

THE ACTION COMMITTEE FOR ELDORADO'S FIXED HARDWARE GUIDELINES

2 February 2015

PURPOSE

Climbing in Eldorado Canyon State Park has increased dramatically over the past thirty years. As a result of this growth, Eldorado climbers have increasingly been called upon to make decisions concerning the installation and replacement of fixed hardware as members of a larger community that extends to future users of the Park as well as those currently climbing here. The very nature of establishing a new route in Eldorado has changed dramatically. Because of their impact on the climbing community as a whole, new climbing routes requiring fixed hardware in Eldorado are now considered first and foremost a community service, and are only secondarily a means of personal expression for the individual establishing the climb. Thus, the Action Committee for Eldorado (ACE) encourages applications for new anchors and for new routes which are capable of being led safely by an Eldorado leader competent at the grade. The community's desire for growth in the Park must be balanced with a respect for the existing routes that have shaped the climbing that exists there today. Toward this end, ACE exists as a public forum to assist and regulate the installation of fixed hardware in Eldorado with the goal of facilitating controlled growth of quality routes and anchors in the Canyon.

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1980s, the placement of bolts became a topic of controversy in the Boulder area. During that time, Boulder Mountain Parks and City and County Open Space (BMP) prohibited the placement of new bolts: an extreme reaction, despite Boulder City Council's direction to BMP staff to create a process allowing the creation of new routes.

At the same time, Eldorado saw its share of controversy when several climbers began upgrading and replacing numerous fixed anchors throughout the Canyon. Unfortunately, instead of replacing like gear for like gear in the same location, these climbers added additional bolts to existing routes, replaced pitons with bolts, and moved the location of bolts. These actions substantially changed the nature of certain classic Eldorado climbs, such as *Psycho*, *X-M*, *Rosy Crucifixion*, *Le Toit*, and *The Wisdom*, and enraged many local climbers.

In contrast to BMP's position, in 1991, Bob Toll, the head ranger at Eldorado, approached several active local climbers and informed them that the Park would continue to allow climbers to establish new routes requiring bolts, if climbers would establish a process which allowed the local climbing community to comment on the proposed routes. Park management believed that Eldorado belonged to all climbers and that individuals could no longer be permitted to take unilateral actions that affected all climbers without community input and consensus.

The Action Committee for Eldorado (ACE) was incorporated in 1992 by the

Access Fund to meet this need and ACE's first task was the creation of a fixed hardware review process and a Fixed Hardware Review Committee (FHRC) to supervise the process. The fixed hardware review process is designed to provide the climbing community with the opportunity to comment on and discuss, approve or disapprove of:

1. Applications to establish new routes requiring fixed gear.
2. Applications to remove routes with fixed gear.
3. Applications to change existing climbing routes by adding, moving or removing fixed gear.
4. Applications to establish new rappel and/or belay anchors.

ACE's main task is to survey the local climbing community to determine whether the community is in favor of or against applications requiring fixed gear. After considering the community's opinion on the applications, each member of ACE votes whether he or she believes that the climbing community supports the application. ACE then notifies the Park, and recommends that the Park either approve or deny the application based on community's position. ACE's recommendation to the Park is advisory only. The Park reviews the application to determine whether there are any environmental or other conflicts with the application and makes the final decision on whether to approve the application. The Park has traditionally approved proposals recommended by ACE.

In 2011, the ACE Board of Directors decided that a separate committee to supervise the fixed hardware process was no longer necessary or desirable. The ACE Board absorbed FHRC and it was dissolved. Currently the number of Board members is nine. ACE Board member's term length is three years and are staggered so that complete turnover of ACE Board members does not occur in any year.

The purpose of ACE is to allow the thoughtful development of new routes in Eldorado per community consensus. An open mind, the ability to consider each application on its merits, the ability to apply these Guidelines as written, and the ability to vote against one's own personal opinions when the climbing community's opinion differs are among the most important criteria for a Board member's participation in the fixed hardware review process. In addition, years of climbing experience in Eldorado, awareness of Eldorado's history and traditions, willingness to devote a substantial amount of time working on the applications, and the ability to discuss applications with other climbers while out climbing are also necessary.

