

From: [Grand River Conservation Authority](#)
To: [Samantha Lawson](#)
Subject: FW: Climbing Access at Rockwood Conservation
Date: June 7, 2023 12:16:24 PM

From: Danielle Atara Ripsman [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 6, 2023 5:53 PM
To: Pam Walther-Mabee <pwalthermabee@grandriver.ca>; Samantha Lawson <slawson@grandriver.ca>
Cc: Grand River Conservation Authority <grca@grandriver.ca>
Subject: Climbing Access at Rockwood Conservation

Hello Pamela, Samantha and anyone else this may concern,

My name is Danielle, and I've been a graduate student here in the Waterloo region for the past 6 years. In that time, this region has become my home and I have built a community around climbing both outdoors and at the local gyms.

I read about the removal of bolts and anchors at Rockwood Conservation today, and I have to be honest, this is really disheartening. A lot of money, thought and volunteer hours go into establishing routes for the climbing community to enjoy, and you are definitely sending a signal that you are not willing to provide a huge swath of the community with public access to a natural resource.

Ontario has some of the strictest climbing access rules in the world, despite its thriving climbing community. As people that are passionate about sharing the outdoors, I find it puzzling that you would cut off a whole community of advocates for time in nature, that are thriving particularly in your region. While all outdoor activities come with a risk (particularly, fire, wildlife, and personal injury for your hiking and camping communities), we all share a common goal of sharing a common good, and preserving things for generations to come.

I was wondering why climbers have been seemingly left out of the discussion with regards to access, and how we might work towards bridging this gap.

Looking forward to hearing back from you.
Sincerely,

Danielle A. Ripsman, MASc
PhD Candidate
Department of Management Sciences
University of Waterloo

From: [Grand River Conservation Authority](#)
To: [Samantha Lawson](#)
Subject: FW: Climbing Access/Routes
Date: June 8, 2023 8:33:21 AM

From: Bean B. [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2023 8:43 PM
To: Grand River Conservation Authority <grca@grandriver.ca>
Subject: Climbing Access/Routes

I am writing to find out why the GRCA is doing everything they can to destroy any possibility for climbers to set and follow routes. I have been informed that within the past couple of days you have been destroying existing routes and in the process people have witnessed the crew you have working also destroying trees. What exactly is your reasoning for discriminating against people who have a love for climbing and the outdoors, from being able to do this? As a family that has been purchasing multiple yearly memberships over the years, this treatment is making us want to just stick with our Provincial Parks passes instead.

I find it very difficult to understand how an organization that is all about conservation of the outdoors, is destroying the natural landscape that is a part of the GRCA. From what I recall, I would venture a guess that there would be people at the University of Guelph that would be quite upset that this is happening. Also, what does destroying trees have to do with the climbing routes?

Colleen

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: [Grand River Conservation Authority](#)
To: [Samantha Lawson](#)
Subject: FW: Rockwood Climbing Bolt Removal
Date: June 7, 2023 12:16:47 PM

From: Liz Maffett [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2023 10:37 AM
Subject: Rockwood Climbing Bolt Removal

Hello Ms Walther-Mabee and Ms Lawson,

I would like to register my disappointment in your organization. It is incredibly ignorant and cruel of you to remove the bolts from a historic rock climbing area like Rockwood without consultation of the community or of the Ontario Alliance of Climbers.

I am sure you are aware that climbers have repeatedly attempted to meet and discuss the reopening of climbing at Rockwood. **We are willing to pay to use the area, sign waivers to remove your liability, and help with the creation of infrastructure and trails that will keep the flora and fauna safe.** We have worked with Niagara Parks, Halton Parks, and many other organizations to bring awareness to Leave No Trace practices. **Climbers are a respectful user group with money, time, and a love of nature.**

In our world of screens, it's so important for people to get outside and connect with the natural world. Please allow us to work with you to create a management plan for Rockwood that will help us all to grow and thrive.

