

For general information about Box Canyon and the Socorro area see Bob's climbing page.

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Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Charles Carroll
Socorro Field Office
198 Neel Avenue NW
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Hello Charles Carroll,

Input for the RMPR.

Box Canyon (including the area known as Spook Canyon) has a large amount of solid, climbable rock in one place. The rock is well suited for the activity of rock climbing. This is due to the special nature of the rock giving a variety of reliable hand holds and footholds. Good climbing areas are rare and scattered throughout the world because these qualities are not common. Box is additionally unique in the climbing community thanks to the wide variety of climbing, including overhangs, slabs, cracks, pockets, edges, traditional and sport, bouldering and technical roped routes. Box Canyon contains some of the most challenging bouldering in the world.

Box Canyon has further qualities that enhance the climbing experience:

- Good climate that allows year-round climbing,
- A beautiful natural setting,
- Most of the visitors to Box are climbers,
- Existing roads allowing good access to most of the climbing.

Box Canyon also has a long climbing history going back several decades, with it's own collection of legends, tall tales, true stories of adventure and courage, and artifacts of climbers long gone.

Climbers generally understand these precious climbing qualities of Box Canyon and keep the area clean of litter, stay on existing roads and trails, respect the

private property and landowners near the area, and tend to respect the cultural resources of the area¹. Climbers are therefore good people to have around the Box Canyon area.

There are other climbing areas around Socorro as well. Some are on BLM land and others in the National Forests. These areas are usually less well known but have potential for recreational use by climbers, as well as scenic and natural values that are under appreciated. The combination of Box Canyon with the other areas makes the Socorro area an important recreational destination.

Box Canyon and the other climbing resources around Socorro help attract people to the area for vacations, business ventures, and New Mexico Tech. This has a positive economic impact on Socorro.

I am a board member in the New Mexico Climber's Resource and Advocacy Group (NMCRAAG), a statewide organization. I have also been working extensively with the New Mexico Tech Climbing Club (NMTCC), which is the largest organized group of local climbers. I have been talking to many people through both groups as well as visitors, independent local climbers, and others. This letter is a product of conversations with over fifty people, locals, visitors, and ex-locals. As such, it does not represent individual ideas but only common concerns of the climbing community.

The major concerns are:

1. Expand the Box SMA
2. Add SMAs for other climbing in the area
3. Understand and document climbing impacts
4. Define BLM involvement
5. Trail improvement or development plan

These concerns are discussed at length below.

1. The original RMP written in 1989 designated 320 acres of the Box Canyon area as an SMA. This was an excellent step that has improved the preservation of the climbing resources, and thus other natural and cultural resources in the area. The area in the SMA represents the best understanding of the climbing resources at the time of the writing of the RMP.

Since that time, however, a huge amount of climbable rock has been published, discovered or explored. The current SMA includes approximately half of the established climbing in Box Canyon proper, and about one quarter of the climbing around Spook Canyon². It does not address any climbing in the

¹There is a belief among some climbers that many of the ancient peoples who once traveled through Box Canyon were also rock climbers

²Located just East of Box Canyon

Quebradas, near Riley, to the South of Box Canyon, East Red Canyon, etc.

The SMA³ should be expanded to consider all the established climbing resources at Box Canyon and Spook Canyon, including but not limited to areas known as: Major Wall, Minor Wall, Upper Spook, Fight Club Boulder, Monkey Bars, Behind Edges, Tres Hermanas, etc. By working with local climbing groups these areas can be mapped and a suitable boundary for the SMA defined.

2. Other SMAs should be considered for areas outside of Box Canyon where the primary resource would be climbing. Again, the local climbing groups should be queried for specific locations and resource valuation in the RMPR. If there are areas outside BLM control, the BLM should pursue the acquisition of the lands to create climbing SMAs.

The possibly largest climbing resource in the area is completely off-limits to the public. This is the Socorro Peak⁴ area that EMRTC and Tech control. Climbers have had no results trying to gain access to this area, but a cooperative BLM/NMTech agreement⁵ could annex some of these climbable rocks.

3. The impacts of various climbing practices should be understood to compare to the benefits of having climbers at Box and other areas. These impacts are relatively small⁶. Again, by working with local climbing groups, NMCRA, and using Access Fund materials the impacts of climbing and bouldering can be documented, understood, and accepted in the SMA. The documentation of impacts is important to help decision making processes in the future, especially concerning unwarranted activism or commercial development.

4. The amount of BLM involvement should be defined in the RMPR. Climbers are attracted to the Socorro area for the natural, free setting. We want an outdoors experience without unnecessary regulations, rules, and boundaries. However, we do not want the natural setting marred with tire tracks, roads, trash, paint, mining activities, housing developments, etc. It benefits the BLM to provide some facilities, such as trash barrels, signs, toilets and campsites (only where necessary). It is important to patrol climbing areas for vandalism, trash dumping, OHV use, etc. To preserve the free and natural setting, the BLM should keep roads and trails to the minimum, limit OHV use in climbing SMAs, and avoid hassling climbers and other conscientious users of the area.

5. The RMPR should have a provision for trail improvement. The natural climber and game trails in the areas are adequate and stable at the present. The future may bring erosion, increased foot, game, or livestock traffic, new

³Or whatever term will be used in the RMPR

⁴Also known as "M-Mountain"

⁵Especially on the Northern edge below Strawberry peak, where the singletrack trail is

⁶as compared to roads, OHV, mining, paint-balling, grazing, partying, etc.

areas, new climbs and boulders, etc. By planning for possible trail development and improvement in the RMPR it will help coordinate the budget, preservation of cultural resources, and local groups.

Box Canyon is a beautiful, wonderful, precious climbing resource with a colorful climbing history. It is a special place to many climbers. It's fantastic to have such an incredible climbing area only ten minutes from town. The BLM has done an excellent job managing this area. An appropriate RMPR gives us the opportunity to ensure that this resource, and the other climbing resources, are available to everyone, now and in the future.

Thank You,

Bob Broilo
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Alumni Member, NMTCC
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cc: NMCRAAG
NMTCC
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