

# GUIDELINES ON ACCESS AND CONSERVATION ON CRAGS AND CLIFFS

## Outputs from the UIAA/IUCN workshop on “Climbers, Mountains, and the Environment” Barcelona, 1-3 May 1998

These guidelines are intended for the use of UIAA member federations and organisations with complementary interests. They have been formulated primarily for rock climbing on crags and cliffs below the Alpine zone, but may often have general application in the Alpine zone. The guidelines include three components: principles, strategies, and actions. Strategies should be defined and implemented through actions at two levels: national/regional and local.

### PRINCIPLES

The guidelines are based on the following **general principles**:

- 1) Freedom of access to all crags and cliffs, and climbing in a responsible and sustainable way, should be basic human rights.
- 2) While climbing and the enjoyment of nature are essential ingredients for nurturing the human spirit, nature also has rights.
- 3) Where potential, actual, or perceived conflicts between these rights occur, knowledge, flexibility, dialogue, and cooperation should be employed in order to establish whether any restriction on access is appropriate, and in implementing any such restriction.

These general principles are supported by other more **specific principles**:

- 1) Many crags and cliffs have considerable importance for the conservation of birds, animals, and plants.
- 2) The natural conditions of crags and cliffs are very diverse.
- 3) Climbing is only one of a number of activities that may endanger the survival of particular species of birds, animals, and/or plants on a particular crag or cliff.
- 4) Decision-makers should not misuse restrictions.
- 5) Climbers should accept restrictions on climbing in specific places and at particular times when these restrictions are supported by well-founded data.
- 6) Climbers should follow minimum-impact principles.
- 7) Active pioneers, group leaders, and guide writers have special responsibilities for fostering sustainable climbing through example, awareness-raising, and education.

### NATIONAL & REGIONAL STRATEGIES

At the national and regional levels, strategies relating to access and conservation should be based on appropriate **knowledge**:

- a national inventory of sites
- information on patterns and trends of use
- identification of stakeholders (see appendix 1)

**Structures** set up to implement strategies should:

- be based on stakeholder analysis
- define the responsibilities of stakeholders
- include capability to react to new information, events, etc.

Strategies should include well-defined **information and communication** components:

- internal (within the climbing community and those most directly concerned with defining and implementing a strategy)
- external (to all those others concerned)

Both internal and external communication should be:

- transparent (recognising that some information should not be publicly available, as it may endanger particular species, or lead to commercial gain)
- regular

Strategies should be based on **best practice** and finding **solutions**. They should include mechanisms for ongoing **monitoring and evaluation**.

## **ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT NATIONAL & REGIONAL STRATEGIES**

### **Knowledge basis**

The **knowledge basis** should be developed efficiently and effectively. Necessary actions are:

- development of common methodologies
- training in the use of manuals describing common methodologies
- development and implementation of efficient information processing, storage, and access
- use of existing information and knowledge wherever possible
- building up knowledge from the local level (involving climbers and partners - see Appendix 1)
- identifying and filling information gaps
- identifying potential and existing problems and conflicts

### **Structures**

Different **structures** should be set up to develop and implement strategies. At the **national** level, necessary actions are to:

- set up a national structure with representatives from the climbing community
- conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify partners (see Appendix 1)
- set up a national structure with representatives from the climbing community and partners
- establish mechanisms for conflict identification and resolution
- define climbing regions (according to cultural, geological, and/or any other appropriate criteria)

At the **regional** level, necessary actions are to:

- set up a regional structure with representatives from the climbing community
- conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify partners (see Appendix 1)
- set up a regional structure with representatives from the climbing community and partners
- establish mechanisms for conflict identification and resolution

In general, representatives from individual regions will participate in the national structure.

### **Information and communication**

Actions related to the external dissemination of **information and communication** regarding the principles, processes, and decisions of strategies should:

- use diverse media (brochures, leaflets, meetings, Internet, etc.)
- be targeted at different audiences (press and broadcast media, climbers, public, specialised, etc.)
- be on-going
- be consistent in content and format

Internal communication must be efficient, on-going, and consistent in content and format.

### **Best practice/solutions**

Actions to define **best practice and solutions** may include:

- definition of a code of conduct for climbers
- definition of processes for defining special measures, based on available knowledge

## **LOCAL STRATEGIES**

At local levels, strategies should be developed and implemented through **local networks**.

This entails:

- identification of local climbers and climbing-related groups and organisations:
  - individual active climbers, local clubs and club sections, commercial guides, trainers, education and training establishments, mountain rescue
- identification of other local actors:
  - local authorities, landowners, nature conservation bodies and NGOs, etc.
- definition of local network
- establishment of local network
- definition of agenda:
  - frequency of meeting, working method, action plan, responsibilities, funding, etc.

The activities of the local network must be based on current local **knowledge** regarding climbed and non-climbed crags and cliffs, with a survey of:

- climbing situation
- ecological features
- legal aspects, ownership

Higher priority should be given to crags in protected areas (national parks, nature reserves, etc.). Mechanisms must be put in place to:

- regularly update the survey
- develop and act on recommendations
- implement management actions (including rescue aspects)

**Information and best practice** must be communicated, using means such as:

- leaflets
- guidebooks
- signs
- climbing magazines
- local press and broadcast media
- NGOs and climbing and Alpine clubs

These activities should be complemented through educational activities, such as:

- informing and training group leaders
- training guides
- joint site visits and projects

All communication should be linked to activities at national and regional levels.

One emphasis of any strategy should be to stress the **benefits of climbing to local communities**, for instance through:

- encouraging development and use of local businesses ('local sell and spend')
- establishing or supporting local trust funds (e.g., for conservation work)
- support for local clubs, organisations, and projects (e.g., sale of stickers)

## LOCAL ACTIONS

One set of actions for the implementation of local strategies relates to **access**. This includes:

- a transport policy, including the promotion of the use of public transport
- a facilities concept, for accommodation, sanitary facilities, waste disposal, etc.
- relative assessment of benefits and problems associated with climbing
- provision of clear access routes to crags and cliffs
- contact with landowners, with emphases on respect for the immediate environment, local people and culture
- no waste
- car park security
- regular monitoring and reporting of all of the above

A second set of actions relates to **detailed measures on individual crags and cliffs**, based on survey and monitoring. When necessary, and based on current knowledge, zoning and/or seasonal restrictions may be implemented. On-site management actions should include:

- management of crag base areas (trails, etc.)
- provision of site information (the minimum necessary)
- definition of a policy on vegetation removal and fixed equipment
- installation of rappel anchors to avoid fragile top areas
- no waste
- regular monitoring and reporting of all of the above, as well as any conservation problems

## **APPENDIX 1: PARTNERS IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STRATEGIES**

The following list of potential partners illustrates the range of partner organisations that should be included in developing and implementing national and regional strategies. Many of these groups would also be represented in local networks.

- 1) Mountaineering federations and clubs
- 2) The public
  - unaffiliated climbers and mountaineers
- 3) Landowner federations
  - private landowners
  - commercial landowners
  - foundations, trusts, charities
  - government
- 4) Sports and recreation
  - national sports federations
  - national outdoor sports federations
  - national Olympic committee
  - hunters' federations
  - automobile clubs/associations
- 5) Commercial
  - manufacturers
  - retailers
  - commercial operators