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Maibauer Boulders - Grant

Grant Name	Maibauer Boulders - Grant	Today's Date	12/13/2023
Staff Size	4	Organization Name	Carolina Climbers Coalition
Total Membership	1,000	Annual Operating Budget	\$277,923.00
BIPOC-led	Yes	Operating Budget Year	
C-Suite Staff	8%	Tax Status/Organization Type	501c3 Organization
Notes			

Project Information

Project/Campaign Name	Maibauer Boulders	Project Address	
Project Location (State or Territory)	NC	Amount Requested from Alliance	\$32,000.00

Proposal Questions

1. Purpose/History Of Organization	<p>The mission of the Carolina Climbers Coalition is to protect, preserve and expand climbing opportunities in the Carolinas and beyond. The organization was established as a nonprofit in 1995 with the purposes of preserving the natural environment, promoting safe climbing practices and preserving climber's access to climbing areas in North and South Carolina.</p> <p>Our role in the has evolved to include the purchase of roped climbing areas. We also work with state, federal, municipal, and private land owners to steward climbing areas. This includes trail maintenance, trail building, accessibility, parking lot infrastructure, rare species monitoring, cliff hardware replacement, graffiti removal, climbing policy, and climbing education. The CCC has a dedicated board of 13 members plus 4 staff that represent the our climbing areas and the diverse community of climbers.</p>	7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay off our Conservation loan: The Access Fund provided a loan for our purchase of the Maibauer Boulders. The Climbing Conservation Loan Program is a revolving fund for Local Climbing Organizations (LCO) like the Carolina Climbers Coalition to be able to act swiftly to make land conservation purchases. Once our loan is repaid to the Access Fund, they are then able to utilize the funds for another loan to another LCO looking to protect and conserve a climbing area. Once we repay our Maibauer loan, the funds we send to the Access Fund will be utilized for another conservation project. 2. Complete access infrastructure 3. Investigate expanding conserved land and recreation opportunities 4. Celebrate our acquisition of the property through events, outreach, and gatherings.
2. Final Success	<p>The Maibauer Boulders climbing conservation project aims to protect 32 acres of pristine forest and large boulder outcrops, to preserve a public climbing destination, and to expand outdoor adventure opportunities for current and future generations.</p>	8. Evaluate Your Progress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access: Improving accessibility for visitors by completing remaining infrastructure projects. 2. Safety: Implement a rescue plan with First Responders. 3. Education: The addition of a kiosk to aid in educating visitors about the history, biodiversity and geology of the area. 4. Outdoor Adventure: The CCC's

ultimate goal is to expand climbing access to our diverse community of climbers.

5. Acquisition: The purchase, by the CCC or partnering organizations, of adjacent land for the purposes of land and climbing conservation.

6. Community Engagement: A measure of our success is often gauged by the level of community engagement at stewardship and community events.

3. Location Details

The Maibauer Boulders are nestled in Central North Carolina's Brushy Mountains. With this purchase, the CCC was presented with both the challenge of opening a new outdoor adventure destination to the public and an opportunity for a new conservation project. This climbing area, characterized by the prominent boulders at the properties highest elevations, not only serves climbing enthusiasts, but also plays a crucial role in supporting local biodiversity and contributing to climate resilience. Surrounding parcels have been logged and/or cleared for grazing animals in a county that, currently, has very little land protected by conservation easements.

Alexander County is one of five counties that encompass North Carolina's Brushy Mountains. The Brushy Mountains are a 45 mile-long and 8 mile-wide ancient mountain chain that are a spur of the greater Blue Ridge Mountain chain. The Brushy Mountains create the watersheds for two of NC's largest rivers- the Yadkin and the Catawba. Despite the natural beauty and diverse ecosystems of the Brushys, the ease of access and extensive agricultural land have made logging highly desirable and achievable throughout the mountain range in the last century. Small patches of forest still remain, with early successional forests or clear cut lands dominating the landscape. The granitic outcroppings and steep elevation surrounding the Maibauer Boulders created a bit of a natural buffer from commercial timber harvest.

