keep those places pristine by considering and reducing their impact on the natural environment.

Relevant actions can include:

At the UIAA organisational level

4.5.1

The UIAA needs to have projects and activities in place that showcase and promote learning on how reducing the environmental impacts of climbing and mountaineering and support ecosystem restoration translate to tangible co-benefits and stewardship of mountain spaces, while supporting its member federations to engage and participate in this learning. This could be achieved by building on the legacy of the UIAA Mountain Protection Award (2013-2023) and the upcoming UIAA Awards concept and strategy, plus the facilitation and programming of workshops and events at UIAA General Assemblies. These actions need to be coupled with corresponding communication and outreach campaigns. Conversely, the UIAA should adopt and implement its own organizational policies that demonstrate a concerted commitment to minimize waste and avoid pollution through its operations, events, and activities.

4.5.2

The UIAA supports educational work and the development of training material to foster a greater and broader understanding of the inherent character and value of mountain environments. The UIAA encourages the inclusion of curricula geared at environmental education and risk awareness and management into the certification and training programmes for climbing and mountaineering instructors, and as part of the regular reviews of publications such as its Alpine Skills Handbook series.

Member federations

4.5.3

Member federations can provide and promote databases, tools and resources available to their members via their website or printed publications or newsletters, to help climbers and mountaineers make well-informed and responsible choices and minimise their impact on the environment and actively engage in ecosystem restoration efforts. These can include tips on implementing “leave no trace” principles, tips on reducing waste (e.g. eliminate single-use products, sourcing reusable and repairable clothing and equipment); importance of staying on designated trails and in designated campsites; use of limited resources wisely (energy, water, fuel); observance of and adherence to regulations and zoning conditions of parks and protected areas, etc.

4.5.4

Member federations are also encouraged to share key lessons, experiences and recommendations with the UIAA and its Commissions so that the UIAA can also stand to benefit from and adjust and improve its own practices and recommendations based on the successes and challenges faced by its members.

Cross-cutting actions that address environmental and social impacts and promote positive change in climbing and mountaineering

4.6

The UIAA affirms that freedom of access, exercised with responsibility, is an integral element of climbing and mountaineering and the spirit of adventure. The UIAA encourages its member federations to continue their work in advocating for the protection of public lands in their respective countries and regions, while committing to supporting them in these efforts through representation and advice.

4.7

The establishment of protected areas, such as national parks and reserves that safeguard mountain wildlife, plants, and scenery, are important means to ensure mountain protection, so long as these are effectively managed, well integrated with local community needs, and are sensitive to the needs and interest of the climbing mountaineering community, such as freedom of access. Through its member federations, the UIAA supports, where necessary, regulatory arrangements, which are consistent with mountaineering interests and capable of being applied equitably, preferably under voluntary agreement arrangements. Balancing the mountaineering interests with the need to conserve biodiversity is essential for the future of this activity.

4.8

The UIAA communicates and encourages its member federation to promote fair and equitable measures which help climbers and mountaineers contribute directly to the economic prosperity and environmental well-being of local communities, through the purchase of local goods or services or through other reasonable means to support revenue.

4.9

The UIAA recognises and communicates to the mountaineering community that travel to mountain destinations can impact on Indigenous communities and the local people who live there, and mountaineers should endeavour to treat them with respect and support their dignity and well-being. UIAA member federations are encouraged to support their respective members to contribute to the local economy, for example by staying in local accommodation, buying locally sourced and locally produced goods, contracting local guides, etc.; respect their local customs and traditions; and refuse the purchase of crafts or products from protected or endangered species.

4.10

The UIAA encourages its community to support fair treatment of and conditions for the local workforce whose livelihoods depend on climbing and mountaineering, ensuring that the climbing and mountaineering equipment and services provided are non-exploitative or made by underage minors, and paying fair price for local goods and services².

4.11

The UIAA is cognisant of the far-reaching consequences and influence that climbing and mountaineering can have beyond its own community and with those whose employment and livelihood directly depend on climbing and mountaineering practices in the mountain. Active engagement on the multiple and far-reaching influences of climbing is pursued with relevant stakeholders that operate along the mountain tourism and recreation value chain – whether mountainous or in urban centres.

4.12

The UIAA promotes consultation arrangements between other mountaineering-related federations and organisations representing citizen groups, governments, and international organisations on the development of land use, energy and transport policies which affect mountain areas and potentially the access to places valued for climbing and mountaineering. Developing partnerships between these stakeholders is key, given the common interest shared in protecting the mountain environment and engage in climate action, while encouraging responsible and free access to these natural spaces.

4.13

Supporting the advocacy for and creation of more physically accessible trails and places to climb to ensure that climbing and mountaineering is an inclusive and accessible activity for people with various disabilities and mobility issues. For example, by raising awareness of and help promote the more accessible sites on member federations' websites and other communications channels.

