

Rockwoods Reservation

Ten Year Area Management Plan

FY 2014-2023



Lisa B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

6-18-14

Date

Rockwoods Reservation Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Gus Raeker, Forestry District Supervisor

Denise Hunsaker, Conservation Agent

Angie Weber, Community Conservation Planner

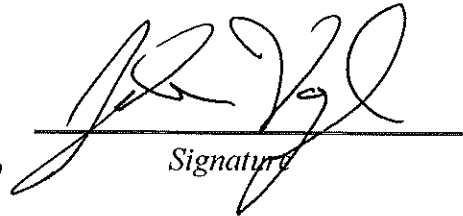
Kevin McCarthy, Interpretive Center Manager

Mike Arduser, Natural History Biologist

Kevin Meneau, Fisheries Management Biologist

ST. LOUIS REGION

RCT Chair



Signature



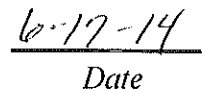
Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Unit Chief



Signature



Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Rockwoods Reservation, # 5405
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1938
- **Acreage:** 1,880 acres
- **County:** St. Louis
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**

A. Strategic Direction

Manage Rockwoods Reservation to promote a healthy, diverse, and sustainable mosaic of forest, woodland, and glade communities which provide habitat to a wide variety of flora and fauna, maintain a high quality infrastructure of trails, picnic areas, and other outdoor recreation amenities which are highly sought after and enjoyed by the public; and provide exceptional opportunities for the public to learn about nature and conservation.

B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition of Rockwoods Reservation is a forest/woodland landscape which includes small widely scattered glades.

C. Federal Aid Statement

This area, or a portion thereof, was developed with Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars to provide land or facilities for public outdoor recreation.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

A. Priority Areas: Rockwoods Reservation lies within the Lower Meramec/Missouri Priority Forest Landscape, Audubon Missouri's Meramec Highlands Important Bird Area and the Henry Shaw Ozark Corridor.

B. Natural Area: None

II. Important Natural Features and Resources

A. Species of Conservation Concern: Species of conservation concern are known from this area. Area Managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the Natural History Biologist.

B. Caves: Yes, records kept with MDC Natural History Biologist. Managers should follow the Cave Management policy found in the MDC Resource Policy Manual. All caves on this and other Conservation Areas are closed or restricted to public access. The fungus that causes White-nose Syndrome in bats has been

documented in Missouri, resulting in the Missouri Department of Conservation's White-nose Syndrome Action Plan that limits public access to protect bats.

C. Springs: Yes, records kept with MDC Natural History Biologist.

D. Streams: Hamilton Creek

E. Bluffs: Rockwoods Reservation includes several bluffs which were created via historic mining operations, as well as some natural bluffs and rock outcroppings.

F. Land Type Associations: Rockwoods Reservation is in the Meramec Highlands Oak Woodland/Forest Rugged Hills Land Type Association (LTA) within the Outer Ozark Border. This LTA consists mostly of very rugged hills with narrow ridges with isolated knobs, steep slopes, and narrow valleys carved into late Ordovician sandstones and dolomites. Historically, the LTA was timbered in oak and mixed-hardwood woodland and forest with scattered glades. Today, this region is significantly less urbanized than adjacent lands of lower relief, but development is rapidly encroaching. Much of this landscape is still timbered in second-growth forest, woodlands, and glades which contain many more trees than they did historically (Missouri Department of Conservation 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

A. Buildings:

- Conservation Education Center/Visitors Center (Built 1952)
- "Brown House" Forestry Staff Office Building (Built 1955) Fenced in Compound which includes: Maintenance Shop, Rock Garage (constructed pre-1938), Rock Well House (constructed pre-1938), Water Storage Building, and Chemical Storage Buildings (2)
- Additional Rock Well House (constructed pre-1938)
- Comfort Station (a.k.a. picnic area restrooms)
- Metal Storage Sheds (2)
- Pavilion

B. Historic Structures:

- Lime Kiln (built in 1856; fenced off to prevent public access)
- Bridge Support Piers (from historic railway used for mining in late 1,800s/early 1,900s)

C. Roads:

- Glencoe Road (3.1 miles of asphalt road maintained by MDC, including two concrete road bridges)

D. Trails*:

- Wildlife Habitat Trail (ADA accessible, 300 yards, asphalt)
- Trail Among the Trees (1.5 miles [1 mile asphalt & 0.5 miles natural surface])
- Turkey Ridge (2 miles, natural surface)

- Rock Quarry (2.25 miles, chat and natural surface)
- Lime Kiln (3.25 miles, natural surface)
- Green Rock (3.6 miles on Rockwoods (15 miles total), natural surface)
- Hamilton-Carr Trail (0.25 miles on Rockwoods (1.4 miles total), asphalt)
***Note: trails include bridges and stairways which are not specifically listed out here.**

E. Picnic Areas:

- Cottonwood Picnic Area
- Hillside Picnic Area
- ADA Picnic Area

F. Campsites:

- Organized Youth Group Camping Area

G. Parking Lots:

- 12 parking lots - including 3 disabled accessible lots and 2 “staff only” lots.

H. Ponds:

- There is one 2-acre wetland unit located at the north end of Rockwoods for educational purposes, and numerous small clay pit ponds created via historic mining operations.

I. Other Structures:

- Automated security gate at front entrance which is closed overnight.
- Pipe gate across Glencoe Road on north end of Rockwoods.
- Wildlife viewing structure adjacent to Education Building.
- 20’ x 20’ deer exclusion fence along Green Rock Trail.
- A box cupola style cave gate was constructed in 2008 on Rockwoods Cave (a.k.a. Bathtub Cave).

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed restrictions or ownership considerations:** The only deed restriction on Rockwoods Reservation is MDC’s “Declaration as to Use of Property” described in Appendix A, which is recorded on the official deed.
- B. Federal Interest:** Federal funds were used in the development of this area, or a portion thereof. The Department must maintain the developed project throughout its useful life. Federal funds may also be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.
- C. Easements:**
- Ingress and Egress easement issued to homeowner who lives on Glencoe Rd.

- Electric (Ameren Missouri/Union Electric)
 - Water tower (American Water Company)
 - Cell phone tower on water tower (Sprint Spectrum)
 - Telephone (AT&T)
 - City of Wildwood easement for Hamilton-Carr Trail along Highway 109 from Turkey Ridge Parking lot to the south.
 - City of Wildwood easement for Hamilton Trail and Highway 109 underpass to the north and west of Turkey Ridge Parking Lot.
 - MODOT highway easement for Highway 109
 - City of Wildwood road easements for Christy Avenue (includes easement for potential trail too), Manchester Road, Melrose Road, and Woods Ave.
 - MDC holds a conservation easement on a 3 acre private property inholding on Christy Ave.
- D. Cultural resources findings:** Yes, records kept with MDC Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the MDC Resource Policy Manual.
- E. Hazards and hazardous materials:** Cobb’s Cavern, which was created via mining activities, has some structural integrity issues (e.g. rocks sloughing off). Therefore, the cavern has been completely fenced off from public access.
- F. Endangered species:** Endangered Species are known from this area. Area Managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the Natural History Biologist.
- G. Boundary Issues:** Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Ninety-nine percent of Rockwood Reservation’s 1,880 acres consists of oak-hickory dominated forests and woodlands. These terrestrial resources offer many conservation opportunities and face several challenges – especially given the proximity of the area to Missouri’s largest metropolitan area.

Terrestrial Challenges and Opportunities:

- *Challenge:* Pervasiveness of exotic plants (bush honeysuckle and garlic mustard).
- *Challenge:* Impacts of removal of wildfire from natural communities:
 - Overstocked woodlands and glades (too many trees per acre).
 - Tree species composition shift to shade tolerant, fire intolerant species (away from oaks and hickories towards primarily sugar maple).

- Major loss of diversity and abundance of ground layer herbaceous vegetation and tree regeneration.
- *Challenge:* Maintaining healthy, sustainable, and diverse forests which are approaching biological maturity and are mostly even-aged.
- *Challenge:* Managing a planted prairie growing on a historically forested bottomland site.
- *Challenge:* Managing Memorial Forests which consist of tree species which are not native to the site and could be difficult to sustain with those species.
- *Challenge:* Heavy browsing pressure from deer.
- *Challenge:* Protect cave ecosystems from degradation via human activities and protect cave dwelling bats from “White Nose Syndrome.”
- *Opportunity:* Maintain and enhance a high quality natural landscape, wildlife habitat, and green space near Missouri’s largest metropolitan area – thus providing opportunity for people to experience and enjoy Missouri’s forests close to home.
- *Opportunity:* Demonstrate to the public the benefits of important forest management practices (exotic species control, prescribed fire, thinning).

Terrestrial Management Objective 1: Maintain high quality natural communities.

Terrestrial Strategy 1.1: Reduce exotic plant species (predominantly bush honeysuckle and garlic mustard) to levels which will have negligible impact to natural communities and can be easily kept in check via routine scouting and minor control efforts. Moderate to intense control efforts are needed on approximately 100 acres of Rockwoods, with light surveillance needed on the rest of the area. This work will be completed using a combination of MDC staff, volunteers, and contractors. (Forestry)

Terrestrial Strategy 1.2: Reduce tree stocking in forests, woodlands, and glades to historic stocking levels and tree species mixes via tree thinning. Initially, three 10-25 acre demonstration areas will be established. Once these demonstration areas have a chance to respond and reveal the benefits of proactive management, it is anticipated that additional thinning projects will be established. This work will be completed using MDC staff. (Forestry)

Terrestrial Strategy 1.3: Utilize prescribed fire to stimulate herbaceous vegetation in glades and woodlands, to increase oak regeneration in forests and woodlands, and to discourage bush honeysuckle. Initially, three 10-25 acre demonstration areas will be established (may or may not be the same areas described in Strategy 1.2). Once these demonstration areas have a chance to respond and reveal the benefits of proactive management, it is anticipated that additional prescribed fire projects will be established. This work will be completed using MDC staff. (Forestry)

Terrestrial Strategy 1.4: Create widely scattered temporary forest openings of approximately ½ to 1 acre in size in which most trees will be cut down. In these openings, new forests will emerge containing an abundance of young trees and shrubs. These dense thickets will provide habitat (food and cover) that is important to many wildlife species, but is very limited in this landscape. These temporary openings will also allow new oak trees to become established, which would otherwise not be able to grow up in a mature forest which is succeeding to maple (they wouldn't get enough sunlight). This practice will enhance forest health, diversity, and sustainability by creating different forest age structures across the landscape and by encouraging tree regeneration from species which require full sunlight. On average, 2 acres of temporary forest openings will be created each year. These openings will be created using MDC staff. (Forestry)

Terrestrial Management Objective 2: Manage old field (planted prairie) in a manner which provides gradual transition from planted vegetation to naturally occurring forest.