FIXED HARDWARE REVIEW PROCESS GUIDELINES

ACE's fixed hardware review process operates according to the following guidelines:

1. Mechanics

1.1. Proposals. Anyone desiring to (a) establish a new route requiring fixed hardware, i.e., bolts or pitons; (b) add or remove bolts or pitons from an existing route; (c) replace any fixed piton with a bolt; or (d) add, remove, or relocate fixed belay anchors on any route, must

submit an application to ACE. Individuals who wish to replace like gear for like gear in the same location do not need to obtain permission from ACE. Those applications can be made directly to the Park which usually responds to the request fairly quickly, often at the time of submission. Applications regarding the replacement of like gear for like gear, or the addition or replacement of belay/rappel anchors shall be handled as specifically described in Guidelines 3.4 and 3.7 below.

1.2 Public Meetings. ACE shall conduct up to two public meetings each year. Public meetings will be scheduled after ACE review of a new fixed hardware submission, and may be held at any time of year. There is no deadline for applications to ACE for new routes, anchors, or for addition or replacement of fixed hardware. ACE shall schedule public meetings within four (4) months of receipt of a new fixed hardware application.

1.3 Pre-Meeting Responsibilities. From time to time ACE shall appoint a director as chairman of the fixed hardware review process (the "Chair"). The Chair shall divide up responsibilities for the tasks to be complete before the public meeting. During the next four (4) weeks, ACE shall attempt to meet with each applicant and review their application with them. Clarifications regarding the location of the proposed line and the exact location of each piece of fixed hardware are determined. ACE works with the applicant to ensure the highest quality application possible; that is, if ACE has recommendations regarding bolt placements for ease of clipping or the number of bolts, these recommendations are communicated to the applicant. The applicant shall have two (2) weeks to revise the application in writing; otherwise the application as originally filed will be processed by ACE.

1.4 Application for Public Review. Four to six weeks before each public meeting, ACE will prepare a Fact Sheet as described below and publicize the application(s) that ACE will consider at its next meeting. The Fact Sheet for public review shall include a precise topo of the new route or location of the new anchors and the applicant's narrative of the application. ACE shall prepare a description of the application to be published on the ACE website and disseminated to the public, which shall briefly summarize relevant facts about the proposed new route, factors in favor of the application, factors against the application, and neutral factors, as outlined in these Guidelines (the "Fact Sheet"). ACE shall publish the Fact Sheet upon approval by the ACE Board. The Fact Sheet shall not be published until after the vote of the Board. The intent of the Fact Sheet is to provide additional facts to the climbing community in an effort to facilitate an educated public discussion on the application's merits. The Fact Sheet is not intended to bias the public vote on the merits of the route. The Fact Sheet and FHRC edited version of the application shall be distributed to the public approximately four weeks before the public meeting.

1.5 Surveying the Climbing Community. Four to six weeks before each public meeting, ACE shall begin surveying the climbing community to determine the community's support or lack of support for each application. Comments are welcome from all Eldorado climbers. The survey shall be accomplished through three methods: (1) email vote or other Internet communication, (2) votes cast at the public meeting, and (3) informal polling of local climbers by ACE directors. The survey shall take place as follows: ACE shall notify all members of the

ACE email list of the applications and public meeting. ACE shall notify the public at large. In addition, individual ACE members should talk with climbers as much as possible about the application and seek their opinions on the applications. Finally, public discussion and voting on each application shall take place at each public meeting. The results of all votes collected via email and the ACE website shall be organized, tallied, and summarized before each public meeting by ACE. The results of informal discussions of ACE members with other climbers may also be summarized.

1.6 Reviewing Applications. ACE directors shall climb all proposed new routes whenever possible. At the very least, ACE members should closely inspect the routes, holds, and proposed bolt placements. To be able to publicly discuss reasons to recommend or not recommend a route, each ACE member should educate themselves about each new application. Without detailed knowledge of the route, the ACE member cannot discuss its merits or lack thereof, but instead can only discuss the application in general philosophical terms.

1.7 Attendance. Each ACE member is expected to attend each public meeting. Any ACE member who misses two meetings in any term may be removed by ACE.

1.8. Voting. Each ACE member present shall cast one vote on each application. No ACE member may abstain from voting unless they have a significant conflict of interest in the outcome, *e.g.*, an ACE member is applying for the route. The members of the public who are physically present at the meeting, including the applicant, shall collectively have one vote. The non-present public vote, *i.e.*, all votes received via email or ACE website, shall collectively have one vote. In considering all applications, ACE shall give great weight to the opinion of the majority of the climbing community. Any ACE member voting against the prevailing public opinion must have excellent reasons to do so, and must describe and discuss those reasons) in detail at the public meeting.

