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Citizen Coalition presents a Climbing Management Plan (CMP) to the Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) for use as an alternative in the upcoming development of a BNF CMP

Hamilton, MT – A broad coalition of sixteen local, regional and national citizen groups are presenting a Citizens' Climbing Management Plan (CCMP) to the Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) today. After participating in meetings with climbers and BNF officials for over two years, this plan was developed by incorporating research into many other CMPs and climbing policies currently used by the Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and by States and Cities across the U.S.

Key elements include:

- An inventory of climbing routes
- An authorization system to install fixed anchors (climbing would not require authorization)
- An 800-meter (1/2 mile) seasonal buffer around raptor nests
- Education and outreach
- Protection of wilderness characteristics, cultural heritage, wildlife, and other resource values to ensure sustainability of climbing.

Organizations endorsing the CCMP include:

Wilderness Watch, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, WildEarth Guardians, Bitterroot Audubon, Montana Peregrine Institute, Friends of the Bitterroot, Friends of the Clearwater, Swan View Coalition, Friends of the Wild Swan, Flathead Lolo Bitterroot Task Force, Native Ecosystems Council, Conservation Congress, Gallatin Wildlife Association, Sequoia ForestKeeper®, Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Bozeman Broadband, and Northwest Montana Great Old Broads for Wilderness Broadband

George Nickas, Wilderness Watch Executive Director said, "Climbing in Wilderness requires that we accept the Wilderness on its own terms. Modifying the Wilderness to suit our personal demands not only is inappropriate and unlawful, but it also cheapens the climbing experience. The Citizens Climbing Management Plan preserves the opportunity for an authentic wilderness experience and preserves the Wilderness for humans and wildlife alike."

"The CCMP will allow long term enjoyment by the climbing community while also protecting sensitive habitat and important cliff-dwelling species," said Adam Rissien of WildEarth Guardians. "Under this plan climbers can enjoy the vertical rock for recreation and still ensure the survival of specially adapted plants and wildlife on these same cliffs."

Jim Miller, Friends of the Bitterroot president commented, "FOB is dedicated to protecting our public lands' natural and cultural resources, from peregrine falcons to ancient pictographs, while ensuring long-term climbing opportunities. This CCMP achieves both and is a win-win."

"To protect our nesting Peregrine Falcons, it is essential that all managing agencies maintain at least a ½ mile buffer zone restricting all activity around all active Peregrine Falcons nesting cliffs from March through July.", said Jay Sumner, Executive Director, Montana Peregrine Institute

Clint Nagel, president of Gallatin Wildlife Association pointed out, "We are living in a time where outdoor enthusiasts want an uninhibited lifestyle. But as more and more people venture out into the backcountry, it just places too much pressure on that resource, especially as it relates to wildlife and wilderness. If we allow that pressure to continue, we will lose the value that makes us want to venture and experience those places. We must have common sense and a sense of proportion as to what is acceptable."

Linda Healow, Bozeman Broadband Great Old Broads for Wilderness said, "The Citizens Climbing Plan offers both ample recreational opportunity and protection for vulnerable areas including raptor nests in a well-researched, common sense and easily implemented proposal. We heartily encourage BNF to adopt the suggestions included in the plan. "

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