

THE ACTION COMMITTEE FOR ELDORADO'S **FHRC GUIDELINES**

15 April 2004

PURPOSE

Climbing in Eldorado Canyon State Park has increased exponentially over the past thirty years. As a result of this growth, Eldorado climbers have increasingly been called upon to make decisions concerning the installation and replacement of fixed hardware as members of a larger community that extends to future users of the Park as well as those currently climbing here. The very nature of establishing a new route in Eldorado has changed dramatically. Because of their impact on the climbing community as a whole, new climbing routes requiring fixed hardware in Eldorado are now considered first and foremost a community service, and are only secondarily a means of personal expression for the individual establishing the climb. Thus, the Action Committee for Eldorado and its Fixed Hardware Review Committee (FHRC) encourage applications for new anchors and for new routes which are capable of being led safely by an Eldorado leader competent at the grade. The community's desire for growth in the Park must be balanced with a respect for the existing routes that have shaped the climbing that exists there today. Toward this end, the FHRC exists as a public forum to assist and regulate the installation and replacement of fixed hardware in Eldorado with the goal of facilitating controlled growth of quality routes and anchors in the Canyon.

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1980s, the placement of bolts became a topic of controversy in the Boulder area. During that time, Boulder Mountain Parks and City and County Open Space (BMP) prohibited the placement of new bolts: an extreme reaction, despite Boulder City Council's direction to BMP staff to create a process allowing the creation of new routes.

At the same time, Eldorado saw its share of controversy when several climbers began upgrading and replacing numerous fixed anchors throughout the Canyon. Unfortunately, instead of replacing like gear for like gear in the same location, these climbers added additional bolts to existing routes, replaced pitons with bolts, and moved the location of bolts. These actions substantially changed the nature of certain classic Eldorado climbs, such as *Psycho*, *X-M*, *Rosy Crucifixion*, *Le Toit*, and *The Wisdom*, and enraged many local climbers. As a result of this well-meant, but unilateral effort, some of the new routes and new bolts were chopped, and the rock damaged.

In contrast to BMP's position, in 1991, Bob Toll, the head ranger at Eldorado, approached several active local climbers and informed them that the Park would continue to allow climbers to establish new routes requiring bolts, if climbers would establish a process which allowed the local climbing community to comment on the proposed routes.

Park management believed that Eldorado belonged to all climbers and that individuals could no longer be permitted to take unilateral actions that affected all climbers without community input and consensus.

The Action Committee for Eldorado (ACE) was incorporated in 1992 by the Access Fund to meet this need and ACE's first task was the creation of the FHRC process. The FHRC process is designed to provide the climbing community with the opportunity to comment on and discuss, approve or disprove of:

- (1) applications to establish new routes requiring fixed gear;
- (2) applications to remove routes with fixed gear;
- (3) applications to change existing climbing routes by moving or removing fixed gear;
- (4) applications to establish new anchors; and
- (5) other applications or actions that effect climbing in the Canyon.

After gathering and considering public opinion on the applications, the FHRC notifies the Park that the climbing community is either in favor of or opposed to each application, and recommends that the Park either approve or deny the application. The FHRC's recommendation to the Park is advisory only. The Park reviews the application to determine whether there are any environmental or other conflicts with the application and makes the final decision on whether to approve the application. The Park has traditionally approved proposals recommended by the FHRC.

FHRC members are elected annually by ACE based upon several criteria. The purpose of the FHRC is to allow the thoughtful development of new routes in Eldorado per community consensus. An open mind, the ability to consider each application on its merits, and the ability to vote against one's own personal opinions when the climbing community's opinion differs are among the most important criteria for FHRC members. In addition, years of climbing experience in Eldorado, awareness of Eldorado's history and traditions, willingness to devote a substantial amount of time working on the FHRC, and the ability to discuss applications with other climbers while out climbing are also considered.

FHRC GUIDELINES

The FHRC operates according to the following guidelines:

1. Mechanics

1.1. Proposals. Anyone desiring to (a) establish a new route requiring fixed hardware; (b) remove hardware from an existing route; (c) replace a fixed hardware with a bolt; or (d) add, remove, or relocate fixed anchors on any route must submit a application to ACE. Individuals who wish to replace like gear for like gear in the same location need not obtain permission from the FHRC. Those applications can be made directly to the Park which usually responds to the request fairly quickly, often at the time of submission.

