Beacon Rock State Park

Technical Rock Climbing Management Plan

Prepared by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Beacon Rock Climbing Advisory Committee

Approved by Donald Hoch

Director, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

Date 6-20-2017

Climbing Management Plan for Technical Rock Climbing at Beacon Rock State Park

I. Purpose

This climbing management plan supplements Washington Administrative Code-Technical Rock Climbing (WAC 352-32-085) (Appendix 1) and the statewide Technical Rock Climbing Policy (Policy 65-95-2) to provide site-specific management guidelines that will result in adequate resource protection and accommodation for technical rock climbing, bouldering and other park activities.

Technical rock climbing is permitted in Beacon Rock State Park consistent with WAC 352-32-085, Policy 65-95-2 and this management plan.

II. Climbing Advisory Committee

There will be a climbing advisory committee for this park in accordance with WAC 352-32-085 that will be made up of at least five (5) climbers, the park manager, and others deemed appropriate by State Parks. Term of appointment will be as determined by State Parks. The climbing management plan will be reviewed as often as State Parks and the climbing advisory committee deem necessary. Climbing plan review may occur via electronic means (i.e. email).

III. Climbing Area Description

Beacon Rock State Park went through a Classification and Management Plan (CAMP) process in 2001. As part of this process, portions of the park where climbing occurs received specific land use classifications. These classifications determine the type of recreational activity that can occur.

Beacon Rock and its immediate surroundings are classified as "Natural" which is defined at WAC 352-16-020. Natural areas are designated for preservation, restoration, and interpretation of natural processes. "Technical rock climbing" as defined in WAC 352-32-085 (Appendix 1) is a recreational activity specifically approved as a conditional use within this classification by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Approved Climbing Areas

a. The Northwest Face of Beacon Rock beginning west of the bronze plaque visible from the Highway 14 parking lot and extending to the southwest where the hikers' trail begins. This area includes routes beginning near *Stone Soup* and ending near *Fireball*.

b. The West Face climbing area beginning under the hikers' trail below the green gate and extending to the southwest to *Jensen's Ridge*. This area includes routes beginning near *Sunset Strip* and ending near *Lay Lady Lay*.

c. The South Face of Beacon Rock beginning at the route *Rhythm Method* and extending west past *Young Warriors* and the *Southeast Corner* to *Jensen's Ridge*. The South Face is subject to a seasonal closure as further described below.

d. Boulders located: 1) at and near the bases of the Northwest Face and West Faces of Beacon Rock; and 2) in talus fields above the Equestrian Trailhead/Day Use Area within Beacon Rock State Park (commonly known as the Hamilton Boulders). Bouldering at these areas is subject to the provisions of this plan as applicable to bouldering activity. Recreational use in the Hamilton Boulders area is increasing and State Parks will continue to assess any impacts including Pika habitat.

Climbing Areas Closures
Pursuant to WAC 352-32-085(3), a closure may be instituted when the director or his or her designee determines a closure is necessary for the protection of the health, safety and welfare of the public, park visitors or staff, or park resources.

Rare Plants
The East Face is currently closed to climbing in order to protect the following potential populations of rare plant species:

- Gorge Daisy (*Erigeron oreganus*), State status: Threatened. Located on east face of Beacon Rock only at elevations 50 feet and above and beneath overhangs and on face of the cliff in small cracks in the rock.
- Oregon Sullivantia (*Sullivantia oregana*), State status: Threatened. Confined to a small seep on the east face of Beacon Rock.

A complete species inventory would be needed before opening this area to climbing again. This area begins at *Boardwalk* and extends to the right (north) to Highway 14.

Raptor Protection
Peregrine falcons *(Falco peregrinus)* have a long history of nesting on the South Face of Beacon Rock. This climbing management plan includes a potential closure area and period to promote successful nesting, while balancing climbing access.

A closure area will be seasonally implemented on the South Face of Beacon Rock, as defined in Section III, to restrict climbing activities if peregrine falcons are determined by State Park staff to be nesting, either through their direct observation, official volunteer observation, or observation by other qualified state or federal agency staff. This seasonal closure occurs from February 1 until approximately July 15.

The above general closure area and closure period, as well as any subsequent changes, may be adjusted based on actual monitored observation of nesting activity, subject to final approval of Washington State Parks. This includes the possibility of an earlier opening date if no nesting activity occurs, nesting activity is unsuccessful, or successful fledging has occurred. It also includes the possibility of a smaller area of the South Face being subject to closure, both within a particular season and over time.

As necessary State Parks will consult with state agencies including the Department of Fish and Wildlife and may use qualified volunteers to assist in monitoring nesting activity, provided that such monitoring has been vetted by State Parks to ensure integrity and quality of data collection. This includes working with established 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations such as the Mazamas, the Access Fund, or the Washington Climbers Coalition to assume responsibility for monitoring under protocols proposed to and accepted by State Parks.

