

**Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area Climbing Management Plan
Workshop 1D – September 1, 2020 Notes and Agenda**

Agenda

- 6:00-6:25 Alex Schlueter introduction and presentation
- 6:25-6:35 Questions on presentation/process
- 6:35-7:40 Small group discussions (self-introductions and follow questions)
- 7:40-8:00 Report out from each group

6:35-7:40 Small group discussions

There were approximately 12 participants so it was not necessary to split into smaller groups. The following pages are the notes guided by discussion questions.

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Notes

1. Self-Introductions of Group Leader and participants

2. Code of conduct and technology tips

- Be courteous and respectful of other people's opinions: failure to adhere to this, or other inappropriate behavior, may result in removal from the meeting
- Be understanding of the limitations of the technology and exercise patience if and when technical problems arise
- Mute your microphone when not speaking; non-verbal communication is encouraged (nodding; thumbs up, hand-raising etc.)
- Be mindful of lag in audio and consider allowing some space between speaking
- Be mindful that you are on camera and try to avoid things that could cause a distraction

3. What do you value about the area or crag(s) that you climb in this area? Please be specific as to which places you are associating your response with. (15 min)

Further leading questions:

- **What motivates you to select that crag? Is it the setting, the social scene, something else?**
- **How is this area different from others you could have visited instead?**

Area/Crag	Notes
Seneca Rocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-pitch trad <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Able to “get away” from everyone with taller climbs - Aesthetically beautiful - Geology of the area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Natural history of the area is unique o Why long, multi-pitch trad present here and not other places - Psychological & emotional training for bigger objectives without being entirely remote so help can come to you quickly in the form of several highly skilled people (Seneca community has a good pool of people who are experienced and know how to respond in an emergency) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Gives ambience of self-reliance = “just deal with it” o Really start to get a taste of these more intense goals/climbs o Ability to practice necessary skills an hour from help (as opposed to a day from help) o Required competence to climb here <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Even “easier” rated climbs like 5.4 have adventure and competence aspects of them - Plenty of varied climbs facing different directions = can basically climb year-round and choose sunny or shady routes - Maintains good mix/variety of those routes that require competence, skill, & experience plus safer more bolted routes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you can climb a route at a given grade at Seneca, you can basically climb that grade in other parts of the country
Smoke Hole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rich, anecdotal history <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Picnic area, church - A positive sport climbing experience for people all around - Climbs for all levels available - Approaches are well-maintained and easy - Close to water for tubing and relaxing - Close to affordable campgrounds - Close to many local climbers - Year-round climbing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o No matter how hot, still able to climb with the river nearby and the trees for shade - Convenient & safe climbing - Like that this has not been gridbolted - Been bolted with appropriate spacing - Not strictly sport, some trad lines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Similar to Reed's, see additional notes below o Sanctuary is trad
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No cell service = able to disconnect from civilization & reconnect w/ nature (not ideal for locals though)
Reeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Year-round climbing - Close to affordable campgrounds - Not strictly sport! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Some beautiful (and some spicy) trad lines here o Not everything needs to be bolted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some great lines have been done ground up on gear = no need to bolt that line - Balance of bolting/developing and nature preservation

4. What would you like the experience at your favorite crag(s) to be like 20 years from now? (10 min)

Area/Crag	Notes
Germany Valley area (Seneca, Champe, etc.)	<p>How to preserve cultural resources & history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider indigenous people who use the area - WW2 training area & campground field is unique: possibility to preserve this history? - More information & historical markers that describe historic local events pertaining to and overlapping with climbing history - Eagle Rock still has extensive pitons
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Balance of bolting/developing and nature preservation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Not everything needs to be climbed” ○ How do you determine this? What guidelines would guide this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do you balance different groups of individuals’ goals and ideas? ○ What plants & animals in these areas are of high importance? (endangered, possible pressure due to development, etc.) - Campgrounds open year-round (Seneca Shadows, Big Bend, Jess Judy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Possible to supplement staff in lower seasons with volunteers? ○ Look to groups like Americorps, etc. to do small projects and help with maintenance ○ Jess Judy = walk-up primitive camping possible again? ○ Possibility of local management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local economic development community? ▪ Want to get these locals involved in the management of the forest and area ▪ Locals would be better able to manage local flora (ex: berry bushes instead of useless bushes)
Smoke Hole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Want this area opened in the wintertime, specifically keep campgrounds running year-round <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would bring in more outdoor recreation revenue to local community ○ would bring in more revenue for NFS and possible future projects - Parking lot
Reeds Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parking lot improvements - Addition of toilet or waste management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Possibility of wag bags
Seneca Rocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waste management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Possibility of small box near high-use areas that provide wag bags to climbers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently in Pacific Northwest and Red Rock Canyon, NV - Preserve the view from the backside (East Face) of Seneca <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Been for sale for a long time and will eventually be sold ○ Possibility for private landownership that does not result in development? - Increase cliff access/availability to reduce crowding at crag <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Example: Champe & Riverton ○ See further note below in Champe, Riverton, North Fork - Bolted anchors on multipitch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lots of info at the American Safe Climbing Association online about the merits of different anchors, pros and cons ○ Discussion of “convenience bolting”, see last meeting’s notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easy, safe process of clipping into a bolt at the anchor versus the adventure, skill-determined aspect of building your own gear anchor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First pitch bolting may have been put in specifically for the guiding services to make it easier to take clients up then allow them to back off <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This anchor could have been a gear anchor but was bolted to allow for clients to top rope harder routes above their grade ▪ Further discussion needed ○ American Safe Climbing Association – not wanting to put bolts or allow them to be put in unless there’s cause for it but able to provide bolts if necessary
Blue Rock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local landowner already purchased large area of land to preserve/prevent development, possibility to do same with land behind Seneca
Champe, Riverton, North Fork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently there are access issues but these may be able to be resolved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If able to access, could take pressure off of Seneca & reduce crowding - Riverton: to get to it, have to trespass on someone’s property similar to Champe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other cliffs nearby like Church Rock, Seneca caverns area
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerns about quarrying near Seneca caverns & caves with particular bat species due to impact on this population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seneca Caverns, Hell Hole, & the quarry