Terrestrial Strategy 2.1: Allow the old field (planted prairie) along Glencoe Road to naturally succeed back to forest. This field is difficult to maintain as prairie due to its natural tendency to be bottomland forest. Allowing this field to revert back to forest will help decrease forest fragmentation effects on wildlife, and will also help protect Hamilton Creek. Management of this field will be very passive with the exception of controlling exotic plant species and possibly planting trees along a narrow riparian corridor along Hamilton Creek. (Forestry)

Terrestrial Management Objective 3: Manage Memorial Forests in a manner which recognizes the importance of these forests, but also allows them to naturally transition from planted vegetation to naturally occurring vegetation.

Terrestrial Strategy 3.1: Allow Memorial Forests to continue to grow with the trees planted in them. However, as planted trees succumb to natural mortality, they will be allowed to establish with naturally occurring native tree species which may or may not be the same species as were originally planted. (Forestry)

Terrestrial Strategy 3.2: Develop and maintain a sign to showcase: 1) The importance of these forests; 2) Recognize the people who made these forests possible; and 3) Explain how these forests will evolve over time. (Forestry/Outreach and Education)

Terrestrial Management Objective 4: Maintain healthy deer populations and reduced levels of deer browse pressure on natural communities.

Terrestrial Strategy 4.1: Conduct aerial survey or other survey of deer population on area to better assess current density. (Wildlife)

Terrestrial Strategy 4.2: Conduct managed hunts as needed to avoid overpopulation of deer. (Forestry/Wildlife)

Terrestrial Management Objective 5: Maintain healthy cave ecosystems and cave dwelling bat populations.

Terrestrial Strategy 5.1: Follow MDC policies and procedures on cave access. All caves on Rockwoods are currently closed to the public by guidance of the MDC Cave Biologist (per guidance of the statewide, 2010 White Nose Syndrome Action Plan (WNSAP)). Future access will be determined by the WNSAP and guidance by MDC Cave Biologist. (Forestry/Outreach and Education/Resource Science)

Terrestrial Strategy 5.2: Maintain “cave closed” signs at each cave, and monitor public traffic to caves to determine the need for additional cave gates. (Forestry)

Terrestrial Management Objective 6: Provide forest/woodland/glade management demonstration sites and interpretation which reveals to the public the benefits of proactive management activities.

Terrestrial Strategy 6.1: Strategically locate some of the projects described in Terrestrial Strategies 1.1-4 in areas which are visible to the public with good opportunities for interpretation (signage, programs, etc.). (Forestry/Outreach and Education)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Aquatic Challenges and Opportunities:

- *Challenge:* Streams within Rockwoods receive excessive stormwater flows from development on adjacent lands.
- *Challenge:* Portions of streams within Rockwoods have narrow riparian forest buffers which cannot be expanded due to their proximity to Glencoe Road and Highway 109.
- *Challenge:* The interpretive wetland is filling in with sediment and has a deteriorating boardwalk.
- *Opportunity:* Over six miles of Hamilton Creek and its tributaries run through Rockwoods offering pleasing scenery, diverse wildlife habitat, and educational opportunities.

Aquatic Management Objective 1: Improve water quality of streams flowing through Rockwoods.

Aquatic Strategy 1.1: Allow planted prairie to naturally revert back to bottomland forest as indicated in Terrestrial Strategy 2.1 – thus establishing a

100' or wider riparian forest buffer on as much of Hamilton Creek as possible.
(Forestry)

Aquatic Strategy 1.2: Wherever stream corridor width does not allow for establishment of desired riparian forest buffers, develop and implement erosion control measures as needed to reduce accelerated stream bank erosion.

(Fisheries/Design and Development/Forestry).

Aquatic Strategy 1.3: Explore options and feasibility of establishing fishless, detention/retention basins to help manage stormwater quantity and water quality generated by neighboring developed properties. (Fisheries/Design and Development)

Aquatic Strategy 1.4: Work with neighboring landowners to inform them of practices and cost-share opportunities for reducing stormwater runoff impacts. (Private Land Services)

Aquatic Management Objective 2: Provide aquatic education opportunities.

Aquatic Strategy 2.1: Explore options for replacement of the deteriorating stationary interpretive boardwalk at the wetland. (Outreach and Education/Design and Development)

Aquatic Strategy 2.2: Explore the option of installing an overflow pipe to better regulate fluctuating wetland water levels. (Design and Development/Outreach and Education/Fisheries)

Aquatic Strategy 2.3: If needed, consider periodic removal of fish from fishless ponds to help maintain the herpetofauna community. (Fisheries/Outreach and Education)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Public Use Challenges and Opportunities:

- *Challenge:* There is interest in allowing rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation. However, after careful consideration of this request, and to balance requests for a wide variety of activities within the Constitutional mission of the Department of Conservation, rock climbing will not be allowed at Rockwoods Reservation.
- *Opportunity:* Rockwoods includes a highly scenic forested landscape within Missouri's largest metropolitan area. Thus, the area offers tremendous opportunities to connect people to nature.
- *Opportunity:* Rockwoods includes a popular trail system, an Education Center, Glencoe Road and other infrastructure which provide outdoor recreation opportunities. These resources require considerable maintenance, but benefit a large number of people.

- *Opportunity:* Glencoe Road through Rockwoods has been identified as an ideal link to the Great Rivers Greenway – Western Corridor Project as a “Share the Road” bicycling route which could potentially connect Rockwoods to a vast network of multi-use trails, parks, and neighborhoods.
- *Opportunity:* Rockwoods has a pavilion which could be improved and better utilized by the public. In the past the pavilion was officially restricted to use for MDC programs.
- *Challenge and Opportunity:* Current Area Regulations require that visitors stay on designated trails while hiking. This regulation results in many missed recreational opportunities such as mushroom hunting, geocaching, photography, and more.

Public Use Management Objective 1: Maintain and enhance trail system at Rockwoods to provide quality hiking and road bicycling opportunities to the public.

Public Use Strategy 1.1: Improve trailhead signage and visibility so that it is easier for visitors to find trails. (Forestry)

Public Use Strategy 1.2: Construct 1/8 mile trail connector between Lime Kiln Trail and Trail Among the Trees to offer visitors a longer hiking opportunity. (Forestry)

Public Use Strategy 1.3: Construct ¼ mile trail connector on the Green Rock Trail to provide a ~2 mile “short loop” option. (Forestry)

Public Use Strategy 1.4: Evaluate the feasibility of developing a 0.5+ mile trail connection from the Lime Kiln Trail to Wildwood Community College. (Forestry/Design and Development)

Public Use Strategy 1.5: Work with Great Rivers Greenway and City of Wildwood to investigate opportunities to formally develop Glencoe Road as a Share the Road bicycling opportunity as part of the proposed Western Corridor Multi-Use Trail Alignment. Incorporate signage and/or other techniques for promoting safety. (Forestry/Design and Development)

Public Use Strategy 1.6: If Public Use Strategy 1.5 is feasible, work with Great Rivers Greenway to establish interpretive signage along Glencoe Road which features the Rockwoods Trail System, and natural and historical interpretation (Forestry/Outreach and Education).

Public Use Strategy 1.7: The Trail among the Trees is an asphalt trail which is difficult to maintain. In some stretches the asphalt is degrading. This trail will be converted to a crushed rock surface trail as the asphalt degrades – as long as this would comply with federal aid requirements. (Forestry/Design and Development)

Public Use Strategy 1.8: Update natural interpretation resources on the Trail among the Trees and the Rock Quarry Trail. (Outreach and Education/Forestry)

Public Use Management Objective 2: Increase recreational opportunities available on the area by allowing visitors to go off trail.

Public Use Strategy 2.1: Eliminate the “stay on designated trails” regulation to allow for diverse uses of Rockwoods such as mushroom hunting, photography and geocaching. (Forestry)

Public Use Management Objective 3: Communicate that rock climbing is not allowed on Rockwoods Reservation.

Public Use Strategy 3.1: Post in area brochure that rock climbing is not allowed at Rockwoods Reservation. (Forestry)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Administrative Challenges and Opportunities:

- *Challenge and Opportunity:* Public and Operations building facilities need to be maintained and/or improved in order to sustain or enhance their utility, aesthetics, and energy efficiency. Particular building needs/concerns include:
 - The picnic area restroom (i.e. Comfort Station) is deteriorating in appearance and functionality. Simultaneously, there are no restroom facilities available at the Education Building/Pavilion area on evenings and weekends – which is located ¼ mile away from the Comfort Station. Options should be explored for better accommodating the restroom needs of both of these high public use sites.
 - The pavilion is in need of minor repairs.
 - Two 42-year old metal storage buildings are not aesthetically pleasing and provide very poor storage (subject to wildlife exposure, humidity, mildew, etc.). These sheds need to be replaced in order to provide adequate storage space and improve aesthetics.
 - Considerable area maintenance equipment (brush hog, disc, etc.) are currently left out in the weather. A “lean-to” storage area would provide valuable protection for equipment – improving functionality and longevity of equipment.
 - Office buildings include 50+ year old windows, old lighting, and poor air circulation. Replacing windows, lighting, and adding limited ceiling fans would make the office much more energy efficient and comfortable.
- *Challenge and Opportunity:* The Education Building is not open on weekends when the area gets the most public visitation.
- *Challenge and Opportunity:* The historic lime kiln is aging and would benefit from restoration to increase its durability and longevity.

- *Challenge:* Minor boundary issues have been identified at Rockwoods impacting a total acreage of 0.63 acres or less.

Administrative Management Objective 1: Maintain needed public and operations buildings in order to meet public use needs, operational needs, and to maintain or enhance building utility and energy efficiency.

Administrative Strategy 1.1: Replace or renovate the picnic area restrooms (i.e. Comfort Station). Consider replacing with a new compostable restroom; or update with new plumbing, septic, electricity, and heat (also see Strategy 1.2 below). (Design and Development/Forestry)

Administrative Strategy 1.2: Conduct feasibility study of options for making restrooms available at the Pavilion/Education Building on evenings and weekends (when the area is not regularly staffed). Potential options could include modifications to the Education Building to accommodate non-staffed public access to restrooms and exhibits; creating a combined restroom and storage facility to replace the two sheds mentioned in Strategy 1.4 below; or constructing a new restroom facility between the Pavilion and the Picnic Areas (see Strategy 1.1 above) to accommodate the needs of both sites with one facility. (Design and Development/Forestry)

Administrative Strategy 1.3: Conduct needed pavilion maintenance activities. (Design and Development)

Administrative Strategy 1.4: Replace deteriorated and unsightly metal storage sheds with a modern storage unit which is more aesthetically pleasing and provides greater utility (size, weather resistance, wildlife proof, etc.). (Design and Development/Forestry/Outreach and Education)

Administrative Strategy 1.5: Construct “lean-to” covered storage next to maintenance shop in order to protect maintenance equipment from the weather. (Design and Development/Forestry)

Administrative Strategy 1.6: Increase energy efficiency and improve work environment of buildings by replacing windows and lighting, improving insulation, and adding ceiling fans to increase air circulation. (Design and Development/Forestry)

Administrative Management Objective 2: Maintain historic structures.

Administrative Strategy 2.1: Look for outside investment opportunities for increasing the durability of the historic lime kiln along Glencoe Road which was built in 1856 in order to help ensure it lasts into the future. (Forestry)

Administrative Management Objective 3: Maintain well marked, accurate boundary lines.

