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## Citadel Bouldering Preserve

<b>Application Date</b>	5/16/2024		
<b>Applying Organization</b>	Southeastern Climbers Coalition	<b>Grant Type</b>	Member Directed
<b>Requested Amount</b>	\$40,000.00	<b>Project Name</b>	Citadel Bouldering Preserve
<b>Contact Name</b>	Kate Hanes	<b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b>	AL
<b>Contact Title</b>	Stewardship Director	<b>Project State/Province</b>	AL
<b>Contact Email Address</b>	info@seclimbers.org	<b>Project Multiple Locations</b>	
<b>Notes</b>		<b>Status</b>	Submitted
		<b>Created By</b>	Meg Evans, 5/16/2024, 2:07 PM

### Organization Details

<b>Organization Name</b>	Southeastern Climbers Coalition, INC	<b>Annual Operating Budget</b>	\$226,055.00
<b>Applying Contact</b>	Kate Hanes	<b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>	501c3 Organization
<b>Staff Size</b>	3	<b>Main Phone</b>	2052108393
<b>Total Membership</b>	1,300	<b>Website Address</b>	https://seclimbers.org
<b>BIPOC-led</b>	No	<b>Address</b>	801 East 11 st Chattanooga, Tennessee 37404 United States
<b>C-Suite Staff</b>			

### Proposal Questions

<b>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</b>	The Southeastern Climbers Coalition (SCC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to preserving climbing areas in the Southeast for future generations. We are nationally recognized for our work as a land trust and climbing advocacy organization. SCC started when a group of climbers banded together to mediate with the National Parks Service about access issues at Sunset Rock, atop Lookout Mountain. SCC went on to become the first local climbing organization to acquire land, when the	<b>2. Final Success</b>	A rare win for increased public recreational access in the southeast - Climbers protect another critical foothold and climbing area, Citadel Boulders, thereby preserving 58 acres of critical habitat, 40 unique sandstone boulders, and 2 miles of trails.
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only alternative was to watch a beloved boulder field outside of metro Atlanta get leveled by developers.

Since 1993, we have protected over 920 acres of land in TN, AL & GA. Beyond our access and conservation initiatives, we operate as a platform for community, education, and social connection among regional climbers. We have 1300 members and host an average 50 trail days annually, working with more than 600 volunteers to steward climbing areas.

### 3. Location Details

Citadel Boulders is a highly revered boulder field in Alabama hosting more than 150 unique boulder problems, and more than 40 individual large sandstone boulders. Over the years, climbing visitation has increased at Citadel Boulders, with reports of 15-20 cars or up to 50 climbers in the boulder field on a busy weekend, even though it was closed and private property at the time. The constellation of rock formations offers a winding maze of trails through rock corridors - wholly unique to the area, that provides a sense of wonder and exploration. The land had a previous life as a privately held roadside park in the 50s and much of the infrastructure and trails are still in place today. Not only has this acquisition been significant for the climbing community, but it is also an asset to Fort Payne residents who have now returned to hike, explore, and bring their dogs for an afternoon walk at the park.

Alabama is home to some incredibly unique sandstone rock features, but 96.2% of the greenspace is held privately. Our access to outdoor recreation is challenging in the southeast compared to other climbing hotspots throughout the country where there are more state or federally-protected green spaces. This lack of recreation and conservation has been recognized by conservation organizations and government entities, including the Thrive Regional Partnership (TRP) and Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG).

This acquisition not only protects a major climbing area but also provides a critical foothold for conservation in the TRP conservation zone. Citadel Boulders preserves scenic views, water quality, and critical plant and wildlife habitat. The property is part of an area identified in the 2011 Cumberland Voices Conservation Vision document that provides connectivity and protected land near Desoto State Park on Lookout Mountain. This section of Lookout Mountain includes habitats that are home to a variety of species including Neotropical migrant songbirds, and several rare plants such as the federally

### 4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

We have finalized the acquisition, engaged the preliminary conservation partners, installed critical infrastructure, and welcomed the public. Our main goal now is to successfully finalize the purchase of Citadel Boulders, while working to increase public recreation opportunities there. We identified 3-5 year goals as well as long-term goals that will help us measure the final success of the project.