Our site-specific conservation initiatives within the Maibauer Boulders have focused on maintaining the integrity of this sensitive ecosystem through the construction of carefully planned trails designed to minimize climber and hiker impact to the forest and the area encompassing the boulder field. Designated climbing routes help concentrate climber traffic, reducing environmental impact to sensitive lichens and fauna that call the boulders home. Biodiversity thrives in the Maibauer climbing area due to the variety of terrain created by the boulders and densely forested areas.

9. TCA Funding Plan

To close out our Conservation Loan with the Access Fund and permanently protect the Maibauer Boulders.

Ultimately, protecting the Maibauer climbing area involves a balance between creating an area to enjoy outdoor recreation in a place where the natural beauty of the land has been preserved. Conservation efforts ensure that future generations can experience stellar North Carolina bouldering while appreciating the diversity of life that thrives on the land. The preservation of these areas is a vital component of climate stability.

4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

Since 1990, a small handful of rock climbers had landowner permission to access the Maibauer Boulders. The area was largely a coveted secret, with no formal access or conservation agreements in place. In early 2022, members of our coalition had heard that the Maibauer Boulders property owner may be amicable to a sale. Realizing that we had the opportunity to purchase and protect the property for recreation and conservation, we acted swiftly and entered into a purchase contract with the land owner. In the summer of 2022, we purchased the 32 acre parcel with a total budget of \$135,000.

The Access Fund supplied us with a two year Conservation Loan for the purchase, giving us the ability to quickly close on the property. Since the summer of 2022, we have raised over \$88,500 towards our total project costs and loan repayment. Our deadline to pay off the remaining amount is fast approaching; July 2024. If the Conservation Alliance supports this project, we are confident that we will be able to close out the loan and have the Maibauer Boulders permanently protected for public access and conservation. As of December 2023, we have received a verbal promise from a business donation pending the Conservation Alliance grant. The loan pay off deadline of July 2024 is urgent for three reasons; 1. We have other pressing conservation projects that are timely, but we are not able to take out a second loan for these, 2. If we do not meet the loan deadline, we will need to take out a traditional loan with a larger interest rate, 3. If we do not pay it off the loan in a timely matter, the Access Fund will have less funds to loan out to other climbing organizations working on timely land acquisitions.

Shortly after our purchase this past year, we worked with various partners and volunteers to build a 20 car parking lot, a .5 mile access trail, and began extensive erosion control work within the boulder field. This work is not yet complete but it is well underway. The 20 car parking lot was nearly full during our first open season of climbing in the spring of 2023.

10. JEDI Efforts and Impact

The CCC integrates diversity, equity, and inclusion into each of our programs and acquisitions. We have a J.E.D.I board position. The CCC regularly partners with local grassroots organizations like NC BIPOC Climbers and Southeastern Queer Climbers to create equitable access scholarships to climbing festivals, competitions, and events. The festival scholarships include free access to educational clinics on a wide variety of climbing-related subjects. We have implemented a sliding-scale membership program to lower barriers to entry to the CCC. We have also updated our bylaws and handbook with more inclusive language that demonstrates our commitment to promoting fairness. Our organization is actively engaged with the community we serve, and prioritizing inclusiveness can create meaningful impact. This year, we supplied a local gym with adaptive climbing equipment. Every year, we fund scholarships to underserved kids to attend summer camp.

Our opening ceremony included over 50 local and regional climbers who were thrilled to see this rare treasure preserved. Additionally, Triple Crown Bouldering Series, a southeast outdoor bouldering competition organization, created a guidebook for climbers to enjoy the Maibauer Boulders. The guidebook features over 100 boulder problems from the beginner to advanced level. The boulders now see consistent use; typically 3-4 climbing parties per day, or 20+ individuals per day.