Administrative Strategy 3.1: Paint and maintain signs along boundary lines every five years. (Forestry)

Administrative Strategy 3.2: Obtain administrative guidance on resolving minor boundary issues. (Forestry)

Administrative Management Objective 4: Acquisition of land

Administrative Strategy 4.1: When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities may be considered. (Forestry)

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Rockwoods Reservation is in western St. Louis County. It was established in 1938 by a group of St. Louis businessmen headed by A.P. Greensfelder. Other gifts and purchases have increased the area to its present size of 1,880 acres. Today, Rockwoods Reservation is operated as an area for conservation education. We encourage day-use by the general public, school groups, and organizations.

Rockwoods Reservation harbors a rich diversity of plant and animal life as well as springs, caves, and rock formations. Cool, moist, north facing ravines and lush creek bottoms contrast with the nearby arid, rocky ridge tops, and south slopes. The terrain is reminiscent of the Ozark hills and, indeed, many plants and animals found in hill country are also found here.

Although located near metropolitan St. Louis, raccoons, opossums, turkeys, deer, fox, songbirds, chipmunks, and snakes are common here.

Rockwoods Reservation has a fascinating cultural history dating back to the late 1700s, when trappers passed through the valley on their way to sell furs in the new settlement of St. Louis. In 1800, Ninian Hamilton received a Spanish land grant and started a small farm here with his family. Hamilton Creek, which flows through Rockwoods, is named after him.

Observant visitors will be able to find remnants of extensive limestone, clay and gravel quarrying. Developers once attempted to subdivide the land for home sites, but the project failed because of the inadequate road system.

Interpretive signs throughout the area point out special features or demonstration areas, such as butterfly gardening, bird feeding, mining and quarrying, and the history of lime kilns.

The Conservation Education Center contains exhibits and information about the forest, fish, and wildlife resources of Missouri. Programs are available by advance registration for school field trips and other organized groups.

Current Land and Water Types: (see Topo Map and Aerial Photo)

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	1,858		99%
Grassland/Prairie	12		0.5%
Wetland	2		0.1%
Buildings/Infrastructure	8		0.4%
Total:	1,880		100%
Hamilton Creek and associated tributaries		6.4	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Rockwood Reservation Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period December 1–31, 2013. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) received 72 comments from 68 respondents (Appendix C). The Rockwoods Reservation Conservation Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes – including how they were incorporated or why they were not can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

Prior to writing this area plan, MDC also conducted a public input process (June 24-August 8, 2013). During this “idea gathering” phase, 134 comments were received from 126 different respondents. A summary of comments can be found in the report, “Rockwoods Reservation Idea Gathering Stage Public Input Summary.” MDC responses to comments received during the Summer 2013 comments period can be found in the report, “December 2013 MDC Responses to Public Comments – Rockwoods Reservation Idea Gathering Stage.” These documents are available upon request by contacting Amy Buechler at amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov.

Who responded?

We received 72 comments from 68 respondents during the December 2013 public comment period for the draft Rockwoods Reservation Area Management Plan. Several respondents submitted multiple comments, so the total number of responses is greater than the total number of respondents.

Respondents by respondent category, if self-identified.

Organization Type	Count
Individual citizens	66
Volunteer Group (Missouri Master Naturalists – Confluence Chapter)	1
Rock climbing organizations	5

(Missouri Climbers Coalition, Mid-Mo Climbers, Kansas City Climbing Club, American Alpine Club, Access Fund)	
TOTAL	72

How they responded:

Total number of each response received.

Response Type	Count	Percent
E-mail to Director Ziehmer	45	62%
Web Comment Form	27	37%
Phone call	1	1%
TOTAL	72	100%

Where respondents are from:

Table 4. Total number of respondents by location.

State	Count	Percent
Missouri	38	57%
Out of state responses* (Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington)	30	43%
TOTAL	68	100%

*All out of state respondents were proponents of rock climbing.

MDC responses to themes and issues identified through Rockwoods Reservation Conservation Area public comment period

Supports prescribed fire to manage forests and glades.

As indicated in the plan, we hope to begin utilizing limited prescribed fire to stimulate herbaceous vegetation in glades and woodlands, to increase oak regeneration in forests and woodlands, and to discourage bush honeysuckle.

Disappointed that the plan does not allow for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation. Suggests opening area to rock climbing.

We realize that the decision to not allow rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation disappointed people who enjoy rock climbing.

The Missouri Department of Conservation carefully considered the request to allow rock climbing. We received 134 comments from 126 respondents during the idea gathering stage (June 24-August 8, 2013) to identify concerns, issues, and interests prior to development of the Rockwoods Reservation Area Management Plan. On August 5, 2013, we also hosted a public open house to answer questions and gather comments about Rockwoods Reservation. The open house and comments received during this initial comment period made it clear that there was a high interest in rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation.

Our Department divisions and Director's Office staff met several times to discuss the possibility of rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation and the Department's ability to manage that activity with other uses and resource management. These discussions included consideration of partnering with local or national rock climbing organizations to have responsibility for placement and management of fixed anchors.

The decision was not based on liability concerns, which are manageable. Instead, the decision to not allow rock climbing was based upon the realization that even taking a hands-off approach (and allowing rock climbing organizations to place and manage the fixed anchors), would result in additional workload and diversion from our core mission: "To protect and manage the forest, fish, and wildlife resources of the state; to facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources [forests, fish, and wildlife]."

In recent years, the Department has reduced staff by over 11% which has required closer scrutiny of the use of staff time more than ever. In the past, rock climbing (answering questions, dealing with injuries, etc.) has taken a significant time away from other forest, fish, and wildlife related activities for Rockwoods Reservation staff. The purpose of Conservation Areas (like Rockwoods Reservation), are to conserve natural diversity and provide fish, forest, and wildlife-related recreation and education opportunities. We do not allow horseback riding or mountain biking at Rockwoods Reservation.

Supports the continued allowance of dogs at Rockwoods Reservation.

In January of 2013, MDC began implementing a recently enacted Wildlife Code change which now allows visitors to bring leashed pets to Rockwoods Reservation. There are no plans to change this regulation.

Supports not allowing bicycles, horses, or motorized vehicles on area trails.

There are no plans to begin allowing bicycles, horses or motorized vehicles on trails at Rockwoods Reservation.

Suggests opening trails to horseback riding.

Comments were received asking that equestrian use be established on Rockwoods Reservation. Other comments were received specifically asking that equestrian use not be allowed at Rockwoods Reservation. The Area Plan Team certainly understands the desire to have equestrian opportunities at Rockwoods Reservation. However, we are not recommending that any new or existing trails be established for equestrian use at this time for the following reasons: 1) Such opportunities are already provided immediately next door at Greensfelder County Park and Rockwoods Range Conservation Area and at other nearby sites such as Forest 44 Conservation Area, Babler State Park, and Castlewood State Park.; 2) Existing trails on Rockwoods Reservation are heavily used by hikers and many trails include infrastructure (e.g. stairways, bridges) that would not be conducive to equestrian use.; and 3) Rockwoods Reservation includes incredibly steep slopes and soils that would be difficult to properly maintain equestrian trails on.

An additional statement was made that we are expanding trails and opportunities for bicycles at Rockwoods (and thus we should do the same for equestrian use too). This is not accurate. The only place we are intending to allow bicycles is on the asphalt road and the City of Wildwood's Hamilton – Carr Trail where they are already allowed. We simply meant that we might formally recognize the opportunity (thus allowing it to be included in regional trail maps) and install signs to improve safety and the quality of the experience.

Supports allowing off-trail access for mushroom hunting and wildlife viewing.

With the approval of this area plan, we will now allow off-trail use at Rockwoods Reservation as soon as we are able to update signs, brochures, and websites accordingly.

Suggests maintaining the Trail Among the Trees trail in as natural a condition as possible.

One comment was received expressing a preference to see the Trail Among the Trees be maintained in as natural a condition as possible - limiting the use of crushed rock to areas that need it for drainage issues or erosion control purposes. This trail is currently constructed with asphalt which is deteriorating and which is expensive and time consuming to maintain. As this trail is converted to a new surface, we will gladly evaluate whether portions can be maintained as natural surface (i.e. dirt). As such plans are formalized; they will involve careful consideration of economics, aesthetics, hiking experience quality, and ecology. The public input offered through this Area Planning Process will definitely be considered as we make that determination.

Suggests improving native plant gardens around the visitor's center, including interpretive information about the importance of pollinators.

Our primary focus on increasing native plant diversity and abundance and wildlife habitat (including pollinators) will be towards improving our forest, woodland, and glade natural communities and providing interpretive information about these sites. However, we intend to maintain our existing Grow Native Garden and Butterfly Garden – although our management of

these gardens is shifting a bit. These fertile bottomland sites have proven tricky to maintain in wildflowers due to heavy competition from weeds and deer browse. Although herbaceous vegetation will still be a component, our focus will be more on maintaining and showcasing tree and shrub species. We certainly hope to improve the signage and interpretation of these gardens. Including information on pollinators is a great idea!

Suggests opening the visitor's center on weekends.

We recognize that weekends are the busiest times at Rockwoods, and have interest in staffing the Visitor Center/Education Building on weekends. We currently don't staff our office on weekends because our available staffing is very limited and most of our work needs to be conducted on weekdays. Although we don't have any immediate plans to open the Visitor Center on weekends we will keep this recommendation in mind if future opportunities present themselves.

Suggests trail maintenance and invasive species removal volunteer work days.

The Area Planning Team finds this to be an intriguing idea. We are challenged somewhat by restrictions on what we are allowed to let volunteers do (applying herbicide, running chainsaws, etc.). However, there may be good opportunities for volunteer work days despite these limitations. Although not made a formal part of this plan, the Area Plan Team will put some thought into if and how such work days could be created. Thanks for your suggestion and your support!

Suggests a "bioblitz" at Rockwoods Reservation.

The Area Planning Team believes that conducting a "bioblitz" at Rockwoods Reservation is a great idea. The primary concern is simply that such an event would be a large undertaking and could require a lot of staff time that is currently not available. This idea is certainly worth further consideration however. One way to make such an event a much more likely reality would be for one or more partner groups to volunteer to spearhead such an event. We will consider this proposal regardless. However, if groups are interested in organizing a bioblitz, they are encouraged to contact our Rockwoods Office to discuss.

Supports managed hunts at Rockwoods Reservation. Suggests increasing number of managed hunts or deer harvested to manage deer population.

Our managed deer hunts are an important tool for us to manage the local deer population at a healthy level that meets public demands as well as possible (some of which would like to see more deer, and some of which would like to see less). After 12 years of our managed hunt being in place, we continue to see a lot of deer on Rockwoods. Anecdotally, we feel that it may be appropriate to take measures to increase the harvest modestly. However, we would like to obtain scientific population data before making any significant changes to the hunt. These surveys are not simple to accomplish – requiring the simultaneous availability of deep snow, an available helicopter, and trained biologists. However, we are hoping to accomplish such a survey within

the next year or two. Such data will allow much better informed decision making. In the meantime, we will likely continue with our very conservative 2-day late season managed hunt.