IV. Climbing Management

Overnight bivouacs

- Unattended vehicles in the park after hours are required to have an unattended vehicle overnight parking permit pursuant to WAC 352-32-250.
- Overnight bivouacking is allowed on all climbing areas of Beacon Rock in compliance with State Parks climbing Policy 65-95-2.
- No additional fee will be required for bivouacking.
- No fires will be permitted during bivouacking and human waste will be contained and disposed of in appropriate park facilities as required by WAC 352-32-030.
- Bivouacking will be done in a low-impact fashion with no signs of the bivouac being left at the site upon departure.

Chalk

- Chalk may be used. Tick marks must be removed or cleaned.

Route Maintenance

- Route maintenance is permitted as needed for climber safety and enjoyment of a natural line of ascent.
- Moss and small vegetation that are not sensitive, threatened, or endangered species may only be removed from the direct route of ascent as needed for climber safety and a clear and enjoyable line of ascent.
- Brushes may be used for route maintenance or new route development, with the use of natural fiber or nylon bristles strongly preferred based on local practice and the specific nature of the rock at Beacon Rock.

Hold addition

- The addition of holds onto the rock face by any means, including gluing, chipping, or bolting is prohibited.

Stabilization of holds

- The artificial stabilization of natural holds with epoxy is strongly discouraged unless deemed necessary to preserve a natural line of ascent. If employed, such stabilization must be visually unobtrusive.

Fixed anchors

- On established routes, except in emergency situations, the climbing advisory committee, in consultation with State Parks staff, will review the placement of new fixed anchors or removal of existing fixed anchors. The installation of fixed anchors is less of an issue at Beacon Rock due to the emphasis on traditional techniques using climber installed and removed protection.
- On established routes, climbers may replace existing fixed anchors one-for-one at their discretion.
- New routes that utilize natural protection, fixed anchors, or a combination thereof along the line of ascent may be established at the discretion of the first ascensionist. These new routes may include rappel and belay anchors at the top of the route as necessary for safety, descent, and enjoyment of the line.

- Without endorsement by State Parks (see "Liability" below), the climbing advisory committee encourages climbers to use stainless steel products for any replaced or newly approved bolts, hangers, and chains, with bolts at least 3/8" in diameter.
- Climbers are encouraged to camouflage all fixed anchors to blend into the natural landscape.
- Power drills may be used in placing fixed anchors.

Belay stations
Natural bases (i.e. cliff base belay stations) should be created in a low-impact fashion using natural features such as hardened spaces or existing natural platforms.

Trail Development and Maintenance
There is an existing access trail from the Highway 14 parking area to the South Face climbing area as well as an existing trail to the West Face climbing area. All climbers will be expected to utilize the developed trails to access the climbing areas. Excessive resource degradation and/or negative impacts to sensitive plant species may result in area climbing restrictions or closures.

Resource Protection
Sensitive and endangered vegetation is not to be disturbed on Beacon Rock. Discovery of any new threatened or endangered plant or animal species within an existing or proposed climbing area may result in a full or partial closure. The action taken in this case will be at the level necessary to ensure adequate protection for the species.

Discovery of any new plant or animal species of conservation concern within an existing or proposed climbing area may result in a full or partial closure. For the purposes of this Plan, "species of conservation concern" means a threatened or endangered plant or animal species, or a species that, while not threatened or endangered, is of limited distribution, habitat use, or population size such that it is impacted by climbing at Beacon Rock State Park. The action taken in this case will be at the level necessary to ensure adequate protection for the species until a study can be completed to determine its location, condition, and the level of protection required. The management plan will then be amended to provide for that required protection. Following approval of the amended plan, the climbing closures may be reviewed and areas reopened if allowed by the plan.

Rescues
To the degree possible State Parks staff will participate in rescues within the scope of their training and abilities. State Parks staff is typically not trained for climbing rescue and climbers should dial 911 and contact local emergency service providers. Climbers at Beacon Rock are encouraged to be skilled in self-rescue and to volunteer with local search and rescue units to help supplement emergency response resources.

Volunteer support
State Parks encourages any and all volunteer activity including trail work and clean-ups.

Public education
Information boards will be located at climbing area entry points and at the base of Beacon Rock in various locations in order to educate climbers about rules and regulations, safety, environmental concerns, emergency phone numbers, and locations of the nearest phone and ranger station.

Liability

State Parks assumes no responsibility for monitoring or managing the manner in which climbers practice their sport, or the hazards of climbing in what is acknowledged to be a geologically active area (rock fall potential). Climbers are responsible for their own safety, as provided in RCW 4.24.210. This climbing management plan is to solely manage the impact of climbing on State Park resources.