4.14

Internal advocacy and engagement within the UIAA should be facilitated through digital platforms and in-person or hybrid workshops, allowing for member federations to meet and exchange on knowledge and experiences; encouraging resource sharing and insights gained from implementing sustainability measures. Organising thematic webinars and events and publishing content that showcases various solutions that address key issues of concern for climbing and mountaineering, should be promoted.

4.15

Collectively, the UIAA, its member federations and associations, and community at large need to advocate with policy and decision makers to recognize that mountains are important, and that responsible climbing and mountaineering is an activity deserving of the highest levels of support. The UIAA and its member federations, respectively, need to have an engagement team in place, or a designated person(s) acting as focal point(s), to liaise and work with key partners and decision makers on a regular basis.

² See for example the UIAA Mountain Worker Initiative <https://www.theuiaa.org/mountain-worker-initiative/>

ANNEX I: FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

Building on the list of UIAA declarations outlined in the Annex appended to the UIAA Environmental Objectives and Guidelines (2002) , the following list includes policy statements, declarations, codes, and guidelines adopted by or noted at UIAA General Assemblies since 2002 . Other additional external documents that the UIAA has signed and /or adopted are also acknowledged in the list below:

UIAA FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS SINCE 2002

2002 UIAA Summit Charter

<https://theuiaa.org/declarations/uiaa-summit-charter/>

2005 Argeos Charter

Guidelines for sustainable mountain tourism in countries with development potential

https://theuiaa.org/documents/declarations/UIAA_2006_ArgeosCharter.pdf

2009 UIAA Mountain Ethics Declaration

https://theuiaa.org/documents/declarations/UIAA_2009_Mountain_Ethics_Declaration-2.pdf

2014 UIAA Recommendations on the Preservation of Natural Rock for Adventure Climbing

<https://theuiaa.org/documents/declarations/13-01-2014-revision-The-Preservation-of-Natural-Rock-for-Adventure-Climbing.pdf>

2015 UIAA Resolution on Climate Change

https://theuiaa.org/documents/declarations/ResolutionOnClimateChange_Oct15.pdf

2015 The Climbers' Manifesto

<https://theuiaa.org/documents/declarations/ClimbersManifesto-web.pdf>

2018 UIAA Code of Ethics

<https://theuiaa.org/documents/members/UIAACodeofEthics2018.pdf>

UIAA Strategic Plan 2021-2024

https://theuiaa.org/documents/members/UIAA_StrategicPlan%202021-2024_GA%20APPROVED.pdf

OTHER EXTERNAL FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

Tyrol Declaration

Presented at the Future of Mountain Sports Conference, held in Innsbruck, Austria, 6-8 September 2002.

https://theuiaa.org/documents/declarations/UIAA_Declaration_TyrolDeclaration.pdf

United Nations Convention on Climate Change - Sports for Climate Action (S4CA)

2019 - UIAA became a signatory to the S4CA initiative.

2022 - UIAA signs commitment pledge as part of the S4CA to reach (net)-zero targets by 2040.

<https://unfccc.int/climate-action/sectoral-engagement/sports-for-climate-action>

Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism

2021 - UIAA became signatory via the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, led by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) of the United Nations, with the governments of France and Spain as Co-leads and in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

<https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-tourism/glasgow-declaration>

ANNEX II: GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES ISSUES BY UIAA MEMBER FEDERATIONS

Known to the UIAA as of 11 April 2024:

AAC American Alpine Club

<https://americanalpineclub.org/advocacy>

ACC Alpine Club of Canada

<https://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/environment/>

CAI Italian Alpine Club

<https://www.cai.it/attivita/ambiente/documenti/>

DAV German Alpine Club

<https://www.alpenverein.de/Natur/>

FEDME Federación Española de Deportes de Montaña y Escalada

<https://medioambientefedme.es/>

NKBV Royal Dutch Climbing and Mountaineering Federation

<https://nkbv.nl/kenniscentrum/visie-op-duurzaamheid.html>

PZS Alpine Association of Slovenia

<https://www.pzs.si/vsebina.php?pid=8>

SAC-CAS Swiss Alpine Club

<https://www.sac-cas.ch/de/umwelt/>

VAVÖ Austrian Alpine Club

<https://www.alpenverein.at/portal/natur-umwelt/index.php>

Others:

International Skyrunning Federation

<http://www.skyrunning.com/environment/>

ANNEX III: GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES ISSUES BY UIAA MEMBER FEDERATIONS

The following sources of information were consulted in the preparation of these Guidelines:

Adler, C., P. Wester, I. Bhatt, C. Huggel, G.E. Insarov, M.D. Morecroft, V. Muccione, and A. Prakash (2022). Cross-Chapter Paper 5: Mountains. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Lösschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 2273-2318, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.022.