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Missouri Department of Conservation. 2013. December 2013 MDC Responses to Public Comments – Rockwoods Reservation Idea Gathering Stage. The Conservation Commission. State of Missouri.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Appendixes:

Appendix A: Declaration as to Use of Property

Appendix B: Clarification of the “Declaration as to Use of Property”

Appendix C. Draft Rockwoods Reservation Area Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

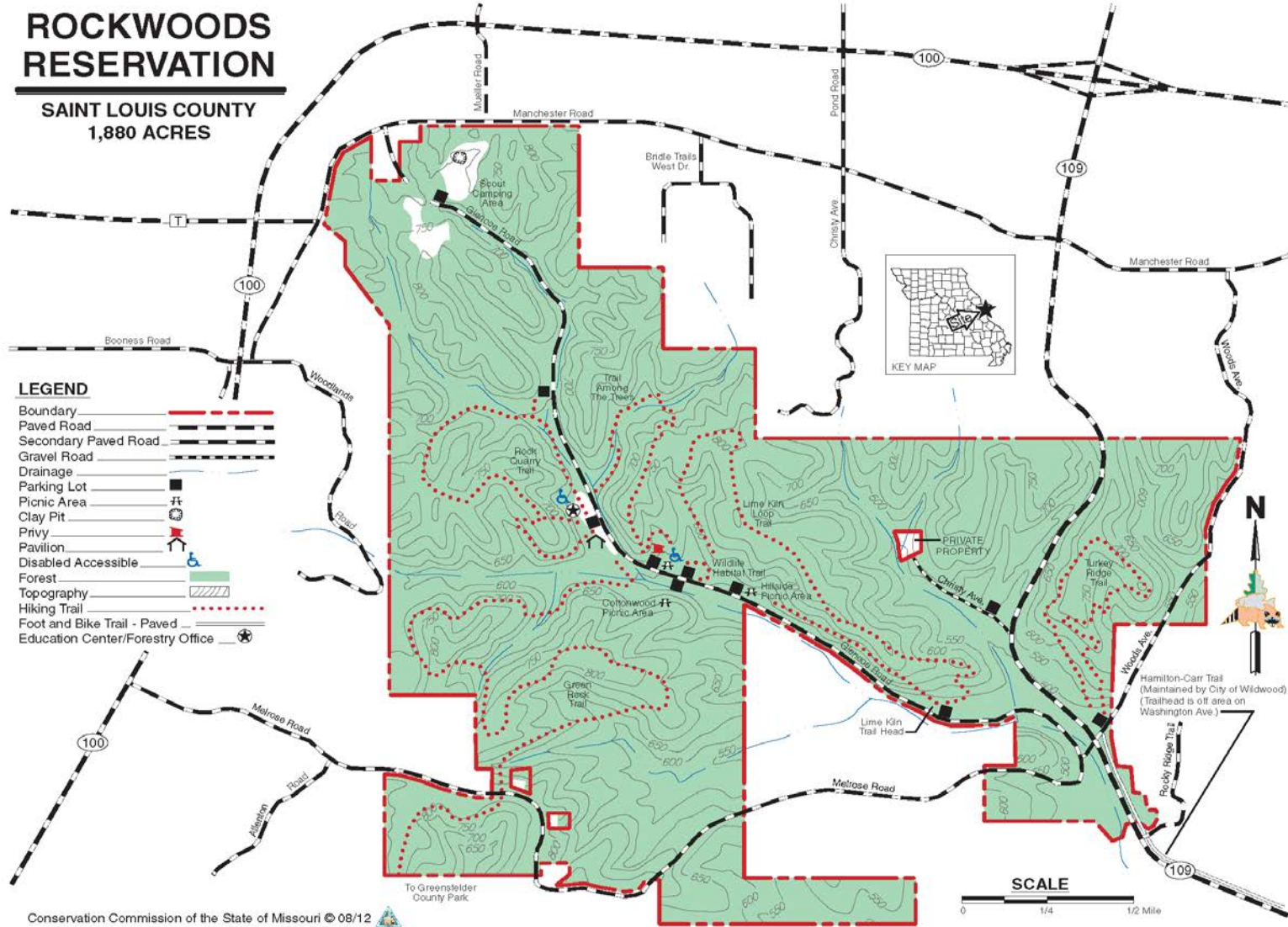


Figure 2: Aerial Map

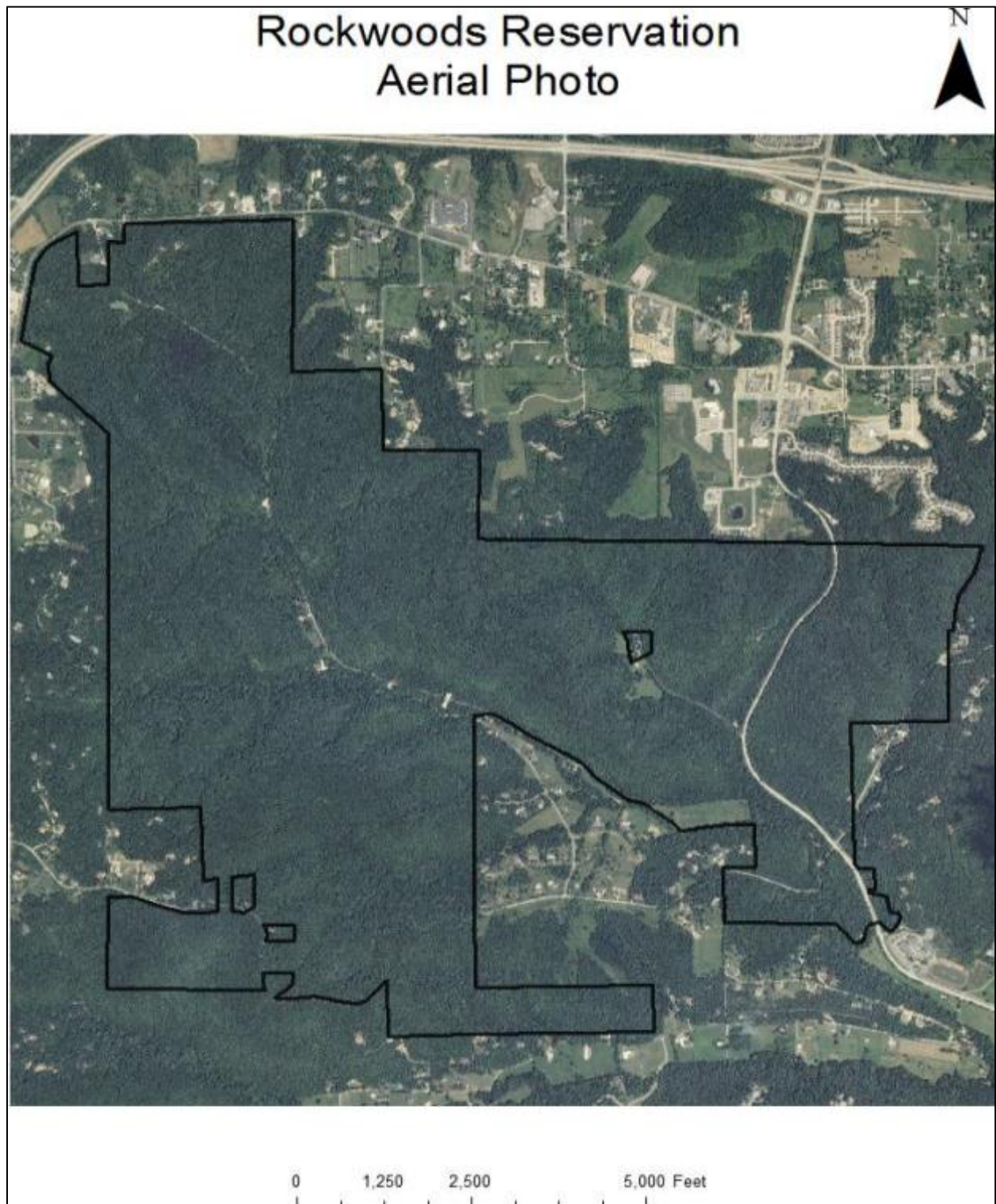
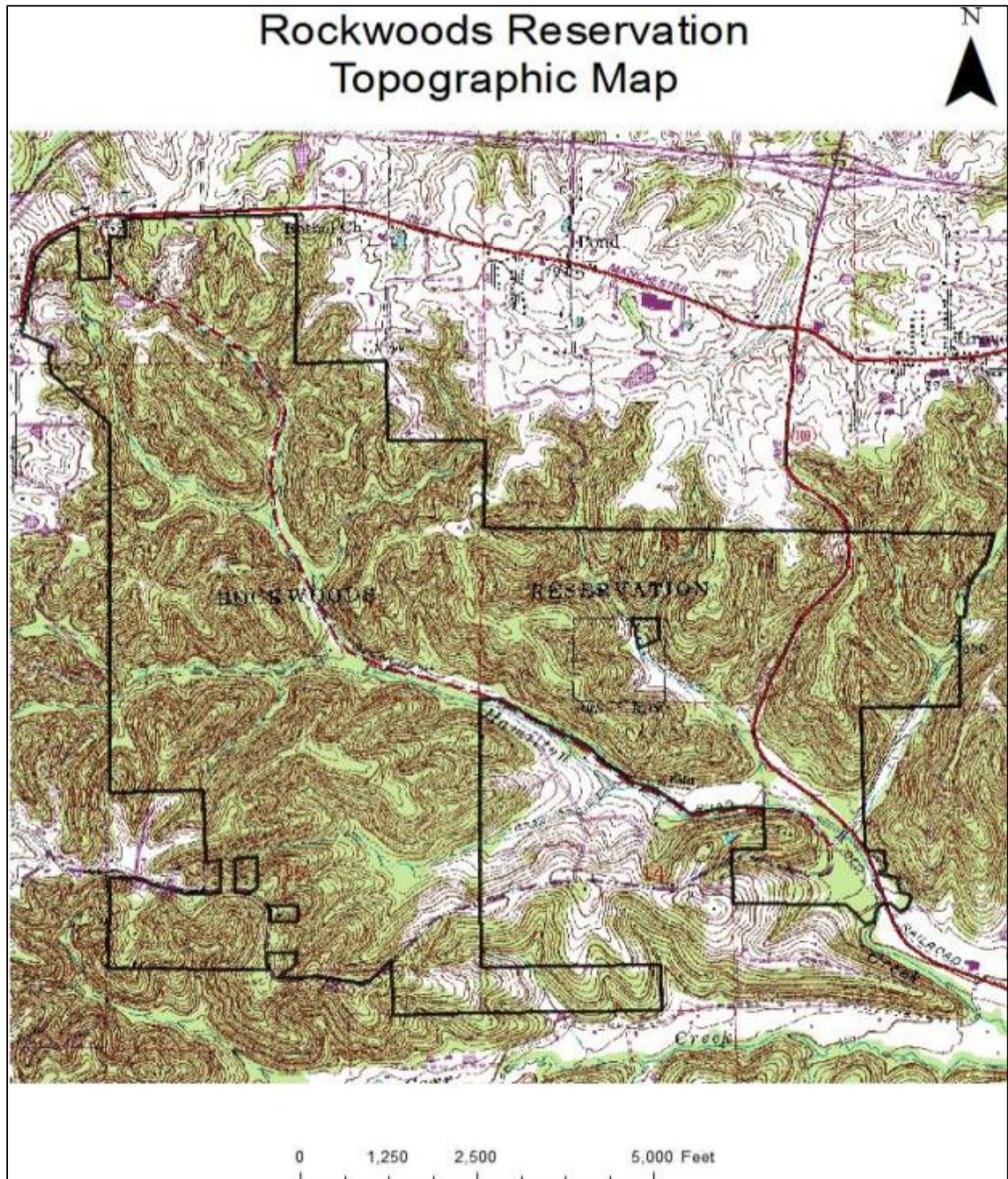


Figure 3: Topographic Map



Appendix A: Declaration as to Use of Property

S
STATE LAND
Rockwoods Res.

