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Save the Maibauer Boulders/ A Southeast Climbing Destination

Application Date	5/29/2024		
Applying Organization	Carolina Climbers Coalition	Grant Type	Member Directed
Requested Amount	\$32,000.00	Project Name	Save the Maibauer Boulders/ A Southeast Climbing Destination
Contact Name	Mike Reardon	Project Location (State or Territory)	NC
Contact Title	Executive Director	Project State/Province	NC
Contact Email Address	mreardon@carolinaclimbers.org	Project Multiple Locations	
Notes		Status	Submitted
		Created By	Mike Reardon, 5/29/2024, 2:51 PM

Organization Details

Organization Name	Carolina Climbers Coalition	Annual Operating Budget	\$340,000.00
Applying Contact	Mike Reardon	Tax Status/Organization Type	501c3 Organization
Staff Size	4	Main Phone	8282804046
Total Membership	1,087	Website Address	https://www.carolinaclimbers.org
BIPOC-led	Yes	Address	13 Goldview Dr Asheville, 28804
C-Suite Staff	8%		

Proposal Questions

1. Purpose/History Of Organization	The mission of the Carolina Climbers Coalition (CCC) 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 our region. The southeastern U.S. is riddled with private lands that block access and degrade conservation values of many	2. Final Success	The Maibauer Boulders climbing conservation project aims to transform a formerly inaccessible climbing area without conservation protections into a recreational climbing hub, igniting conservation efforts in the Brushy Mountains of NC.
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recreational treasures. When possible, the CCC protects and opens climbing areas through purchase. We also work with state, federal, municipal, and private land owners to open and 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 our lands and the diverse community of climbers.

3. Location Details

Too many treasured landscapes in the southeastern U.S. are owned privately or commercially without any public access or conservation strategies in place. Compared to many states in our nation, our southeastern recreation opportunities and conservation values are stunted due to our parceled landscape. Population increase has led to the sprawl of housing developments, commercial lands, or clearcut logging where informal recreational access once existed. This conversion pressure on many of our forested lands greatly impacts climate resiliency and biodiversity, and has closed out too many from enjoying nature's wonders. The CCC's purchase and protection of the Maibauer Boulders is one critical step to protect a special place in the southeastern U.S.

The prominent boulders at Maibauer play a crucial role in supporting local biodiversity and contributing to climate resilience. Surrounding parcels have been logged and/or cleared for agriculture in a region that, currently, has very little land protected by conservation easements or conservation organizations. The area is located in Central NC's Brushy Mountains, a 45 mile-long and 8 mile-wide ancient mountain chain considered a spur of the greater Blue Ridge Mountains. 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 like our protected lands at Maibauer, but early successional forests or clear cut lands dominate the landscape.

To give a regional example of a special place in our region lost to access, just a few weeks ago, the access to Eagle Rock was permanently closed. Eagle Rock was a scenic hiking, mountain biking, and climbing destination located within the biodiversity hotspot of Hickory Nut Gorge. Housing development won the battle. This loss shows the need for

4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

Since 1990, climbers knew of the unique bouldering opportunities at the Maibauer Boulders, but like so many of our greatest recreational lands in the Southeastern U.S., the land was privately owned. The area was largely inaccessible, 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 three 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 \$93,000 towards our total project costs and loan repayment. Our interest-free deadline to pay off the remaining amount has passed and our full loan amount is due in early 2025. If the Conservation Alliance supports this project, we will close out the loan and have the Maibauer Boulders permanently protected for public access and conservation. The loan pay off deadline is urgent for three reasons; 1. We have other pressing conservation projects that we will miss out on if we can not pay off this loan now, 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 immediately, 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

permanent protections of land at areas like the Maibauer Boulders. Saving the Maibauer Boulders is a prime example of the benefits of merging conservation and recreation. So many of our recreational lands, including climbing areas, have limited protections in the southeast. Access to nature is threatened throughout our region, but saving the Maibauer Boulders is a symbolic step towards saving these treasured landscapes for future generations.

season of climbing in the spring of 2023. Our opening ceremony included over 50 local and regional climbers who were thrilled to see this rare gem 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

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

staff in stewardship tasks and events to assist the project. If we are able to achieve a Conservation Alliance grant, we will request a further donation. 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 Early 2025. We have \$34,000 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.

bouldering destination is well over an hour away, and even that area lacks permanent protections. 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 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.

7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

1. Pay off our Conservation loan and save the Maibauer Boulders: The Access Fund provided a loan for our purchase of the Maibauer Boulders. The Climbing Conservation Loan Program is a revolving fund for organizations like the CCC to act swiftly for land acquisition. Once we repay our Maibauer loan, the funds we send to the Access Fund will be utilized for another conservation project. We have several land conservation projects lined up, but we are unable to move forward until this loan is paid off.
2. Complete access infrastructure
3. Investigate expanding conserved land and recreation opportunities
4. Celebrate our acquisition of the property through events, outreach, and gatherings.

8. Evaluate Your Progress

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.

9. TCA Funding Plan

To close out our Conservation Loan with the Access Fund and permanently protect the Maibauer Boulders. Closing this loan will give us the opportunity to begin a new conservation project.

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 and regularly partner with local grassroots organizations like NC BIPOC Climbers and Southeastern Queer Climbers to create equitable access scholarships to climbing festivals, competitions, educational clinics, and events. We have also updated our

bylaws and handbook with more inclusive language that demonstrates our commitment to promoting fairness. This year, we supplied a local gym with adaptive climbing equipment. Every year, we fund scholarships to underserved kids to attend summer camp. Incorporating J.E.D.I. work into each of our programs and acquisitions has taught us, as an organization, to look at climbing access through a varied lens. When we create access to a new area like the Maibauer Boulders, we take into consideration the various barriers of access that people may have and make changes to infrastructure, events, and messaging accordingly.

11. Confidential Items N/A

**Other Relevant
Application Details**

Thank you for this opportunity!