Located in rural Alexander County where recreation opportunities are few, the Maibauer Boulders will give new recreational options for local outdoor enthusiasts who currently do not have many options. One exception is nearby Rocky Face Recreation Area, owned by Alexander County. Rocky Face was formed in 2012, and opened to attract people to visit Alexander County in hopes of positive economic impacts. Alexander County's economy is largely created by agriculture and forestry, but Rocky Face marked a change in the County by creating economic impacts from recreational opportunities. The Maibauer Boulders are the perfect compliment to Rocky Face, and a step in the right direction for expanding conservation and recreational economic impacts within Alexander County. Although rural, the Maibauer Boulders are centrally located to several city centers such as Winston Salem, Greensboro, Charlotte, and Boone. The Maibauer Boulders represent the only open bouldering area within a 60 mile radius, thus creating a new recreational opportunity and attraction for the region. Opening the Maibauer Boulders to climbing has begun to bring climbers, hikers, and conservation enthusiasts to Alexander County. As of 2022, Alexander County has seen a yearly population decrease and a poverty rate of 11.5%. Diversifying the county's economy through recreation and outside visitation will help to turn this trend.

5. Key Decision Makers

Triple Crown Bouldering Series, a nonprofit climbing competition series, have donated their trail expertise and equipment to help build our parking lot as well as the trail. They have been key supporters of this project and are able to mobilize regional climbers to help us protect the Maibauer Boulders. Triple Crown has promised a further donation to help us close out the loan if the Conservation Alliance is able to approve this grant application.

Triangle Rock Club, a for profit climbing gym, has donated over \$15,000 to the land acquisition and has involved their staff in stewardship tasks and events to

11. Confidential Items N/A

assist the project. If we are able to achieve a Conservation Alliance grant, we will request a further donation. If the Conservation Alliance supplies this grant, it is highly likely that the Triangle Rock Club will donate a remaining portion to pay off our loan. Their support is highly likely.

Access Fund, a national nonprofit and certified Land Trust, provided a Climbing Conservation Loan that is interest free for two years, and due in full in July 2024. We have \$54,000 remaining on the loan pay off. We have secured the loan but we are in need of Conservation Alliance funding to pay off the loan. Additionally, we have other properties that we are hoping to secure and acquire for recreation and conservation in early 2024, but this is not possible if we have outstanding debts with the Access Fund. Time is of the essence on our loan payoff.

Foothills Conservancy is a regional Land Trust that is beginning to work in conserving sections of the Brushy Mountains and we have begun conversations with this organization and neighboring parcels to create a larger buffer of conservation and recreation land.

Trango Climbing is a climbing equipment manufacturer that has been a continual supporter of our access and conservation efforts. With a successful closing of this project before the loan deadline, their support is highly likely.

6. Elevate Voices

Since our announcement of the opening and purchase of the Maibauer Boulders, area climbers and residents have been involved in the project and invested in its success as a public recreation area. We held eight trail building events this past year, engaging over 100 volunteers on building the access trail. In early 2023, we held an opening ceremony event and climb-a-thon that reached registration capacity weeks before the event occurred.

The Maibauer Boulders are located in Alexander County. The County has a high poverty rate, and the region suffers from a lack of recreation or conservation opportunities. The closest bouldering destination is well over an hour away. Our acquisition will make bouldering a more accessible activity for climbers living in the Alexander County region. Through events at Maibauer Boulders, we introduced people to bouldering who would not normally have the opportunity, worked with neighboring land owners to build and maintain the area, worked with regional climber volunteers, and worked with area rescue teams to introduce them to the new public access area. Our

goal is to make the Maibauer Boulders a regional destination for climbers, as well as a natural safe haven for those who live nearby but do not have other similar opportunities.

The CCC collaborates with local grassroots organizations like NC BIPOC Climbers and Southeastern Queer Climbers to engage with historically underrepresented groups. This includes but is not limited to equitable access scholarships to CCC events and free access to clinics. We have also waived vendor and registration fees for them to table at CCC events to help spread their mission of highlighting, connecting, and supporting BIPOC climbers of all levels in North Carolina and the surrounding areas.

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