DECLARATION AS TO USE OF PROPERTY

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, the Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri, by deed dated May 27, 1938, and filed for record in the St. Louis County recorder's Office on Aug. 1, 1938, as Daily No. 108, executed by Sophie Lerner, acquired certain property situated in Meramec Township in the County of St. Louis, State of Missouri.

NOW, THEREFORE, In consideration of One (\$1.00) Dollar, and funds and services contributed by various parties toward the acquisition of the above mentioned property, and as additional inducements for others also to contribute property, funds or services for the enlargement, improvement or development thereof, the hereinafter mentioned stipulations and conditions are hereby established as to said lands. Said stipulations and conditions shall run with the land subject to the right of any owner thereof to grant rights of way or easements for public ways or utilities on or over said property. The stipulations and conditions are as follows. to-wit:

Since this site is near and easily accessible to residents of, and visitors to, a large metropolitan district, said property shall be forever used for an inter-related public demonstration, research, exhibit, restoration, use, experimentation and survey area for a combination forest preserve, game refuge, bird sanctuary, wildlife reservation, and wild life biological field, where there can be maximum production, control and protection of all kinds of wild life fauna and flora and wildlife resources of all kinds; provided, however, that no one interest shall be allowed to dominate and destroy the rights and well being of all others, but said property shall be managed for the greatest good of all the foregoing perpetuity. Such stipulations are made with the view that such property may be so conducted that in due course by observation and prudent use the same may serve to demonstrate the need and exemplify the value thereof and engender sustained interest and support by local conservationists and citizens, of similar or more specialized areas farther away, for State or National conservation and recreation areas and activities. This tract and any additions thereto or enlargements thereof, shall bear the name "ROCK-WOODS RESERVATION".

In order that it may partly pay its way, it is declared that the public may be required to pay for such privileges, products, services thereon, and use or occupancy thereof, as the public authorities then having jurisdiction over such site or portions thereof, may from time to time determine to be in the best public interest. All revenues and income so recieved, together with private gifts of property or funds and public grants, allotments, services and aids therefor shall only be used currently to add additional property to the above described property, or to maintain, restore, operate, improve, enlarge and conserve such property and any addition thereto and any projects, resources or facilities located on said property and any addition or additions thereto.

Should any one or more of the above stipulations and conditions be determined to be ineffective by a court of competent jurisdiction, every other stipulation and condition shall, notwithstanding such decision, continue and be enforceable.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Conservation Commission has caused this instrument to be signed and its seal to be hereunto affixed, this 17 day of June, 1938.

/s/ E. Sydney Stephens
Chairman

/s/ A. P. Greensfelder
Member

/s/ W. C. Buford
Member

/s/ John F. Case
Member

ATTEST: /s/ W. C. Buford
Secretary.

PAGE 2

STATE OF MISSOURI)
 :SS
COUNTY OF COLE)

On this 17 day of June, 1938, before me personally appeared E. SYDNEY STEPHENS, Chairman, and A. P. GREENSFELDER, WILBUR C. BUFORD and JOHN F. CASE, Members of the Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri, and to me known, to be the persons described in and who executed the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged that they executed the same as their free act and deed, as Chairman and Members of the Conservation Commission for the use and purposes herein set forth.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at my office in Jefferson City, and State of Missouri, the date last herein written.

/s/ Montie Glover
Notary Public

My Commission Expires March 9, 1942

Appendix B: Clarification of the “Declaration as to Use of Property”

Although this Declaration is fairly straightforward, it is worth clarifying the Area Planning Team’s interpretation of the terms “preserve”, “refuge”, “sanctuary”, and “reservation”. Forest communities are by nature dynamic systems that change over time. In many forest systems, including Rockwoods Reservation, purely hands-off management can actually result in greater change – often to the detriment of forest health and plant and animal diversity – than active management which promotes healthy, diverse forest systems. In fact, purely hands-off management would contradict significant portions of this Declaration which promote the maximum production and protection of all kinds of flora and fauna. Thus, the Area Planning Team is interpreting the terms “preserve”, “refuge”, “sanctuary” and “reservation” in this Declaration to mean that Rockwoods Reservation should be managed in a way which will best conserve healthy forest communities and the diversity of flora and fauna they support.

Appendix C. Draft Rockwoods Reservation Area Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (December 1-31, 2013)

<p>I'm disappointed by your decision to exclude rock climbing in Rockwoods Reservation.</p>
<p>I believe further dialog should be had regarding the issue of climbing on the Rockwood Reservation. A large network of Midwestern climbers, especially from Missouri, are very willing to pursue this issue, including myself. Please don't oversimplify the issue and make a blind judgement without fully considering the potential benefits of developing climbing at Rockwood Reservation.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>The omitting of allowing rock climbing at Rockwood reservation does not seem fair to the local populace. This includes not only children who will lack the opportunity to experience the joy of rock climbing in a safe and convenient place but also the hundreds of dedicated rock climbers who live in the area who are more than willing to develop and maintain the area. The MDC does not need to manage Rockwood reservation climbing at all. All cliffs are able to be climbed on with a top rope or trad climbing. It would be a shame if the use of these bluffs were not allowed any further.</p>
<p>I would like to see this area opened up to Rock Climbers. There is a large group of climbers in the MO/KS area alone that would be very interested and supportive of developing and maintaining local areas in order to raise interest for the sport and reduce the out of state travel needed to enjoy it.</p>
<p>There is a growing community of extremely responsible rock climbers in St Louis and Columbia that have been developing the sport in a safe and accessible way for public use.</p> <p>Climbing should be allowed at Rockwoods Reservation because "climbing is a legitimate and longstanding use of our nation's public lands. Rock climbing, ice climbing, bouldering and mountaineering are practiced in many places on our nation's diverse public lands. Throughout our National Park System, as administered by the National Park Service, climbing is considered a "welcomed and historical use." Climbing is also a welcomed and historical use on other agency lands including hundreds of sites managed by the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and Army Corp of Engineers. At the state and regional level, climbing is equally popular."</p> <p>http://www.accessfund.org/site/c.tmL5KhNWLrH/b.5040477/k.6068/Climbing_on_Public_Land.htm</p>

I don't see how rock climbing will offset other activities allowed at Rockwood Reservation. Rock climbing will both bring in more visitors along with with a renewed interest in the reservation. Typically climbers have a heightened sense of environmental responsibility as well as high participation levels in activism. Climbers tend to appreciate the limited resources that we are allowed to use. As we speak there are efforts to save climbing land in Southern IL call The Holy Boulders.

https://www.kintera.org/site/c.tmL5KhNWLrH/b.8371223/k.C7CB/Protect_Whats_Holy/apps/ka/sd/donor.asp?c=tmL5KhNWLrH&b=8371223&en=fgLRKRPsFfLKKROBI9KEIVOGLpIZL8MCKcILKXOGJgLNI0OIKuH

Why is rock climbing not allowed at Rockwoods? The doc doesn't explain how that decision was reached. People have been climbing on other public lands in America for decades. Climbing is a welcomed activity in designated areas of National Park lands, so why not at Rockwoods? It appears that the future plan for Rockwood includes improvements to the hiking trails, which will appeal to a large number of people, but opening some areas to climbing would also enhance the park,

I was saddened to hear that the MDC's plans do not include providing access to any of these areas for rock climbing. As a community, rock climbers have historically been strong advocates and partners in conservation of natural areas and their precious resources. Our sport raises awareness of these areas, particularly with the younger generations who will eventually be charged with their care. It seems that there could be a reasonable agreement reached through which access - within set parameters - could be granted for rock climbing. Even if this was done on a test basis, I think the MDC would be pleasantly surprised at the support and energy the climbing community can bring to the organization's conservation efforts.

"To balance requests for a wide variety of activities within the Constitutional mission of the Department of Conservation, rock climbing will not be allowed at Rockwoods Reservation"

What does this even mean? Does rock climbing somehow eliminate multiple other activities that are in higher demand? These are weasel words. Please explain.

Thank you so much for continuing to allow dogs at Rockwoods. Also, I am very glad that you decided to NOT allow bikes or horses on the trails. Thanks, too, for keeping the gate shut to vehicles (at the north end). Great 10-year plan!! :)

I still cannot understand why Outdoor Rock Climbing has continued to be excluded from the Missouri parks plan. Rock climbing is the fastest growing outside activity and is growing. Outdoor recreation is a 646 billion dollar industry. Leaving out activities that are growing in popularity across the USA only causes outdoor enthusiasts and rock climbers alike to spend their dollars in other states such as Kentucky, Arkansas, and Tennessee. I think this is a disservice to Missourians who would really like to spend more time climbing in their own state...and draw other to the great state we live in.

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2013/08/07/number-popularity-rock-gyms-climbing/JUikUNxTvyA6YGLUqco17I/story.html>

Thank you,

Please allow sport and traditional climbing at rockwoods.

Climbing is a legitimate and longstanding use of our nation's public lands. Rock climbing, ice climbing, bouldering and mountaineering are practiced in many places on our nation's diverse public lands. Throughout our National Park System, as administered by the National Park Service, climbing is considered a "welcomed and historical use." Climbing is also a welcomed and historical use on other agency lands including hundreds of sites managed by the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and Army Corp of Engineers. At the state and regional level, climbing is equally popular.

Hello,

I have read the Area Plan for Rockwoods and as a rock climber and father of two young climbers, I found it disappointing that climbing is not to be allowed. I live in Kansas City but frequent St Louis for entertainment. Rock Climbing is a big part of my life and my community.

I am lucky to be able to travel and climb around the globe, but consider it a treasure that BLM, National Parks, Corps of Engineers and National Forest in the United States understand that Rock Climbing is a part of our history and is practiced most often by committed stewards of nature.

Please reconsider your approach with climbing. There are many of us who benefit from it, and our presence in the parks and wild places is a positive ingredient.

With Regards,
Heartland Section Chair of the American Alpine Club

In what way does allowing rock climbing imbalance the variety of activities one could do at the Rockwood Reservation?

I understand that you are concerned about wasting labor and management resources; however, I don't understand how allowing climbing would waste resources.