Thank you.

Liz Maffett
[REDACTED]

From: [Grand River Conservation Authority](#)
To: [Samantha Lawson](#)
Subject: FW: Rockwood Climbing
Date: June 7, 2023 12:16:12 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Ben Webster [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 6, 2023 7:00 PM
To: Grand River Conservation Authority <grca@grandriver.ca>
Subject: Rockwood Climbing

Dear Grand River Conservation Authority,

I am writing as a longtime resident of both Southwestern, Ontario and also Southwestern British Columbia, who has travelled around the world to rock climb.

I can say with high confidence I have never been anywhere in the world that has such low support for recreational rock climbing from government and park authorities as Southern Ontario. In British Columbia, the provincial and municipal governments will actively act to promote and improve climbing infrastructure. They recognize the value of climbing as a recreation pursuit that keeps citizens healthy and engaged with local ecology. Climbing societies and communities have a long history of environmental stewardship and promoting leave no trace ethics. I would encourage you to look to the Smoke Bluffs Park in Squamish, British Columbia and its management plan as well as the Stawamus Chief Provincial Park and Skaha Bluffs Park in Penticton for models of how climbing recreation can be an integral part of a successful park.

South of the border, one can look at Red Rock in Las Vegas, Yosemite National Park and Joshua Tree National Park to show that climbing can safely exist in public places even in the most litigious nation on Earth.

Please engage with the Ontario Alliance of Climbers to create a park management plan that includes climbing and brings responsible individuals out into nature as our public spaces are intended.

I would gladly be available for a telephone conversation if you wish to discuss this. I am also happy to share more information on how some of the above mentioned areas incorporating climbing if you need frameworks for a future model that includes climbing.

Best Regards,

Benjamin Webster
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Grand River Conservation Authority](#)
To: [Samantha Lawson](#)
Subject: FW: Climbing in Rockwood
Date: June 7, 2023 1:49:15 PM

From: Jessie Blake [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2023 1:30 PM
To: Grand River Conservation Authority <grca@grandriver.ca>; Samantha Lawson <slawson@grandriver.ca>; Pam Walther-Mabee <pwalthermabee@grandriver.ca>; chris.white@get.on.ca; steven.liebig@get.on.ca
Subject: Climbing in Rockwood

Hello,

I recently learned that bolts for rock climbing routes are being chopped in and near Rockwood conservation area. I would like to know the logic behind this action and the logic behind the restriction of climbing in this area.

Considering the numerous recreational activities promoted by the GRCA I do not understand why climbers are excluded as users of these areas. Given that some available activities are riskier than rock climbing (e.g. swimming), safety is not a valid reason to prohibit climbing. Also, considering the numerous studies published which show climbing does not present a significant risk to endangered cliffside species (since routes are in areas where there is no vegetation), there is no valid ecological basis for this restriction. Further to this point, in my experience, climbers are a much more ecologically conscious group than other recreationists, providing many opportunities to partner with this community to create a sustainable management plan that could benefit the conservation area (e.g. with clean up days, promotion of best practices, invasive species removal projects).

Considering all the above, I cannot think of any valid reason to restrict climbing within GRCA managed land. On the contrary, I can think of many benefits to allowing climbing. The climbing community in Ontario is sorely lacking access to outdoor areas where climbing is officially permitted. When climbing areas are maintained well, rock climbing offers a safe recreational opportunity for young and old to be active and out in nature. Without these areas, climbers (including my family of 5 with three climbers under the age of 12) are relegated to indoor spaces, removed from the environment they should be forming strong attachments to. Rockwood has the highest concentration in Ontario of quality rock climbs above 5.13. This area could be an international destination, attracting significant tourism money to the Guelph-Eramosa township and significant permit money to the GRCA.

Overall, I think with these restrictions an opportunity is being lost and I await your response to the points raised.

Thank you for your time,
Jessie Blake