

Rock Climbing Guidelines

Prentice Cooper State Forest

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry and the Southeastern Climbers Coalition will work together in cooperation to provide rock climbing opportunities on Prentice Cooper State Forest to meet the growing public demand for rock climbing, while conserving the natural and scenic resources of the forest.

Background:

Prentice Cooper State Forest is home to one of the premiere rock climbing areas in the United States. The “Tennessee Wall” has some of the best rock climbing anywhere. People travel from all over the country and the world to climb here. The Forest’s unique geographic location on the Tennessee River Gorge with miles of bluffs offers numerous opportunities for rock climbing. As use has increased, interest has expanded from the traditional “Tennessee Wall” site to other areas of the Forest. The purpose of these policies is to set a framework that will guide the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Forestry Division and the Southeast Climbers Coalition in forging a continuing working relationship for planning and accomplishing mutually beneficial projects and activities on Prentice Cooper State Forest.

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture Forestry Division is responsible for the management and protection of the natural resources of the Prentice Cooper State Forest. The Forest is managed for multiple-use. This includes timber, wildlife, recreation, aesthetics and watershed protection. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture Forestry Division works in cooperation with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency in managing the forest as a designated Wildlife Management Area.

The Southeastern Climbers Coalition is a private non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of climbing areas for future generations to enjoy. The Coalition’s goal is to protect, ensure and promote responsible climbing through self-awareness, education and support with climbers, non-climbers and land managers.

General Guidelines:

Rock Climbing will be allowed on all the bluffs of Prentice Cooper State Forest with the exception of those sites designated as no climb zones. Those sites will need to be posted. Those would include:

Snoopers Rock

Indian Rockhouse

Bluffview at the end of Hicks Mountain

Additional sites may be added as needed.

No permanent bolts or anchors will be allowed to be placed in the bluffs without permission of the Tennessee Division of Forestry. Placement of permanent bolts or anchors without permission would be considered vandalism.

Requests for permission to place permanent bolts and anchors would be done through the Southeastern Climbers Coalition. Only designated individuals would be allowed to install the permitted hardware.

Responsibilities of respective parties:

The Southeastern Climbers Coalition (SCC) shall:

- **Provide Forestry with a list of proposed projects. These would include campsite improvements, access trail development and maintenance, placement of permanent anchors and any planned promotion of new climbing sites on the Forest. These projects will be consistent with the multiple use status of the Forest. Allow for adequate time for planning and approvals before the project commences.**
- **Maintain existing trails as necessary to prevent soil erosion.**
- **Contact Forestry prior to working on new trails or relocating existing trails.**
- **Manage the use of fixed anchors as necessary for climber safety, climber enjoyment, to protect the scenic resources and to minimize the impacts of cliff-top vegetation. SCC will request permission from Forestry for placement of any permanent bolts and anchors and provide designated expert personnel to install approved anchors. SCC will monitor the cliffs on the Forest for unapproved bolts and anchors and remove them.**
- **Work with Forestry to post closures of cliffs and trails as necessary to protect rare, threatened and endangered (RTE) species or cultural resources.**
- **Educate visitors on the extent and timing of seasonal closures as to insure visitor compliance.**
- **Educate its membership in the conservation of climbing resources, principles of "Leave No Trace" and stewardship of the Forest and facilities.**
- **Inform Forestry of any matters which may affect the administration and/or management of the climbing resources of the Forest.**
- **Report locations of any RTE species or archaeological resources encountered while climbing in the Forest.**
- **Provide a primary liaison person for coordination with the Forestry Division.**
- **Participate in an annual meeting with the leaders of the Southeastern Climbers Coalition, supervisors of the Tennessee Division of Forestry and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency on Prentice Cooper State Forest to discuss rock climbing policies and future plans and projects.**
- **Comply with all rules and regulations which apply to the Forest.**

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture Forestry Division (Forestry) shall:

- **Maintain personal communications between SCC and State Forest Personnel. The Forester over the State Forest will be the primary contact.**

- **Participate in an annual meeting with the leaders of the Southeastern Climbers Coalition, supervisors of the Tennessee Division of Forestry and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency on Prentice Cooper State Forest to discuss rock climbing policies and future plans and projects.**
- **Review proposed projects for approval. Recommend projects that Forestry deems necessary. Set guidelines and standards for completion of projects.**
- **Help provide tools and/or materials to assist in completion of projects when possible.**
- **Keep SCC informed in a timely manner of scheduled closure dates of the Forest due to “Managed Hunts” and any road closures.**
- **Post those areas where climbing is not allowed.**
- **Keep SCC informed on any changes in the guidelines for climbing on the Forest.**

The primary contacts are:

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