2. Running the Meeting

2.1. At the start of the public meeting, the Chair shall read the results of all email, Internet, and web site voting as well as summaries of any comments received.

2.2. Handouts may be used to outline the meeting agenda and clarify how the voting process works. The order of routes to be discussed shall be set by the date each application is received by ACE.

2.3. The Chair shall open the applications up to public discussion. If the applicant is present, he or she may give a brief description of the application. Each member of the public who desires to comment on the application at the public meeting shall be given a reasonable amount of time to offer his or her opinion.

2.4. After public discussion the Chair shall close the application to further discussion. The votes shall be counted as follows: First, the majority vote of all written public comment received prior to the meeting shall be counted as one vote. Second, the majority vote of the

public present at the meeting shall be counted as one vote. Finally, ACE members shall vote and each ACE member's vote shall be counted as one vote. Each ACE member shall vote individually and, after the vote, state the reasons why they voted for or against the route. The Chair shall tally the number of votes in favor of and opposed to the application and announce that the application has been either approved or rejected. The next application shall be read and steps 2.3 and 2.4 shall apply.

2.5. Within three days after the meeting ACE's Secretary shall forward ACE's recommendations to the Park for final approval.

2.6. Installation deadlines.

(a) New Routes. The applicant of any ACE-approved new route shall have sole authority to install such fixed hardware for a period not to exceed one (1) year after being informed of the approval by ACE. After one (1) year, if the approved fixed hardware has not yet been installed, such approved fixed hardware may be installed by any Eldorado climber who so requests, so long as the installer complies with all other requirements listed in these Guidelines and in the approved application. This includes the need to obtain a Permit from the Park. In case of extenuating circumstances the applicant may request an extension. All ACE-approved new hardware must be installed within five (5) years of ACE approval. If the fixed hardware has not been installed within five (5) years, it is assumed that the new route is not of substantial benefit to the climbing community, and ACE approval shall expire. Permission to install the new fixed hardware after five (5) years will require going through ACE public review process again.

(b) Changes to existing routes, and new belay/rappel anchors. The applicant of any FHRC-approved changes to existing routes, or new belay/rappel anchors [excluding Expedited Replacement Anchors, Guideline 3.7(c)] shall have sole authority to install or remove such fixed hardware for a period of six (6) months. After six (6) months, if the fixed hardware changes have not been completed, such work may be conducted by any Eldorado climber, so long as the installer complies with all other requirements listed in these Guidelines and in the approved application. This includes the need to obtain a Permit from the Park. If the approved fixed hardware has not been installed or removed within five (5) years of ACE approval, ACE approval shall expire, and the application would need to go through ACE public review process again.

(c) Expedited Replacement Anchors. Expedited anchor replacement is defined in Guideline 3.7(c) and is an immediate benefit to the climbing community. As such, the applicant shall not have sole authority to install such anchors; any Eldorado climber may install said hardware. A permit from the Park is still required. If any expedited replacement anchor has not been installed within one (1) year of ACE approval, such ACE approval shall expire.

3. Guidelines and Considerations

In managing fixed hardware issues, ACE shall comply with the following guidelines:

3.1 Fixed Hardware Definition. The term "fixed hardware" refers to a fixed piton or bolt. Fixed nuts and cams are not included in this definition. All such nuts and cams can be placed and removed at will as per Guideline 3.5 below. Except as provided below in Guideline 3.3 regarding "like for like replacement", approval by ACE, (the review process outlined in this guideline) and an approved permit from Park are necessary before any fixed hardware may be placed or removed in Eldorado.

3.2. Applications Regarding Existing Routes.

(a) Existing routes shall be maintained to the greatest extent possible in the condition of the First Free Ascent (FFA). Bold routes shall remain bold, safe routes shall remain safe. If good fixed protection existed for the FFA, such gear shall be maintained in its original position.

(b) When fixed hardware is replaced, the replacement shall be made in the same position as the gear being replaced. Any fixed hardware must be made as inconspicuous as possible. Occasionally, the person replacing gear shall not be able to use the same placement as the pre-existing piece. In such case the new gear should be placed as close to the original position as is reasonable, so that the nature of the climb is not affected. A permit is required from the Park to replace fixed hardware and ACE should be notified of the outcome of the replacement so that the Fixed Hardware database can be updated.

(c) Notwithstanding the foregoing, relocation of fixed hardware at the request of or with the permission of the first free ascensionist is permitted under the Guidelines.