1.2. Public Meetings. The FHRC conducts two public meetings each year. Public meetings are held in the spring and the fall on the third Wednesday of June and October. The deadline for all applications to the FHRC for new routes, anchors, or for addition or replacement of fixed hardware shall be April 1 and August 1, so that the FHRC has time to review and publicize the applications.

1.3. Pre-Meeting Responsibilities. Approximately one week after each application deadline, the FHRC meets and divides up responsibilities for the tasks to be completed before the public meeting. During the next four (4) weeks, the FHRC shall attempt to meet with each applicant and review their application with them. Clarifications regarding the location of the proposed line and the exact location of each piece of fixed hardware are determined. The FHRC works with the applicant to ensure the highest quality application possible, that is, if the FHRC has recommendations regarding bolt placements for ease of clipping or the number of bolts, these recommendations are communicated to the applicant. The applicant may revise the application in writing by May 7 or September 7, otherwise the application as originally filled will be processed by the FHRC.

1.4. Application for Public Review. Four to six weeks before each public meeting, the FHRC begins surveying the climbing community to determine the community's support or lack of support for each application. Comments are welcome from all Eldorado climbers. The application for public review shall include a precise topo of the new route or location of the new anchors and the applicant's narrative of the application. In addition, the FHRC shall prepare a description of the application which shall briefly summarize relevant facts about the proposed new route, factors in favor of the application, factors against the application, and neutral factors, as outlined in these Guidelines (the "Fact Sheet"). The FHRC shall prepare and present each Fact Sheet to the ACE Board of Directors for ACE's review five weeks before each public meeting. ACE shall either approve or modify the Fact Sheet and return it to the FHRC for public dissemination within one week of ACE's receipt. The intent of the Fact Sheet is to provide additional facts to the climbing community in an effort to facilitate an educated public discussion on the application's merits. The Fact Sheet is not intended to bias the public vote on the merits of the route. The Fact Sheet shall be distributed to the public approximately four weeks before the public meeting, along with copies of the applications, via email, and posters, which shall be displayed in climbing shops and gyms.

1.5. Surveying the Climbing Community. Four to six weeks before each public meeting, the FHRC shall begin surveying the climbing community to determine the community's support or lack of support for each application. Comments are welcome from all Eldorado climbers. The survey shall be accomplished through three methods: (1) email vote or other Internet communication, (2) votes cast at the public meeting, and (3) informal polling of local climbers by FHRC members. The survey shall take place as follows: the FHRC shall provide ACE with a link to the electronic versions of the applications and ACE shall send them out to all members of the ACE and FHRC email

list. Applications shall also be publicized on ACE's web site. In addition, individual FHRC members should talk with climbers as much as possible about the application and seek their opinions on the applications. Finally, public discussion and voting on each application shall take place at each public meeting. The results of all votes collected via email and the ACE website shall be organized, tallied, and summarized before each public meeting by the FHRC. The results of informal discussions of FHRC members with other climbers may also be summarized.

1.6. *Reviewing Applications.* Each FHRC member shall climb all proposed new routes whenever possible. At the very least, FHRC members should closely inspect the routes, holds, and proposed bolt placements. To be able to publicly discuss reasons to recommend or not recommend a route, each FHRC member should educate themselves about each new application. Without detailed knowledge of the route, the FHRC member cannot discuss its merits or lack thereof, but instead can only discuss the application in general philosophical terms. In general, a person who has gone through the FHRC application process has invested a great deal of time and emotion in their application.

1.7. *Attendance.* Each FHRC member is obligated to attend each public meeting. Any FHRC member who misses two meetings in any term may be removed by ACE.

1.8. *Voting.* Each FHRC member shall cast one vote on each application. FHRC members may not abstain from voting unless they have a significant conflict of interest in the outcome, *e.g.*, an FHRC member is applying for the route. The members of the public who are physically present at the meeting, including the applicant, shall collectively have one vote. The non-present public vote, *i.e.*, all votes received via email or ACE website, shall collectively have one vote. In the event of a tie, the designated ACE representative shall cast the deciding vote.

1.9. *No Early Review of Public Comment.* To streamline the process and treat each applicant equally, the applicant may not review comments received prior to the meeting until the public meeting. All pre-meeting public comments shall be circulated only among ACE directors and the FHRC members.