Violations

As stated in WAC 352-32-085 (10), any violation of the technical rock climbing WAC or rules contained in the park management plan and posted at the park is an infraction under Chapter 7.84 RCW.

Appendix 1: Relevant Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and Commission Policy

WAC 352-32-085 Technical rock climbing

(1) Whenever used in this section, technical rock climbing shall mean climbing while using such aids as pitons, carabiners, chalk, ropes, fixed or removable anchors, or other similar equipment. Technical rock climbing includes bouldering and free soloing (respectively low and high elevation climbing without ropes).

(2) Technical rock climbing will be allowed in state parks except it is:

(a) Not permitted in natural area preserves;

(b) Conditioned in heritage areas, natural areas and natural forest areas;

(c) Not permitted where the director or designee has closed the area pursuant to subsection (3) of this section;

(d) Limited in state park areas without climbing management plans pursuant to subsection (6) of this section to the use of routes with established fixed protection, new routes that do not use fixed protection, nor require gardening/cleaning with any type of cleaning tool;

(e) Not permitted in state park areas closed to public use.

(3) The director or designee may, permanently or for a specified period or periods of time, close any state park area to technical rock climbing if the director or designee concludes that a technical rock climbing closure is necessary for the protection of the health, safety and welfare of the public, park visitors or staff, or park resources. Prior to closing any park or park area to technical rock climbing, the director or designee shall hold a public meeting in the general area of the park or park area to be closed to technical rock climbing. Prior notice of the meeting shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the area and at the park at least thirty days prior to the meeting. In the event that the director or designee determines that it is necessary to close a rock climbing area immediately to protect against an imminent and substantial threat to the health, safety and welfare of the public, park visitors or staff, or park resource, the director or designee may take emergency action to close a park area to rock climbing without first complying with the publication and hearing requirements of this subsection. Such emergency closure may be effective for only so long as is necessary for the director or designee to comply with the publication and hearing requirements of this subsection.

(4) The director or designee shall ensure that any park area closed to technical rock climbing pursuant to subsection (3) of this section is conspicuously posted as such at the entrance of said park area. Additionally, the director or designee shall maintain a list of all parks and park areas closed to technical rock climbing pursuant to subsection (3) of this section.

(5) The director or designee shall establish a committee of technical rock climbers, to advise park staff on park management issues related to technical rock climbing for each state park area where deemed necessary by the agency.

(6) Each state park area with an established advisory committee of technical rock climbers will have a climbing management plan which will specify technical rock climbing rules concerning overnight stays on climbing routes, bolting, power drills, stabilization of holds, group size and activities, gardening/cleaning of routes pursuant to chapter 352-28 WAC and RCW 79A.05.165, chalk, special use designations for climbing areas, protection of sensitive park resources, and other such issues required by the director or designee. Climbing management plans that relate to natural forest areas or heritage areas must be approved by the commission. The director or designee shall ensure that any technical rock climbing rules contained in a climbing management plan are conspicuously posted at the entrance of the affected park area.

(7) Bolting will be allowed as specified in climbing management plans.

(8) The use of power drills will be allowed only if the park climbing management plans specifically permit under specified conditions for bolt replacement and bolt installation on new routes. They are otherwise prohibited.

(9) The addition of holds onto the rock face by any means, including gluing, chipping, or bolting is prohibited.

(10) Except as provided in WAC 352-32-310, any violation of this section and rules contained in the park management plan and posted at the park is an infraction under chapter 7.84 RCW.

65-95-2 Technical Rock Climbing Policy

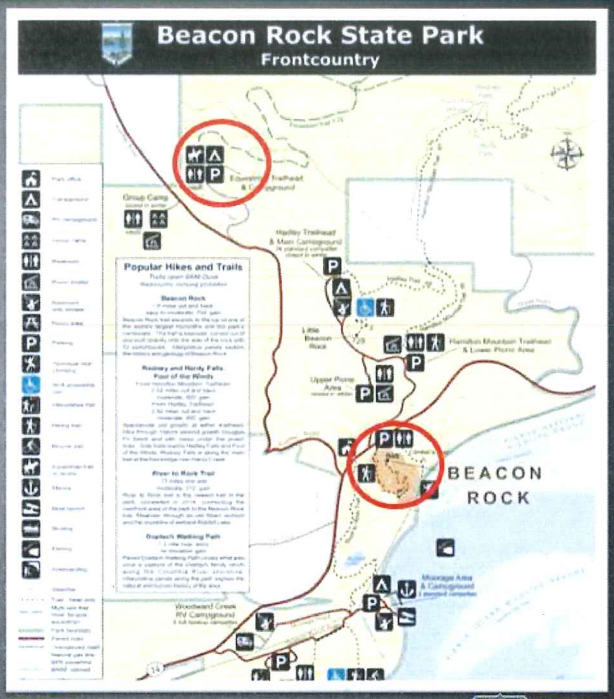
It is the policy of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to allow technical rock climbing in state parks, other than Natural Area Preserves and only as conditioned by the Commission in Heritage Areas, Natural Areas and Natural Forest Areas, in such a way as to assure protection of park resources and compatibility with other public activities in the parks. These assurances are best achieved by establishing forums at each climbing park to seek advice from climbers for appropriate accommodation of the activity, maintaining acceptable levels of impact on park resources, assuring compatibility with park visitors, and continuing the education of agency staff. Public review of this policy will be done periodically to keep it current with trends in technical rock climbing and consistent with related agency policy.