**Finalize Citadel Boulders Purchase - 3 year goal**

To protect Citadel Boulders, SCC utilized the Access Fund's Climbing Conservation Loan program, an emergency fund for occasions when incredible climbing resources that remain unprotected go up for sale on the open market. Since the announcement of the sale in December of 2023, Citadel Boulders has seen incredible community support, and as we gear up for our 3-year fundraising campaign, we have just \$ 108,866.00 left to raise.

SCC hosts an annual fundraiser for our acquisitions. In addition to our annual fundraiser, we have a donor program that is earmarked for acquisitions. Between those two funding sources, we will fundraise an additional \$45,000 for Citadel Boulders over the next two years. Since we opened, we have run successful matching campaigns as well as initial corporate and private donor campaigns. With the help of Conservation Alliance, we will remain focused on the critical steps we have identified for the long-term success of the Citadel Boulders and alleviate pressures to focus predominantly on fundraising.

**Increase Public Recreation Opportunities - 5 year goal**

Finalizing the purchase of Citadel will ensure this resource remains available not only as a recreational resource for climbers, but for various user groups and the general public alike. The Citadel provides a critical foothold in a region that contains endless outdoor recreation potential. SCC aims to engage additional user groups to enjoy the property for hiking, nature viewing and trail running. For our first phase of opening, a loop trail

listed large-flowered skullcap and Virginia spirea. This area is also part of the Coosa River Basin, recognized as one of the most biologically diverse river systems in the United States.

After nearly two decades of effort, the SCC has finally purchased the Citadel Boulders thanks to support from the Access Fund's Climbing Conservation loan and several like-minded foundations in the region. The Citadel Boulders is now free and open to the public.

was established for these groups to enjoy. SCC plans to work with local like-minded groups to increase the number of hiking trails throughout the property to more points of interest. Once we finalize the purchase, we will be able to focus more on strengthening partnerships and increasing visitation to the property as well as support furthering the greater conservation vision for the surrounding parcels.

#### Durable Partnerships and Lasting Stewardship - 5 year goal

With an increase in climbing resources, comes an increase in a durable partnership that lasts for several years. In the economic studies listed below, climbers indicate that they feel responsible for the care of a climbing area. This feeling of stewardship and commitment is seen through our over 600 volunteers, 1300 members, and over 3,000 hours of stewardship in 2023 alone. Opening the Citadel Boulders will have a positive effect on the local and regional commitment to the care of this property for years to come. Through our comprehensive management plans, we will improve the use patterns of the property thereby improving the protection of the natural resources that exist within the boundaries. We will partner with volunteers, local grassroots organizations, and local youth groups to strengthen our commitments to sustainable use patterns.

#### Increase Economic Impacts Through Public Recreation - Long term goal

A significant collection of climbing economic impact research in the Southeast, and the larger U.S. states, provide information about climber demographics as well as use and visitation patterns. Based on this information, and from an economic perspective, opening additional climbing resources can have a positive economic impact on the region. SCC has observed these same trends since opening the Citadel Boulders. Climbers are traveling from all over the country, patronizing the local restaurants, and staying for the weekend. Partnerships with these local businesses, chamber of commerce and more can be fostered to capitalize on this increased traffic as we finalize the purchase.

An example of this partnership and positive impact at work can be seen through the sentiment the Mayor of Fort Payne shared with local news. Mayor Brian Baine has signaled strong support for the project and a willingness to welcome climbers as he recognizes climbing as an economic driver there in Fort Payne.