2. *Running the Meeting*

2.1. At the start of the public meeting, the FHRC shall read the results of all email, Internet, and web site voting as well as summaries of any comments received.

2.2. Handouts and/or overhead projections may be used to outline the meeting agenda and clarify how the voting process works. The order of routes to be discussed shall be set by the date each application is received by the FHRC.

2.3. The Chair of the FHRC shall open the applications up to public discussion. If the applicant is present, he or she may give a brief description of the application. Each member of the public who desires to comment on the application at the public meeting shall be given a reasonable amount of time to offer his or her opinion.

2.4. After public discussion the Chair shall close the application to further discussion. The votes shall be counted as follows: First, the majority vote of all written public comment received prior to the meeting shall be counted as one vote. Second, the majority vote of the public present at the meeting shall be counted as one vote. Finally, the FHRC members shall vote and each FHRC member's vote shall be counted as one vote for a total of seven votes. Each FHRC member shall vote individually and, after the vote, state the reasons why they voted for or against the route. The Chair shall tally the number of votes in favor of and opposed to the application and announce that the application has been either approved or rejected. The next application shall be read and steps 2.3 and 2.4 shall apply.

2.5. Within three days after the meeting, the FHRC Secretary shall forward the FHRC's recommendations to the Park for final approval.

3. Guidelines and Considerations

In managing fixed hardware issues, the FHRC shall comply with the following guidelines:

3.1. Voting. In considering all applications, the FHRC shall give great weight to the opinion of the majority of the climbing community. Any FHRC member voting against the prevailing public opinion must have excellent reason(s) to do so, and must describe and discuss those reason(s) in detail at the public meeting.

3.2. Applications Regarding Existing Routes. Existing routes shall be maintained to the greatest extent possible in the condition of the First Free Ascent (FFA). Bold routes shall remain bold, safe routes shall remain safe. If good fixed protection existed for the FFA, such gear shall be maintained in its original position. This guideline shall govern all applications regardless of the weight of public comment.

When fixed hardware is replaced, the replacement shall be made in the same position as the gear being replaced. Any fixed hardware must be made as inconspicuous as possible. Occasionally, the person replacing gear shall not be able to use the same placement as the pre-existing piece. In such case the new gear should be placed as close to the original position as is reasonable, so that the nature of the climb is not affected. This guideline shall govern all applications regardless of the weight of public comment.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, relocation of fixed hardware at the request of or with the permission of the first ascensionist is permitted under the Guidelines.

3.3. Proposal to Replace Fixed Nuts or Pitons with Bolts. The applicant shall first attempt to replace the fixed nut or piton with like gear. Such application can be made to the Park directly and need not be submitted to ACE. If replacement with like gear is not possible at the same location and of the same integrity as the fixed piece in question, the individual should apply to the FHRC to replace the gear with a bolt. The

goal of the process is to maintain the route in the condition the FFA found it. When it has in past been possible to get good gear in a location but the placement has eroded or blown out, replacement of the gear with a bolt at the same location shall generally be approved by the FHRC providing that it does not change the nature of the route from the first free ascensionist's experience. This guideline shall govern all proposals regardless of the weight of public comment.

Note: RURPs and A4 pitons have never been considered reliable protection and an application to replace RURPs or body weight pitons with bolts should generally be denied. However, historic fixed protection which has disappeared within the past twelve months may be replaced without FHRC approval even if natural gear is possible if the fixed gear has been at that site for the last ten or more years and if it is any more difficult or strenuous to place the natural gear than to clip the historic fixed gear. Applications to replace fixed hardware that has disappeared within the past twelve months should be made directly to the Park which should grant such applications.

3.4. Applications Regarding Anchors. Applications to install new anchors shall be generally given favorable consideration when the new anchor replaces anchors on trees or other vegetation or where the anchor replaces visual eyesores, *e.g.*, wads of slings attached to pitons, fixed nuts, and or bolts. Applications to add anchors in the middle of existing pitches, *i.e.*, anchors that make it easier to retreat before the traditional end of the pitch, shall be denied.

Rappel anchors shall be equalized, preferably in vertical alignment. All applications for anchors must be precise in location and hardware used. If approved, installations of new anchors must conform to the application or be subject to removal and relocation. All applications for anchors shall accurately list the distance of the anchor from the ground or next set of anchors. Any fixed hardware must be made as inconspicuous as possible.