(d) Removal of any fixed pin requires a permit from the Park.

3.3. Proposals to Replace Fixed Pitons with Bolts.

Removal or replacement of fixed pitons will be referred to ACE in which case a public review will be required. If the piton is replaced ACE should be notified of the outcome of the replacement so that the Fixed Hardware database can be updated. If replacement with like gear is not possible at the same location and of the same integrity as the fixed piece in question, the individual should apply to ACE to replace the gear with a bolt. The goal of the process is to maintain the route in the condition the FFA left it. When it has in the past been possible to get good gear in a location but the placement has eroded or blown out, replacement of the gear with a bolt at the same location shall generally be approved by ACE providing that it does not change the nature of the route from the first FFA experience, i.e. if the FFA had a good piece of fixed gear at that location replacement with a bolt may be approved. Note: RURPs and A4 pitons have never been considered reliable lead climbing protection and an application to replace RURPs or body weight pitons with bolts should generally be denied.

3.3.1 As of 2012, neither the Park nor ACE recommends replacing pitons with pitons as the climbing community no longer climbs in a style, i.e. with hammers, so as to maintain fixed pins as safe and appropriate fixed gear. If a fixed piton is deemed unsafe, an applicant may apply

to ACE to remove it. If good, solid natural gear cannot be placed in the same location, the individual should apply to ACE to replace the pin with a bolt.

3.4. Replacement of Fixed Hardware ("Like for Like Replacement").

(a) *Bolts.* Bolts may be replaced on any climb, without ACE approval, if (1) the bolt is currently in place, or (2) if the bolt is missing or the bolt is noted in any current climbing guidebook to Eldorado. Apply directly to the Park for a permit. If any bolt is not currently in place and not noted in any climbing guidebook, application to ACE for the bolt's replacement is needed. In either case, ACE should be notified of the outcome of the replacement so that the Fixed Hardware database can be updated.

(b) *Pins.* As described in section 3.3, replacement of existing fixed pins must go through the ACE review and receive a permit from the Park..

3.5. *Fixed Nuts.* Fixed nuts are not considered to be fixed hardware and may be placed or removed at will on any climb by any climber. The exception to this rule is that fixed nuts noted in the Fixed Hardware database are considered to be fixed hardware and may not be removed without being replaced immediately at the time of removal.

3.6 *ACE Fixed Hardware database.* The ACE Fixed Hardware database is a list of fixed hardware on certain significant climbs in Eldorado. The database is created, approved, and maintained by ACE and may be accessed via the ACE website.

3.7 Applications Regarding Rappel/Belay Anchors.

(a) Applications to install new rappel or belay anchors shall be generally given favorable consideration when the new anchor replaces anchors on trees or other vegetation or where the anchor replaces visual eye sores, e.g., wads of slings attached to pitons, fixed nuts, and/or bolts. Applications to add anchors in the middle of existing pitches, i.e., anchors that make it easier to retreat before the traditional end of the pitch, shall be denied. Applications for new bolted belay anchors where good natural protection is available are discouraged and this is a factor against the application. The previous sentence does not apply to applications for rappel anchors.

(b) Rappel anchors shall be equalized, preferably in vertical alignment. All applications for anchors must be precise in location and hardware used. If approved, installations of new anchors must conform to the application or be subject to removal and relocation. All applications for anchors shall accurately list the distance of the anchor from the ground or next set of anchors. Any fixed hardware must be made as inconspicuous as possible.

(c) *Expedited Anchor Replacement.* In the interests of expediting the replacement of fixed anchors, ACE will consider applications to replace existing fixed belay and rappel anchors, including trees, throughout the year as the applications are received. Many fixed anchor applications are non-controversial and of immediate benefit to the climbing community. These replacements should be encouraged and expedited. ACE will vote via email whether to immediately approve all fixed anchor applications it receives within two (2) weeks of ACE's receipt of the application. If a majority of ACE vote in favor of the application, ACE will notify the applicant and the Park that the application has been approved. Note that a permit from the Park is still required, but this is usually granted quickly, often at the time of submission. If a majority of ACE believes that the application will be considered controversial by the climbing community and vote against immediate acceptance of the application, then the standard fixed hardware process will apply and the application will be considered at ACE's next public meeting.

(d) For fixed anchor replacement applications, ACE shall not be required to meet with the applicant, visit the site, and/or mark the exact location of the anchor. Fixed anchor replacement applications that identify the anchor to be replaced and the materials to be used in the replacement shall be sufficient.