AHS (2023). Take the 5 R's of sustainability to the trail. The American Hiking Society, USA.
<https://americanhiking.org/partners/take-the-5-rs-of-sustainability-to-the-trail/>

Alfthan, B., Semernya, L., Ramola, A., Adler, C., Peñaranda, L.F., Andresen, M., Rucevska, I., Jurek, M., Schoolmeester, T., Baker, E., Hauer, W. & Memon, M. (2016). *Waste Management Outlook for Mountain Regions - Sources and Solutions*. UNEP, GRID-Arendal and ISWA. Nairobi, Arendal and Vienna.
www.unep.org, www.grida.no, www.iswa.org

EUROPARC (2023). 10 Good Principles for Outdoor Sports in Protected Areas. The EUROPARC Federation and European Network of Outdoor Sports, Regensburg, Germany.
<http://www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/10-principles-outdoor-sports-in-PAs-poster.pdf>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and United Nations Environment Programme (2023). *Restoring Mountain Ecosystems: Challenges, case studies and recommendations for implementing the UN Decade Principles for Mountain Ecosystem Restoration*. Rome and Nairobi.
<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9044en> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and World Tourism Organization (2023). *Understanding and Quantifying Mountain Tourism*, FAO/UNWTO, Rome/Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424023>

GRID-Arendal (2021). *Plastics on the Peak: The 2021 Global Mountain Waste Survey*. Arendal: GRID-Arendal. <https://www.grida.no/publications/815>

Hock, R., G. Rasul, C. Adler, B. Cáceres, S. Gruber, Y. Hirabayashi, M. Jackson, A. Kääb, S. Kang, S. Kutuzov, Al. Milner, U. Molau, S. Morin, B. Orlove, and H. Steltzer (2019). High Mountain Areas. In: *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, M. Tignor, E. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Nicolai, A. Okem, J. Petzold, B. Rama, N.M. Weyer (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 131-202. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157964.004>

IOC (2020). "Sustainability Management in Sport". In: *The IOC Sustainability Essentials Guide: A series of practical guides for the Olympic Movement*. The International Olympic Committee, Lausanne, Switzerland. <https://olympics.com/ioc/sustainability/essentials>

IUCN (2004). Guidelines for Planning and Managing Mountain Protected Areas. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. IUCN: Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. xi + 83pp. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2004-017.pdf>

Mills, M. (2021). The Review of the UIAA Mountain Protection Award. An internal evaluation report prepared for the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission. 31 March 2021, London, UK.

MRI (2018). MRI Scoping Workshop & Networking Event: "An agenda for sustainable mountaineering, mountain tourism and recreation: identifying research needs, projects and partnership opportunities", 15 June 2018, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, France. Final Workshop Report. Bern: Mountain Research Initiative. www.mountainresearchinitiative.org

SSC (2022). Sustainable Summits Initiative: Climbers Cutting Carbon. Available at <https://www.climberscuttingcarbon.org/>

The Mountaineers (2023). The Mountaineers Statement on Climate Change. The Mountaineers, Seattle USA. <https://www.mountaineers.org/blog/introducing-the-mountaineers-statement-on-climate-change>

UIAA (2002a). UIAA Environmental Objectives and Guidelines. Bern: The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA). <http://www.theuiaa.org/documents/declarations/Environmental-guidelines-Brochure.pdf>

UIAA (2022b). 2022/23 Athletes' Handbook for UIAA Ice Climbing Competitions - Ice Climbing World Tour. Available online: https://iceclimbing.sport/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Athletes_Handbook_2023_v1.pdf

UIAA (2022c). Annex 9 - UIAA Ice Climbing World Tour Sustainability Guidelines. Available online: https://iceclimbing.sport/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Annex_9_2023_UIAA-Event-Sustainability-Guidelines.pdf

UIAA (2022d). Alpine Summer Skills Handbook. Third English Edition. Bern: The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) and the Petzl Foundation. <https://www.theuiaa.org/training/alpine-handbook>

UIAA & IFMGA. (2018). The UIAA & IFMGA 2018 Environmental Survey. A Report by the International and Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) Mountain Protection Commission and the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA) Environmental and Access Commission. Bern and Martigny, Switzerland.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2019). Draft Decision 14.COM 10.b.12 "Alpinism" (01471). Item 10.b of the Provisional Agenda: Examination of nominations for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Fourteenth session of the Intergovernmental committee for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, Bogotá, Republic of Colombia, 9 to 14 December 2019. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/14.COM/10.B.12>

© UIAA, 2024

Graphic Design & Layout: UIAA Office

Copyright: UIAA, Bern, Switzerland

Parts of this brochure may be copied freely as long as the source - UIAA - is mentioned

These guidelines are shared under the Creative Commons BY 4.0 license.

Photos: Shutterstock

Contact: UIAA, Monbijoustrasse 61, Postfach, 3000 Bern 14, Switzerland

<https://www.theuiaa.org/>



UIAA

International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ALPINISME