3.5. Applications Regarding New Routes. If approved, installations of new routes must conform to the application as approved or be subject to removal.

(a) **Factors in Favor.** Preference shall be given to the following factors:

(1) **Quality.** Quality is perhaps best described as the sum of the following, more tangible, factors:

(i) **Independent Line.** This includes, but is not limited to, distance of the new line from existing lines. Examples of this factor include *Sunrider Arete* and *Hands in the Clouds*.

(ii) **Direct Line.** New routes requiring fixed hardware which ascend direct lines with defined features are encouraged. Examples of this factor include *Back in Black* and *Sunrider Arete*.

(iii) Good Rock Quality. An application for a new route that ascends clean rock with little, if any, loose rock is a factor in favor of the route. Though occasional loose holds are encountered on many otherwise fine climbs, new routes containing much bad rock are viewed unfavorably. There is little point in bolting a pitch if the holds at the crux are likely to break off and render the route unclimbable. Examples of good routes with acceptable loose holds include *Your Mother* and *Le Toit*.

(iv) Interesting Combination of Moves. Examples of routes that have interesting moves without an obvious line include *Bachar Yer Aryan* and *The Contest*.

(v) Safety. Any proposal for a new route requiring bolts should be designed so that an Eldorado climber, competent at the grade of the proposed route, can lead it relatively safely. The crux of the climb, if it is protected by bolts, should be safely bolted. Run-outs on easier terrain are a normal part of the Eldorado experience. Examples of this factor include *Blackwalk*, *Sunrider Arete*, and *Sunset Boulevard*.

(vi) Location. An interesting location (which may tempt people away from the heavily used areas) or a convenient location (which will attract people) is a factor in favor of an application. Examples of this factor include *Never Cry Wolf* and *Prince of Darkness*.

(vii) Aesthetic Position. Examples of this factor include *Heart of Gold* and *Space Invaders*.

These foregoing factors, in combination, may lead to a difficult-to-define, “popular” and, hopefully, well-enjoyed route.

(b) Neutral Factors. The following may be considered but are not factors that argue in favor of or against an application by themselves:

(1) Dangerous routes. Proposed routes with sparse protection, *i.e.*, “R” and “X” rated routes, shall not be given favorable or unfavorable consideration on the basis of its boldness alone, but shall be evaluated on the merits and quality of the climb itself. However, routes which are rehearsed, top roped, and then bolted should be capable of being safely led on sight by an Eldorado climber competent at the grade. Proposed new routes which cannot be safely on sighted by Eldorado climbers competent at the grade or which expose climbers to dangers not faced by the applicant are factors against the application.

(2) Distance of the proposed route from an existing route. New routes applications that are within 10' of an existing route that climbs different features (for example, a proposed arête climb near a comer, or a proposed face climb around the comer from an existing climb) may or may not be acceptable depending upon other factors. The proximity of the application in the latter case should not be considered a factor against the route, especially if the proposed fixed gear is out of sight of the

established route. New route applications that begin, end, or cross existing routes are neutral factors so long as any new fixed hardware cannot be easily clipped from the existing routes.

(3) *Difficulty.* The difficulty of a proposed climb shall generally not be a factor in the decision process. If the FHRC process indicates that the climbing community believes that the new route shall be enjoyed by future climbers, the route should generally be approved.

(4) *Ability to Top Rope.* The ability to top rope a proposed new route is a neutral factor.

(c) *Factors Against*

(1) *Altered routes.* New route applications with chipped or chiseled holds shall be unconditionally denied. This guideline shall govern all proposals regardless of the weight of public comment.

(2) *Distance.* New route applications on the same flat wall closer than 10' should be discouraged and is a factor against the application.

(3) *Poor rock quality.* Poor quality rock, *i.e.*, holds that are likely to break off and change the route or routes that have loose rock that is easily dislodged and may endanger other climbers, is a factor against the application.

(4) *Protection Reachable from Neighboring Routes.* An application which proposes new fixed gear which can be easily clipped from an existing route is a factor against the application.

(5) *Natural Protection Possibilities.* New routes requiring bolts where natural protection can be placed have not been part of the Eldorado tradition and is a factor against the route.

A Final Note.

Final approval of any application is contingent upon Park approval. The Park administrators may apply criteria in addition to those listed in these Guidelines that may result in the acceptance or denial of the application.