Commission Action Date: December 8, 1995

Appendix 2: Climbing Area Maps

Location of Climbing and Bouldering Areas

- General areas where climbing and bouldering occur shown in red circles
- The Hamilton boulders area in the north of the park is under review for bouldering use



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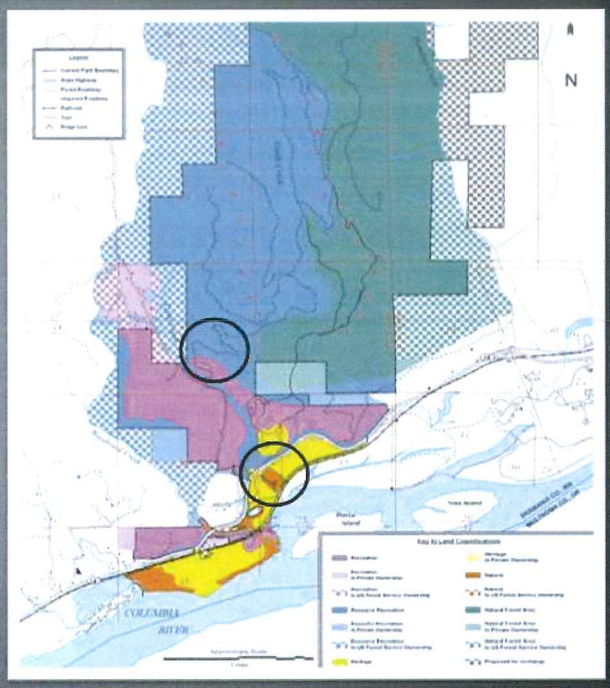
Land Classification in Climbing Areas

- Beacon Rock classified as Natural
- Technical rock climbing allowed as a conditional use
- Bouldering area classified as Resource Recreation
- Land classification allows bouldering as a permitted use subject to review of environmental impacts



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Climbing Areas at Beacon Rock

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Hiking and Climbers Trails at Beacon Rock

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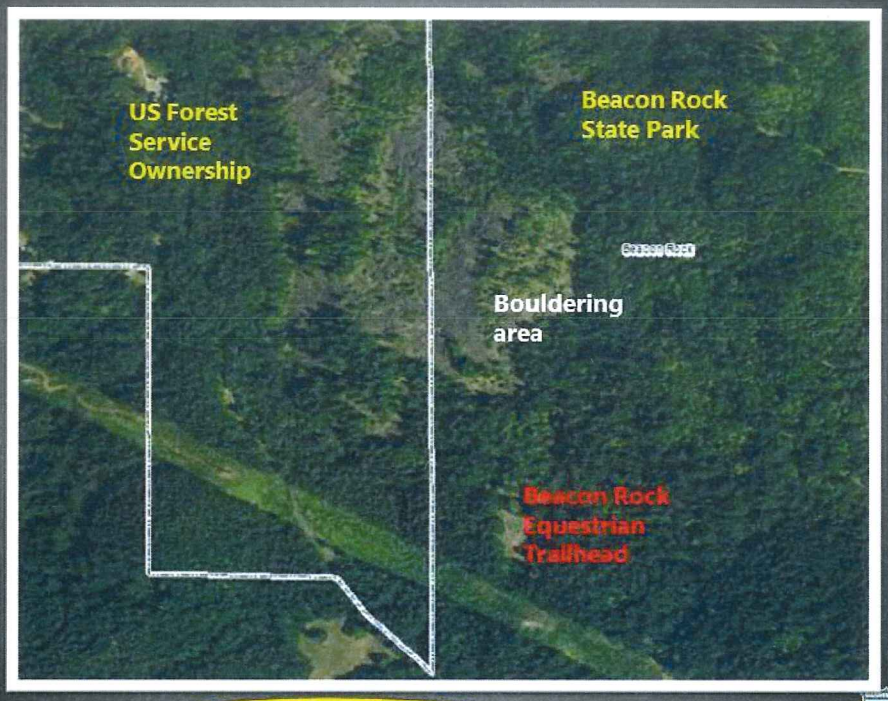
Bouldering Area at Hamilton Boulders



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