

Rock Climbing Guidelines

City of Scottsdale - McDowell Sonoran Preserve

*(Approved by the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission in February, 2011,
and the City Council in October, 2011)*

BACKGROUND

The McDowell Sonoran Preserve has been acquired by the City of Scottsdale to preserve and protect the natural beauty and ecological features of the McDowell Mountains and Sonoran Desert, provide accessibility to the Preserve for passive recreational uses in a safe and healthy environment, and provide educational opportunities related to the flora and fauna of the Sonoran Desert.

In order to insure the long-term protection of this natural resource and facilitate the safe use of the Preserve by the general public while mitigating impacts to the natural environment and surrounding residents, Ordinance # 3321 was approved by the City Council on May 23rd, 2000. These Rock Climbing Guidelines provide additional guidance related to accepted practices, responsibilities, and areas where rock climbing will be allowed within the Preserve.

CLIMBING AREAS

Rock or cliff climbing or rappelling is allowed only in designated areas within the Preserve. The designated areas correspond to existing and historical crags. Please also see the Conceptual Preserve Rock Climbing Plan for the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, on which the Climbing Areas are identified. The areas are named in the following list by the common name for the key rock formation in the area but also include other nearby rock formations to the key rock formation. (The list of Climbing Areas in the Preserve may be modified from time to time to reflect additional land acquisitions that include historical climbing areas.)

Those areas are as follows:

1. Rock Knob and vicinity
2. Sven Slab and vicinity
3. Sven Towers I, II and III and vicinity
4. Morrell's Parking Lot and vicinity
5. Morrell's Wall and vicinity
6. Gardener's Wall and vicinity
7. Crossroad Wall and vicinity
8. Glass Dome and vicinity
9. Goat Hill and vicinity
10. Tom's Thumb and vicinity
11. Lost Wall and vicinity
12. Half and Half Wall and vicinity
13. Fort McDowell Wall and vicinity
14. Granite Ballroom and vicinity
15. Rosetta Stone and vicinity
16. Hog Heaven and vicinity
17. Thrasher
18. Lost in the Air and vicinity

Violators of climbing and other regulations and laws governing the McDowell Sonoran Preserve are subject to prosecution resulting in fines and/or imprisonment in accordance with City of Scottsdale Ordinance # 3321.

CLIMBING ACCESS ROUTES

Access to the climbing areas is allowed only via designated and signed climbing access routes, as identified on the Conceptual Rock Climbing Master Plan for the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. These routes connect the primary Preserve trails system to the rock-climbing areas.

CLIMBER RESPONSIBILITY AND SAFETY

The City of Scottsdale recognizes, as should all climbers, that all climbing activities are inherently dangerous. Further, it is impossible for City staff to guarantee the safety, experience, or ability of any climber. City staff will not inspect or certify the climbing equipment or ability of any visitor. City staff will not certify any route's difficulty rating, safety or the reliability of any fixed anchor.

Preserve visitors climb at their own risk and are solely responsible for their personal safety while climbing on Preserve property. Climbers are expected to secure proper equipment and training, and are expected to adhere to standard climbing safety practices. Safe climbing demands that each climber has experience in route finding, route protection, rope handling, retreat from steep faces, and emergency first aid.

WARNINGS TO BE POSTED AT PRESERVE TRAILHEADS USED BY CLIMBERS

1. All climbing activities are inherently dangerous and may result in injury or death.
2. Climbers climb at their own risk and are responsible for obtaining proper equipment and training.
3. City staff does not create or maintain any climbing route.
4. City staff does not install or maintain the fixed anchors on any climbing route.
5. Route selection and the decision to rely on fixed anchors are the climber's responsibility.
6. New routes are not allowed.

OTHER CLIMBING INFORMATION

1. Climbing is allowed in designated areas only and must coincide with the Preserve's posted hours of operation.
2. Climbers must utilize the designated climbing access routes leading from the main Preserve trail to climbing areas.
3. Temporary or permanent closures of individual routes or specific climbing areas may occur to protect the natural resources or for visitor safety.
4. Fixed anchor locations are limited to those already established, unless subsequently authorized by City Staff.
5. Unroped climbing is not recommended on the larger formations, but bouldering is permitted within the aforementioned climbing areas.

FIXED ANCHORS

Prior to the acquisition of McDowell Sonoran Preserve by the City of Scottsdale, the climbing areas on the property were established by the local climbing community using fixed anchors, primary expansion bolts and pitons (collectively referred to as fixed anchors). Responsibility for the installation, inspection, and long term maintenance of these fixed anchors rests completely with the climbing community. The

City of Scottsdale makes no claims as to any fixed anchor's condition or reliability and does not guarantee that any fixed anchor is still in place. In addition:

1. All anchor placements will be installed on a volunteer basis by members of the climbing community.
2. All climbing equipment, tools, anchor hardware, and any other costs associated with anchor placement are to be provided by the climbing community.
3. Old anchors are to be completely removed and carried out.
4. When possible, old anchor holes will be redrilled and reused. Otherwise, old anchor holes are to be sealed with a mixture of epoxy and rock dust.
5. City staff will have no role in anchor placements.

DEFINITIONS

1. Rock Climbing includes the following:

- **Rappelling:** Using a rope to descend from a steep slope or face.
- **Free Climbing:** Climbing in which the climber relies on the rope only for safety. Progress is made by using the hands and feet on the natural features. Anchors are typically used, but only to stop a fall; they are not used as climbing aids.
- **Direct Aid Climbing:** Climbing in which the climber is completely dependent on the rope for support and safety. Progress is made by installing protective anchors in the rock and then relying on them to support the climber's weight as the climber stands on them and reaches up to the next anchor.
- **Bouldering:** Climbing that occurs on rock faces usually less than 20 feet high. Typically it involves repeating a sequence of moves up or across a rock face. Usually done without a rope.

2. **Fixed Anchor:** Climbing protection that is installed and intended to be left as a permanent fixture on a climbing route. The most common examples include pitons, which are hammered into cracks, and expansion bolts, which are drilled into smooth rock faces.