Wouldn't you have to remove invasive species near the bluffs anyways? I have learned a lot

about different fauna near the crags I climb in order to preserve the environment and save myself from rashes. I have even helped educate my friends on identifying different types of plants and animal tracks.

I understand that the state does not wish to open rock climbing at the Rockwood Reservation and I would appreciate a more detailed explanation as to why it would be against the best interest of the state to allow dedicated climbing areas.

It seems like the state could allow and restrict climbing on different bluffs. If you are using management resources to clarify that climbing is prohibited, you could use them to clarify where it is allowed and get a more diverse group of people attending the reservation (assuming that more people isn't the problem).

Climbing is inherently dangerous and it doesn't seem like the state would be liable for accidents that happened. If it were, climbing wouldn't be allowed at Johnson Shut-ins and Elephant Rock. Furthermore, Rope climbing results in fewer injuries than bouldering (which is what is easily accessible here in Missouri). The Rockwood reservation offers features that are not common to other local climbing areas.

If you're not liable for accidents, already utilizing management resources for clarifying conditions of climbing (that it's not allowed), and already clearing invasive species from the bluffs I can't understand why it is disadvantageous for the reserve to continue restricting climbing.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

I believe it is a mistake to allow rock climbing in this area. The available rock is a key attraction of this area, and regulation which disallows use of this resource acts against public interest. Many organizations exist to facilitate safe access to rock climbing areas. In particular, the Access Fund and Illinois Climbers Association are experienced in addressing the challenges associated with allowing rock climbing in public or private areas.

In response to the MDC's following statement:

"Challenge: There is interest in allowing rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation. However, after careful consideration of this request, and to balance requests for a wide variety of activities within the Constitutional mission of the Department of Conservation, rock climbing will not be allowed at Rockwoods Reservation"

The KEY words being "balance requests", however, as I recall, rock climbing at Rockwoods was the number ONE request from the public.

Though, it is stated that rock climbing activities do not fall within the interests of the Department of Conservation, I would advise you to research Grayson Highlands State Park in Virginia, which is operated by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The introduction

of bouldering (a form of rock climbing) has been a valuable asset to Grayson Highlands and is a valid form of outdoor recreation for this park. From DCR of Virginia's website:
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/gra.shtml

Grayson Highlands is known as the best bouldering site in Virginia. On the park's mountainous slopes are four main boulder fields and three smaller fields with more than 700 named climbing routes, also known as problems. The park's geology, which is unique in the Southeast, makes it well-suited to bouldering. Climbers will find rhyolite at higher elevations as well as a metaconglomerate in a quartzite matrix elsewhere in the park. These provide steep faces with angular features including rails, flakes and edges that ensure bouldering opportunities for climbers of all skill levels.

Summer weather at the park is ideal for bouldering. Several boulder fields have an elevation of more than 4,900 feet, with temperatures in the 70s and cool breezes that allow climbing throughout summer.

The park welcomes climbers to enjoy bouldering opportunities but requires that Leave No Trace ethics be followed. Ropes and the chipping of rocks are not allowed. Climbing is inherently dangerous; all safety precautions should be taken. Stop by the contact station or office to register as a climber in case of emergency.

The park has two crash pads available for rent. It also sells chalk, chalk bags, cleaning brushes and the Grayson Highlands Bouldering Guidebook. For more information about the bouldering opportunities at Grayson Highlands, visit the Mountain Project.
http://graysonhighlandsbouldering.com/2013/07/31/a-va-bouldering-milestone-the-grand-opening-of-the-split-rock-bouldering-trail/?relatedposts_exclude=620

Well-managed rock climbing is a valid use of wilderness areas and has a place in publicly-owned lands. I would encourage you to reconsider climbing as a valuable addition to Rockwoods and consider climbing as a wonderful incentive to encourage physical activity in Missouri's great outdoors.
Sincerely,

Rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation is a legitimate recreational opportunity that is tremendous way to connect people to nature. I have known countless people who couldn't care less about the environment and outdoors until they discovered rock climbing and now they are tireless advocates for nature and the outdoors. Many of Missouri's finest climbing areas happen to be located on MDC lands and are closed to rock climbing. Why is this? In Arkansas, the NPS has embraced rock climbing and has had a tremendous affect on tourism and local interest in nature. If you are willing to consider geocaching, mushroom hunting and biking then there is no reason to not allow rock climbing.

Why when you name is Conservation do you consider climbing not worth conserving, pretty ignorant really, its just another way to attract more people to the state witch brings more revenue to everyone, including conservation, but hey you got it all figured out.

In the plan overview I did not see any information regarding horse trails. With the number of

existing trails and miles in the park, there should be access given to the equestrian community that have made up an extensive amount of the population of Wildwood including large property owners that border the park. I see that more access for bikes and bike trails are planned. The same consideration should be given to equine.

Considering the MDC's constitutional mission to facilitate and provide opportunities for ALL citizens to enjoy Missouri's natural resources, I believe that the MDC has the responsibility to allow public climbing access to the cliffs and boulders on its lands. Given that the MDC allows, and even promotes, other recreational activities (e.g. paddling, mountain biking, and hiking), it is hard to understand why the MDC refuses to allow rock climbing.

There are many benefits to opening rock climbing access at Rockwoods. Rock climbing has documented benefits to local economies. The presence of a climbing area in the St. Louis metropolitan region results in a more attractive place to live and work. And it provides another opportunity for Missouri's citizens to lead an active and engaged life in the outdoors.

The local rock climbing community and local and national climbing organizations are willing to partner with the MDC in developing a management plan that returns public access to the cliffs and boulders at Rockwoods Reservation. I want to see this happen.

Everything in the document seems to me as a very good idea.
Two additional comments:

1. I'm sorry we cannot accommodate the 'climbing community' at Rockwoods. Rock climbing is a huge sport now all over the country.
2. The immediate gardens around the visitor center need considerable improvement to represent the aesthetic, practical and economic value of native plants to community homeowners. Their stewardship of their own natural communities can be forwarded by an updated model at Rockwoods. I understand the problem with deer browse. This can be addressed with aromatic plants & signage around the butterfly/shrubbery gardens at Rockwoods.
3. Bee / insect / pollinator/bird education is needed right away. We are educating the public about trees & forested habitat (the big picture). Additionally we should balance the big picture with the little picture by offering education about little stuff like insects and their importance to the ecosystem. This would encourage homeowner/family stewardship in their backyards, extending wildlife corridors that equally support Rockwoods. For minimal cost and maintenance, we could have an exhibit that encourages growing native plants for pollinators and birds.

Everything in the document seems to me as a very good idea.

Two additional comments:

1. I'm sorry we cannot accommodate the 'climbing community' at Rockwoods. Rock climbing is a huge sport now all over the country.

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I think that it is ridiculous that the visitor center is not open on Saturday and Sunday, when the VAST majority of visitors are there. I hike at Rockwoods often and I see up to 20 plus cars outside the visitor center on weekends. During the week, there are only a few visitors. At those times, I see quite a few staff members and it's not at all clear what they are doing. You are thinking of YOUR needs, not the people who pay for and use the park. Sure, everyone wants to have the weekend off. But have only a small staff during the week, or rotate shifts, so that there would be at least one staff member in the visitor center.

Dear MDC,

As I understand it, the Missouri Department of Conservation plans to continue its ban on rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation. This decision has been made despite overwhelming public input requesting public rock climbing access at Rockwoods—an area that is not only of recreational importance to climbers, but is also of cultural and historical significance to the development of rock climbing in the state of Missouri.

Considering the MDC's constitutional mission to facilitate and provide opportunities for all citizens to enjoy Missouri's natural resources, I believe that the MDC has the responsibility to allow public climbing access to the cliffs and boulders on its lands. Given that the MDC allows, and even promotes, other recreational activities (e.g. paddling, mountain biking, and hiking), it is hard to understand why the MDC refuses to allow rock climbing.

There are many benefits to opening rock climbing access at Rockwoods. Rock climbing has documented benefits to local economies. The presence of a climbing area in the St. Louis metropolitan region results in a more attractive place to live and work. And it provides another opportunity for Missouri's citizens to lead an active and engaged life in the outdoors.

The local rock climbing community and local and national climbing organizations are willing to partner with the MDC in developing a management plan that returns public access to the cliffs and boulders at Rockwoods Reservation.

Please reconsider the decision to close Rockwoods Reservation to climbing access.

Yours,

Please make public trail maintenance or invasive species removal workdays. I also am in favor of proactive prescribed burning to manage forests (thinning or removing maples, overcrowded areas) and to expose degraded glade landscapes. I favor utilizing best glade management practices observed by researchers at Tyson Research center and involving the public in prescribed burns.

I favor showcasing of the remediated areas to encourage public understanding of how these management practices improve the ecosystem.

I propose the organization of a Bioblitz at Rockwoods in late spring/early summer involving a collaboration between academics in the region and public and other nature-focused groups such as Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Master Conservationists, MDC etc. This will highlight the value of the area so close to a metropolitan area and encourage support for the management efforts over the next ten years.

I am in favor of allowing off trail access for mushroom hunting and wildlife viewing.

I am not in favor of opening the area to equestrian or biking or motorized off trail or on trail vehicles.

I am not in favor of opening the caves to the public.

I favor managed hunts in the area and am open to increasing the number of managed hunts or deer harvested to aggressively manage the population.

A few comments on the draft Area Plan:

1. Thank you for accepting my trail improvement suggestions (Public Use Strategies 1.2 and 1.3). I'll be looking forward to trying them out in the near future.
2. Thanks also for keeping Rockwoods trails off limits to bikes and horses. What they would have done to them is not pleasant to imagine. Your wise decision will preserve Rockwoods as the prime destination for area hikers.
3. In regard to Public Use Strategy 1.7, the gradual conversion of the Trail Among the Trees to a crushed rock surface as the asphalt degrades:

I hope this does not mean you will be covering the entire trail with crushed rock. I think most people come to Rockwoods to get "back to nature" for a brief time, and to get away from the man-made. So it would be better to leave the trail in as natural a state as possible, reserving the crushed rock for "problem" sections that are prone to erosion or poor drainage (mud).

A smaller-gauge crushed rock ("pea gravel" ?) would make for a more comfortable walking surface for all ages and abilities of trail users.

Earth-tone rocks would be a much more natural and attractive choice than standard white/gray gravel. I'm thinking of the orange-, red-, and tan-tinted rocks that can be found in southeast Missouri (not sure of their geological names). In my opinion, a trail of standard gravel has no more natural appeal or attractiveness than a service road. It's just plain boring and lackluster. Since the Trail Among the Trees could be considered as Rockwoods "showcase" trail with its best and most varied scenery, I think it deserves better. A more interesting and attractive trail surface would likely bring more return visits.

Email (12-13-2013) The Missouri Department of Conservation plans to continue its ban on rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation. This decision has been made despite overwhelming public input requesting public rock climbing access at Rockwoods—an area that is not only of recreational importance to climbers, but is also of cultural and historical significance to the development of rock climbing in the state of Missouri.