3.8. *Applications Regarding New Routes.* If approved, installations of new routes must conform to the application as approved or be subject to removal.

(a) *Factors in Favor.* Preference shall be given to the following factors:

(1) *Quality.* Quality is perhaps best described as the sum of the following, more tangible, factors:

(i) *Independent Line.* This includes, but is not limited to, distance of the new line from existing lines. Examples of this factor include *Sunrider Arete* and *Hands in the Clouds*.

(ii) *Direct Line.* New routes requiring fixed hardware which ascend direct lines with defined features are encouraged. Examples of this factor include *Back in Black* and *Sunrider Arete*.

(iii) *Good Rock Quality.* An application for a new route that ascends clean rock with little, if any, loose rock is a factor in favor of the route. Though occasional loose holds are encountered on many otherwise fine climbs, new routes containing much bad rock are viewed unfavorably. There is little point in bolting a pitch if the holds at the crux are likely to break off and render the route unclimbable. Examples of good routes with acceptable loose holds include *Your Mother* and *Le Toit*.

(iv) *Interesting Combination of Moves.* Examples of routes that have interesting moves without an obvious line include *Bachar Yer Aryan* and *The Contest*.

(v) *Safety.* Any proposal for a new route requiring bolts should be designed so that an Eldorado climber, competent at the grade of the proposed route, can lead it relatively safely on sight. The crux of the climb, if it is protected by bolts, should be safely bolted. Run-outs on easier terrain are a normal part of

the Eldorado experience. Examples of this factor include *Blackwalk and Saturnalia*.

(vi) *Location*. An interesting location (which may tempt people away from the heavily used areas) or a convenient location (which will attract people) is a factor in favor of an application. Examples of this factor include *Never Cry Wolf* and *Prince of Darkness*.

(vii) *Aesthetic Position*. Examples of this factor include *Heart of Gold* and *Space Invaders*.

These foregoing factors, in combination, may lead to a difficult-to-define, 'popular' and, hopefully, well enjoyed route.

(b) *Neutral Factors*. The following may be considered but are not factors that argue in favor of or against an application by themselves:

(1) *Dangerous routes*. Proposed routes with sparse protection, *i.e.*, "R" and "X" rated routes, shall not be given favorable or unfavorable consideration on the basis of its boldness alone, but shall be evaluated on the merits and quality of the climb itself. However, routes which are rehearsed, top roped, and then bolted should be capable of being safely led on sight by an Eldorado climber competent at the grade. Proposed new routes which cannot be safely on sighted by Eldorado climbers competent at the grade or which expose climbers to dangers not faced by the applicant are factors against the application.

(2) *Distance of the proposed route from an existing route*. New route applications that are within 10' of an existing route that climbs different features (for example, a proposed arete climb near a comer, or a proposed face climb around the corner from an existing climb) may or may not be acceptable depending upon other factors. The proximity of the application in the latter case should not be considered a factor against the route, especially if the proposed fixed gear is out of sight of the established route. New route applications that begin, end, or cross existing routes are neutral factors so long as any new fixed hardware cannot be easily clipped from the existing routes.

(3) *Difficulty*. The difficulty of a proposed climb shall generally not be a factor in the decision process. If the fixed hardware process indicates that the climbing community believes that the new route shall be enjoyed by future climbers, the route should generally be approved.

(4) *Ability to Top Rope*. The ability to top rope a proposed new route is a neutral factor.

(c) *Factors Against*

(1) *Altered routes*. New route applications with chipped or chiseled holds shall be unconditionally denied. This Guideline shall govern all proposals regardless of the weight of public comment or FHRC vote and may not be amended by ACE in the future.

(2) *Distance*. New route applications on the same flat wall closer than 10' should be discouraged and is a factor against the application.

(3) *Poor rock quality*. Poor quality rock, i.e., holds that are likely to break off and change the route or routes that have loose rock that is easily dislodged and may endanger other climbers, is a factor against the application.

(4) *Protection Reachable from Neighboring Routes*. An application which proposes new fixed gear which can be easily clipped from an existing route is a factor against the application.

(5) *Natural Protection Possibilities*. New routes requiring bolts where natural protection can be placed have not been part of the Eldorado tradition and this circumstance is a factor against the route.

3.9 Park Approval Required. Final approval of any application regarding fixed hardware is contingent upon the Park's approval. The Park administrators may apply criteria in addition to those listed in these Guidelines that may result in the acceptance or denial of the application.