5. What issues are you currently experiencing that prevent you from the experience you just described? Are there any issues you anticipate becoming an obstacle to the experience you envisioned 20 years from now? (20 min)

Area/Crag	Notes
Smoke Hole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current trail work was not done with written approval but was done with verbal approval and coordination of Forest Service personnel
Seneca Rocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Litter - Number of climbers - Parking issues - How do we keep track of who is guiding at Seneca Rocks? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lots of “renegade guiding” going on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Locals can tell by seeing who visits, who they come with, frequency, etc. ○ How do you enforce guiding permitting system? ○ How do you know on the wall who is guiding? ○ Presence of NFS climbing ranger may help reduce this

- Anchor bolting
 - East face of north peak: routes that go up to the ridgeline; if bolts were not there, would be unsafe, rotting soft gear like slings and webbing scrambling to top
 - West face peak: traffic jam at the traffic jam rappel
 - Are more rappel stations needed to reduce this traffic and therefore impact?
 - Do not want to end up like Eldorado Canyon where you cannot even sling trees
 - Notion that you need bolts everywhere to protect trees, is there science behind this? Do we know how slings/soft anchor systems are affecting trees?
 - Eldorado Canyon (state park): park regulation in place = unable to sling trees for anchors to prevent affecting trees
 - One issue: newer climbers not knowing to sling the base of the tree rather than several feet up (several feet up damages tree much more than base of tree)
- Lot of loose boulders on Seneca itself
 - Current practice: leave it be until nature takes its course and the boulder/loose rock falls
 - Possible for a proactive approach? How are routes cleaned?
 - Used to be: climbers would go up in early spring and check out shaky stuff; some would have to do
 - some things you would think fall, don't (example: boulder on Banana)
 - Friends of Seneca and guide services try to look out for these things
 - Possibility for developing more clear direction on this process?
 - Where do you draw the line on this?
 - "Once one person sees someone push (or has pushed) boulder, then they think it's okay for them to be proactive too"
 - this was seen at Reeds before: climbers arrived and removed "unnecessary" flakes and chips at the bottom of a route, ended up making the route far harder and removed things that did not need to be removed
 - How could Forest Service climbing ranger possibly get involved, become point of authority on this?
- Hikers who come up and end up in the climbing zone
 - Unsafe for them: things fall off
 - Hikers pitching rocks off summits which can hit/kill climbers
 - Currently very little repercussion for people throwing things
 - Example: Oak Creek Overlook just outside Sedona, AZ: too many people were throwing things off cliff and creating unsafe area = climbing was closed down

Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monongahela National Forest webpage: only has Seneca Rocks and Table Rock listed for rock climbing - Effective communication of climbing etiquette <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How to choose what information to include on physical signage versus digital resources in the future for new climbers, part of gym-to-crag information o Smoke hole/Reeds Creek app guidebook do have more of this information
Table Rock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently very overgrown but with some amazing potential lines

6. Lastly, are there any organizations or individuals not represented today that you feel need to be a part of this planning process?

Ohio Climbing community

More commercial permit-holders, guides

Affinity groups (Brothers of Climbing, Brown Girls Climb, etc.)

Representatives of local gyms (EarthTreks & SportRock)

- Gyms potentially working with AAC on stances for these talks

Rob Whetsel

- Historian and works for Forest Service

Mike Willenborg

- Former conservation officer

Possible geology contact through Diane Kearns

Further local involvement