Considering the MDC's constitutional mission to facilitate and provide opportunities for all citizens to enjoy Missouri's natural resources, I believe that the MDC has the responsibility to allow public climbing access to the cliffs and boulders on its lands. Given that the MDC allows, and even promotes, other recreational activities (e.g. paddling, mountain biking, and hiking), it is hard to understand why the MDC refuses to allow rock climbing.

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The local rock climbing community and local and national climbing organizations are willing to partner with the MDC in developing a management plan that returns public access to the cliffs and boulders at Rockwoods Reservation.

Email (12/13/2013) I love my family and the outdoors. For the past 15 years I have used rock climbing to foster a bond with my children. More than any other activity including team sports, camping, Indian Guide and Princess programs, scuba, skiing and what have you, rock climbing has been the venue through which we have grown together. My kids are now 26 and 24, respectively and we look forward to continuing this activity with the next generation.

It is imperative that parks and wilderness areas include rock climbing as part of the public's enjoyment of our natural resources. We (rock climbers) participate in many programs coordinated with park management to build trails, clean-up and preserve wilderness areas. A well managed recreation area can leverage the passion we have for the outdoors to help preserve our natural resources for future generations.

Please assure that rock climbing remains as a critical activity in our recreation areas.

Email (12/13/2013) I am writing you today to urge the MDC to re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has not heeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands. Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses. A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

I urge you to make Missouri a more attractive place to work, live and play.

Email (12/13/2013) Please consider letting rock climbers enjoy Rockwoods Reservation area. Please lift the ban on rock climbing. There are other ways to care for the rock, the use of instructional signs being one of them. You don't have to ban it from everyone.

I'm a 48 year old male and have been enjoying our parks for the last 30 years. To ban rock climbing is in my opinion short sighted.

Email (12/19/2013) As climbing continues to grow dramatically as a sport it is amazing to me that people are still considering bans on our public land. There is no difference between allowing climbing vs biking or hiking and treating those who climb differently is nothing but discrimination because the sport is more unfamiliar to those making decisions. People should be able to enjoy their land as long as they are not damaging it. If there are liability concerns find a solution as countless state and national parks have rather than just taking the easy way out.

- Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.
- MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.
- MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.
- Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.
- To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.
- Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.
- A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/17/2013) I feel the MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where it is deemed appropriate. Climbers share the MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

The MDC has also unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation, citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission. Yet, the MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands. In light of this, it seems possible that the MDC does not understand the impacts that climbing does and does not have on an area, and should be directed to open a dialogue with the climbing community in order to learn more about the issues involved.

Regarding liability concerns, the MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing also has many well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses. A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/17/2013) Please keep the Rockwoods Reservation open to rock climbing. Promoting activities on public lands that have minimum impact encourages healthier lifestyles, and build support among your citizens for government conservation of natural resources. The proposed Rockwoods Reservation management plan supports mountain biking and hiking, two activities with similar environmental impact.

Rock climbing at Rockwoods has a history dating back to the 1940's. Public opinion has been overwhelmingly in support of allowing climbing here. Yet the proposed 10 year management plan specifically prohibits rock climbing.

Encourage the local community and climbing association or club to take an active role in trail and fixed anchor maintenance to reduce cost and eliminate liability. There are countless examples of this kind of private/public pairing at rock climbing venues elsewhere in the United States, such as the Washington State Parks and the Washington Climbers Coalition.

Its also been demonstrated that increasing public participation in public lands has an economic benefit to local businesses, and makes the local community a more attractive place to live and work.

Allowing rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation clearly benefits the civic, environmental, and economic interests of Missouri. Please change the proposed 10 Year Management Plan to permit rock climbing.

Email (12/16/2013) Please reconsider opening Rockwoods to recreational climbing.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's when Tom Hornbein first began exploring the 70-foot sandstone cliff.

MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

While MDC has concerns about potential liability, fixed anchors, and other climbing management issues, local climbers and Access Fund are committed to being key partners in this evaluation and management process. MDC needs to also consider that rock climbing has well-documented economic benefits to local economies and will unarguably contribute to the quality of life for many residents of Missouri's major metropolitan area.

Email (12/16/2013) I would like to encourage you to support rock climbing as an appropriate recreational activity at Rockwoods Reservation. I was very disturbed when I learned that the new management plan bans rock climbing. While I do not live in Missouri, I am a frequent visitor to the state. My parents live in Rolla and my sister lives in Florissant. Rockwoods Reservation is a very convenient location for me to enjoy rock climbing, as well as to introduce the sport to my 6-year old twin sons, niece and nephew.

I believe there has been a public request to continue to allow rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation. Why does the new plan allow mountain biking and hiking but not rock climbing? Climbers share the ethic for conservation and stewardship with the Missouri Department of Conservation. Local climbers and climbing organizations are willing to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods. Allowing climbing would benefit local economies as climbers visit the area. It would also make the St. Louis metro area a more appealing place to live and work.

I urge you to reconsider allowing climbing at Rockwoods Reservation, as well as other local climbing areas.

Email (12/16/2013) Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.

MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/16/2013) Please. Climbing brings lots of money to local communities. I moved from IL to CO for the climbing. Please allow climbing at rock woods and allow local climbing organizations to manage fixed anchors.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/15/2013) I am writing to encourage you to allow for rock climbing at the Rockwoods Reservation in Missouri. The establishment of a location for outdoor rock climbing so close to St. Louis would greatly improve the accessibility of the outdoors to residents of the city and surrounding counties. Rock climbing outdoors is a safe and vigorous physical activity, much like mountain biking, which is allowed on many MDC lands. Currently the only outdoor climbing options near St. Louis are all located in Southern Illinois. Every weekend in the spring and fall, hundreds of climbers make their way from St. Louis to areas in the Shawnee National Forest. Allowing the development of a rock climbing cliff within Rockwoods, where there is a history of climbing dating back to the 1940s, would create environmental benefits from reduced fuel consumption (we wouldn't have to drive 2 1/2 hours each way to Illinois), and would keep more recreation dollars in Missouri. The skills needed to safely develop the cliffs at Rockwoods for climbing are already in St. Louis. Many climbers in St. Louis have spent the last 10 years equipping cliffs at Jackson Falls and other locations in Illinois with safe climbing gear. The same could be done here, as there is great interest in the community. We just ask that MDC allow climbing as a recreational activity at Rockwoods Reservation.

Email (12/15/2013) Please, please, please endorse rock climbing as an appropriate recreational activity at Rockwoods Reservation. We, as climbers, are visitors to these public lands as well. Please make it legal to climb at Rockwoods Reservation.

Email (12/14/2013) Climbing has been important to me for more than 25 years. Please consider the following points when determining your new policy for the Rockwoods area.

Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.

MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Many Thanks for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Email 12/15/2013) Charlie, Jay Bob: Please allow rock climbing in Rockwoods reservation, climbers can only construct artificial walls for climbing. The natural rock is limited to where mother nature places these cliffs. Encouraging anything that gets people away from their TV's is a good thing for a leader to do.

Email 12/15/2013) Charlie, Jay Bob: Please allow rock climbing in Rockwoods reservation, climbers can only construct artificial walls for climbing. The natural rock is limited to where mother nature places these cliffs. Encouraging anything that gets people away from their TV's is a good thing for a leader to do.

Email (12/14/2013) Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.

MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/13/2013) I ask you to urge Bob Ziehrer, MDC Director, to re-evaluate the proposed climbing ban at Rockwoods Reservation. Banning climbing there is wrong for the following reasons:

- Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.
- MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.
- MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.
- Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.
- To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.
- Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.
- A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/13/2013) I would like to take a moment to address the MDC's attitude toward rock climbing as it relates to Rockwoods Reservation and petition you to consider including climbing among recreational activities encouraged on MDC land.

Climbing at Rockwoods has been going on since a well-known climber named Tom Hornbein visited in the 1940's. Geographical locations that offer climbing are appealing places to live. The integration of climbers in these communities benefits local economies and generates income for local businesses. The climbing community shares the MDC's common goals of conservation, resource stewardship, safety, and has a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships here in the US and internationally. The MDC has indicated that rock climbing is incongruent with their mission statement, yet they advocate hiking, mountain biking, and other similar activities on MDC land. I do realize that there are concerns regarding appropriate locations liability, climbing anchors, impact, and other climbing management issues. A committed group of local climbers and the Access Fund are asking for committed partnership with MCD to see these issues evaluated and addressed. This applies to Rockwoods, but also to other appropriate areas that MCD has refused to allow climbing in. Regarding fixed anchors specifically; MCD should take no active role in placing or maintaining fixed anchors in order to avoid liability issues.

Please lend your ear to the climbing community and consider our request for a fruitful, synergistic, partnership.

Email (12/13/2013) I am writing in regards to current MDC policy on rock climbing at Rockwood Reservation.

Missouri is fortunate to hold geologic features that can be climbed. I live on the Kansas of the Kansas City suburbs. As a climber I often need to travel long distances to get to climbable rock. Many of us flock to Arkansas (usually a 6 hour drive) on warm weekends. It would be nice to consider Rockwood a worthwhile climbing destination. I think it would be fantastic to make a weekend of climbing and hanging out in St. Louis. Unfortunately, The policies in place prevent me, and other climbers, from enjoying these cliffs.

As I understand, there has been record of climbing taking place at Rockwood since the 1940s. Climbing is an important part of American history. Why should Rockwood not continue this legacy? I understand that liability and risk of injury raises some eye brows. But just how policy can be enacted to close the area for climbing, policy that places the liability on the climbers can be put into place. The MDC encourages enjoying the outdoors? Why stop at hiking, biking, and camping? Climbing is a growing sport and by allowing climbing in Rockwood sales at local gear shops would increase and use of the park would increase.

Remember: this is Conservation. Not Preservation.

Email (12/13/2013) MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

While MDC has concerns about potential liability, fixed anchors, and other climbing management issues, local climbers and Access Fund are committed to being key partners in this evaluation and management process. MDC needs to also consider that rock climbing has well-documented economic benefits to local economies and will unarguably contribute to the quality of life for many residents of Missouri's major metropolitan area.

MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work, while providing benefits to local economies and generating income for local businesses.

Email (12/13/2013) To whom it may concern, please consider the following:

- Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.
- MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.
- MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.
- Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.
- To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.
- Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.
- A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/13/2013) I am writing this letter to state my concern regarding the upcoming decision governing recreation use at the Rockwoods Reservation. I believe that rock climbing is a fully legitimate and worthy recreational pastime that should be permitted at the Rockwoods Reservation. As a southern Illinois local I travel to that area of Missouri from time to time to take advantage of the other recreational activities provided, including hiking and canoeing. My wife and I would love to be able to travel to your great state to climb as well. Please carefully consider the points listed below before making any decision regarding acceptable recreational uses on MDC land.

-Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.

-MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

-MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

-Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

-To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

-Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

-A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this issue,

Email (12/13/2013) I encourage you to endorse rock climbing as an appropriate recreational activity at Rockwoods Reservation.

climbing is a low-impact activity which can take place harmoniously alongside other uses of the park.

thanks for your time.