Here are some examples of climbing economic impact studies, some of which underscore how climbing tourism can have a critical positive impact in rural

areas:  
 Red River Gorge, Kentucky - Climber spending brings \$3.8 million to the area annually.  
 New River Gorge, West Virginia - Climber spending brings \$12.1 million annually.  
 Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina - Climbing brings \$14 million a year.  
 Chattanooga region, Tennessee - Climbers spend nearly \$7 million annually in a multi-county Chattanooga area.  
 Custer Gallatin National Forest, Montana - Climbing brings in \$2.6 million annually.

**5. Key Decision Makers**

Answer redacted due to confidentiality of acquisition.

**6. Elevate Voices**

SCC is proud to collaborate with a diverse group of people and organizations to elevate BIPOC, LGBTQ+, women and all underrepresented voices in the outdoor community. In 2020, SCC formed an Equitable Access Committee to identify and remove barriers to climbing by ensuring SCC operations, events, and communications are inclusive and equitable. The EA committee reviews submissions for our annual climbing competition scholarship program for underrepresented communities, educates our community through films and panel discussions, and supports local diversity nonprofits. This committee also established our organization's Equitable Access Statement, which can be found on our website and is posted publicly at all of our properties.

Now that we have had the Equitable Access Committee running for three years, equity and inclusion is woven into every aspect of our work and with a continual lens of JEDI, we are able to promote an inclusive climbing experience. This ranges from event planning, to social media presence, to the very core of what the SCC is aiming to accomplish - preserving climbing areas for future generations. In the last two years we established 5 pillars that guide our projects, called our project priorities. One of the project priority pillars is - recreational access. This pillar is aimed at taking not only the climbing into consideration, but where the area or project might be located, and how much recreational access to climbing a population may or may not have.

**7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes**

Increased access to public recreation - We will have hosted 4,400 visitors from diverse user groups  
 Conservation partners engaged from the larger region - We will have engaged with 5 or more like-minded conservation groups  
 Protected ecological resources- We will have completed our environmental

**8. Evaluate Your Progress**

SCC has a long history of acquiring property for public use and has mechanisms in place for sustainable and long-term management. We aim to host 4,400 unique visitors in the first year at Citadel Boulders. With that goal in mind, as well as the goal to finalize the purchase of the boulders, we will continue to prioritize sustainable infrastructure to withstand welcoming the

surveys and identified species that exist on the property

greater public. SCC has designed a land management plan that will serve as the metric by which we measure the long-term management of our property. In this plan, we have outlined any resource protection needs and long-term maintenance objectives. This plan also touches on our ability to increase community involvement in the project through durable partnerships. Finally, the plan also leverages a combination of staff and volunteer support to maintain the unique natural resources and user experience of our property.

**9. TCA Funding Plan**

SCC is seeking support to help finalize the acquisition. When the SCC takes on a large acquisition, we inevitably have to focus time and resources on securing the property, fundraising, and building sustainable infrastructure. SCC now serves more than 50 climbing areas and is the sole land manager of 9 properties. Our board, volunteers, and staff have to try and avoid having tunnel vision on one climbing area or project which can be difficult to do when we have a new acquisition. Our other projects such as education and stewardship initiatives the organization is dedicated to must remain constant.

**10. JEDI Efforts and Impact**

We are evaluating and addressing our board member and committee member recruitment to ensure a more inclusive process. We have changed our by-laws to allow for more board and committee nominations from outside the Board of Directors. SCC is also taking steps to ensure that a wider group of individuals are aware of how to join our organization by partnering with local diversity organizations, making the information on how to get involved more readily available to the public, and crafting a search committee predominately made up of members of our Equitable Access Committee. We are also working to secure funding for all staff and board members to receive a JEDI training that will help forward the work we are doing. Since then, we have brought on 4 additional BIPOC committee members.

**11. Confidential Items**

There is a proposed corridor that as of right now exists on private property. This would need to remain confidential for the time being.

**Other Relevant Application Details**