Email (12/13/2013) I am writing in regard to the ban on rock climbing in Rockwoods Reservation. I am relatively new to the sport of rock climbing, so I cannot say that I remember a time when climbing was a legal activity in Rockwoods Reservation. In the last 2 years since I started climbing I have driven to Arkansas to climb outdoors and southern Illinois. Now that I am aware that there is an area local to St. Louis I cannot understand why it is not open to local climbers? Climbers, much like other outdoor loving people, are conservationist and environmental stewards. Opening Rockwoods Reservation to climbing would provide my family and I a local place to enjoy a sport that we have come to love as a family. We are also members at a local climbing gym, and I know from the time we have spent at the climbing gym that there a several other families just like us. Rock climbing as sport has seen major growth in the last 5 years, with 2 new gyms opening in the St. Louis area bringing the total to 3 local climbing gyms. Most cities are lucky if they have one decent facility. This speaks volumes to the climbing community here in St. Louis, and could also be potentially tapped into by the Missouri Department of Conservation as a potential revenue stream. I am nurse and my wife is a physician, so we could easily pick up and move to a state that shares our love for the outdoors, but we are hoping that Missouri will see that local outdoor climbing is a potential resource that citizens of St. Louis and the great state of Missouri should be able to enjoy.

Thank you for your time,

Email (12/12/2013) I'm writing you today to ask you to reconsider the proposed climbing ban at Rockwoods Reservation. As an active rock climber and involved citizen, I hope that you will come to see those of us who climb as an valid and as within the mission of the MDC to have recreational use of the land. Rock climbing is the major way that gives me a chance to be out in nature and enjoy the beautiful land that Missouri has to offer inspiring me further to help preserve and protect nature. I see no inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet the MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands. Rock climbers over the years have shown to be active and engaged in resource protection and management partnerships.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses. A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work. In fact, as a resident of Missouri one of the attractions for myself moving to the state was discovering the wealth of activities that mirrored some of the activities I was able to enjoy while living in California.

While I understand that you may have further concerns around liability. What has worked successfully in other areas would be for MDC to take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Email (12/11/2013) Please take the following points into consideration in concern to the proposed Rockwoods Reservation Ten Year Area Management Plan

Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.

MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work

Email (12/11/2013)I am not prone to writing long letters, just as you are not interested in reading them. Please open the Rockwoods Reservation to rock climbing. I am an avid outdoors men, a full time worker, and a soon to be graduate. While I'm sure you've heard a litany of reason for opening the reservation know this, I will vote for you if I see that you personally have taken action to encourage rock climbing in Missouri. I am politically active and will pay attention to your efforts in these coming years.

PS. Thank you for serving our great state. Public service positions and the men who hold them rarely get the thanks they deserve. I really appreciate you stepping up and making the world a better place. For what its worth, no matter your decision in this matter I will still love living in Missouri. Have a happy Holiday.

Email (12/11/2013) As a Missourian I would love to use my state for all my outdoor recreational needs, but I have to export most of my outdoor hobbies to Arkansas. Why? Because of the ban on rock climbing at Redwoods Reservation by the Missouri Department of Conservation. The ban has gone on for to long. I ask that you investigate to why the MDC won't consider rock climbing as a recessional activity and continues to stop climbers of Missouri's effort to use the states natural resources in a non damaging and legal activity.

Email (12/11/2013) As a climber and someone who cares deeply about the preservation of Missouri I am please asking that the 10 year ban on climbing at Rockwoods Reservation areas. Climbing at Rockwoods has been a large part of the community and its involvement with the park since the early 1940's. The Missouri Department of Conservation has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods by making irrelevant and untruthful accusations between rock climbing and the Missouri Department of Conservation while still endorsing mountain biking, hiking and other similar recreational activities on Missouri Department of Conservation land.

Climbers share Missouri Department of Conservation's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resources protecting and management partnerships. To avoid liability concerns Missouri Department of Conservation should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods. Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses. A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/11/2013) I would like to share with you that I am a student at the University of Missouri and have a year and a half as a student. Also, my freshman year I didn't have any friends, I struggled with fitting in and finding the right group of friends. It wasn't until one random friend took me rock climbing at the end of my freshman year that I found my biggest passion and made the majority of my friends I still have today. Climbing is such a special activity to me and I would love for MDC to re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate. I understand that in your eyes there is a huge risk for climbers. However, to avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

I can testify upon my behalf and as well as many others in the climbing community, thank you for your consideration.

Email (12/11/2013) As a lifelong resident of the State of Missouri, and an avid rock climber of 19 years, I urge you to please reconsider the ban on rock climbing at Rockwood Reservation Conservation Area. Climbing is a historic outdoor pursuit which appeals to all ages. In a culture in which our members, particularly youth, are becoming less and less active, we desperately need more opportunities, not fewer, to get people outside and active. Climbing is an activity which is allowed in both state and federally owned land all across the country. Organizations such as the Access Fund are more than happy to work with land managers to come to agreements and help form policies to allow the sport of rock climbing to happen on these public lands. When properly managed, climbing poses no more of a risk or liability than many other activities, such as hunting, horseback riding or mountain biking, which MDC allows to happen on their properties.

Thank you.

Email (12/13/2013) I am writing you today to urge the MDC to re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has not heeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands. Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses. A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

I urge you to make Missouri a more attractive place to work, live and play.

PhoneCon (12/13/2013)). Allen has been a climber his entire life and has climbed all over the world. He is on ski patrol at Hidden Valley Ski Resort (Eureka, MO). He is going to ice climb in Colorado next week and wishes he could do climbing closer to home. He suggested looking into a climbers act piece of legislation similar to the skiers act in Colorado that prevents skiers from suing ski lodges. I explained that the liability issue was manageable according to our Legal Counsel. I then explained a little about the Department, our mission, and the time that this would take from fish, forest and wildlife centered management and activities. He thanked me for explaining and I assured him I would add his comments to others received during the comment period. He also asked that I e-mail him updates about the Rockwoods Reservation area plan.

Email (12/30/2013) I am a rock climber and general outdoor enthusiast (climbing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, hunting, etc.) living in Memphis, Tennessee. I am concerned to hear that the draft Rockwoods Reservation Ten Year Area Management Plan includes a ban on rock climbing. Rockwoods has a rich climbing history beginning in the 1940s when Tom Hornbein, a famous American mountaineer who was born in St. Louis, began exploring the sandstone cliff. I ask that the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reevaluate climbing at Rockwoods with the local climbing community and organizations such as The Access Fund, and allow climbing where appropriate.

The MDC is citing an inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, while supporting mountain biking, hiking, and other similar activities on MDC land. If the safety and environmental impacts of these other activities can be managed, then surely the same is true of rock climbing. Climbers as a group have a strong safety and environmental stewardship ethic that would support the efforts of MDC and create a powerful partnership in helping to protect Missouri's public lands.

My understanding is that MDC is concerned about liability related to fixed anchors. The best approach is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods. This is common on other public lands and is effective in maintaining the safety of fixed anchors. We as climbers use them, and it is in our best interest to make sure that they are safely maintained.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and generates income for local businesses. I am currently considering a move to Missouri and one of the first things that I did as part of my evaluation is look for climbing areas near where I would be living. A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/29/2013) As a long time climber and St Louis County resident, I wish you will reconsider MDC ban on rock climbing at Rockwood Reservation. There are very few climbing areas in Missouri, and banning climbing from Rockwood makes that problem worse. As an IT professional who is involved in recruiting, recreational options in the region are frequently asked about. It would be great if we had more instead of banning them.

Email (12/27/2013) As a native St. Louisian and supporter of the great outdoors, I highly recommend you stop the ban on climbing at the Rockwoods Reservation. As a former boy scout and uncles to several young scouts climbing has become part of the scout curriculum, but unfortunately many scouts have to travel several hours away to southern Illinois to climb, a trip that prevents several scouts from attending. The sport builds confidence and team building and we need that kind of growth and opportunity for our local scouts. As an member of the St. Louis climbing community I know we will supply and maintain the anchors and climbing routes and encourage the growth of the sport. This is a sport that has gained attention nationwide and will increase tourism activity in St. Louis. Please stop the ban at Rockwoods Reservation.

Email (12/21/2013) Please make climbing a Rockwoods possible for the public. Currently my wife and I spend 10-20 weekends every year driving hours to Illinois or Arkansas to climb; and I know numerous others, including large outdoor clubs, do the same. This is a lost economic opportunity for the region, and will be the primary factor behind our decision to leave St. Louis.

I would love to contribute to making this a reality. Feel free to contact me anytime: 864-616-1674

Email (12/20/2013) I am taking the time to write this letter because I feel very strongly about rock climbing. Keeping access open to public cliffs for current and future generations of climbers is essential. This crag is close to St. Louis, has historical meaning to the climbing community, and is a place I'd like to climb at - given the possibility!

Please consider the following points when acting, in your role, as a supporter of our nation's half million rock climbers! We are active members of the broader community; we vote, we are eco-friendly, and we are safe.

*Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.

- MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.
- MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.
- Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.
- To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.
- Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.
- A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Thank you for your time. I hope to have the opportunity to climb at Rockwoods Reservation in the near future!

Email (12/11/2013) Climbing is very dear to a large number of Missouri Citizens and it will be a shame if it is pulled away from us. Through local organizations and national ones such as the Access Fund, climbers unite and take care of the grounds they play on. Please look into the improvements that have taken place in Northern Arkansas in conjunction with their governments; notably Sam's Throne. Many Missouri Climbers were instrumental in the development and continue to be instrumental in the upkeep. I know this as I was a large part of the team that organized and made it happen. I would love to help my own state but won't be able to if Missouri climbing areas and potential areas begin to be shut down by those who are likely unfamiliar with the community.

I have no idea why climbing does not align with the MDC's mission statement when mountain biking, hiking, floating and hunting do.

Please consider the recreational benefits that can come from climbing, tourism and free labor that most climbers are willing to offer to better our wonderful state's outdoor destinations. While I don't currently have the statistics to show, hard data can be acquired to show the benefits climbers can have on a community.

Email (12/13/2013) I am writing to oppose the continuation of a climbing ban at Rockwoods Reservation. Climbing can be a relatively safe activity, statistically safer than mountain biking or other allowed activities, and most climbers are safety-focused and believe in the environmental ethic of "leave no trace." Climbing is being unjustly singled out for a ban at this area.

Please consider the following points:

Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.

MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships.

To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/13/2013) Please consider ending the 10 year climbing ban. There are local climbers that would be happy to work to ensure that sustainable and safe climbing practices are followed. Furthermore:

Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation has historical relevance beginning in the 1940's.

MDC should re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

MDC has unheeded the public's desire for rock climbing at Rockwoods Reservation citing inconsistency between rock climbing and the MDC mission, yet MDC endorses mountain biking, hiking, and other similar recreational activities on MDC lands.

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To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods.

Climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

A climbing area in Missouri's major metropolitan area will result in a more attractive place to live and work.

Email (12/13/2013) I am writing to urge the MDC to re-evaluate Rockwoods and other potential areas with the local climbing community, and allow climbing where appropriate.

Climbers share MDC's conservation and stewardship ethic, and have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships. Also, climbing has well-documented benefits to local economies and will generate income for local businesses.

Thanks for your consideration.

Email (12/13/2013) Please open this area for climbing.