

NC DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION

August 17, 2017

STAFF DIRECTIVE 17-01

To: Administrative Staff
Section Chiefs
Regional Superintends
Park Superintendents
Program Managers

FROM: Michael A. Murphy



SUBJECT: Policy for Rock Climbing Management Within the State Parks System

This staff directive is issued to clarify the division's policy for rock climbing management within the North Carolina State Parks System. This policy has been developed with the assistance and consultation of numerous division staff and outside sources. It is intended to promote low-impact use in the parks that allow climbing activities.

Rock climbing (defined here to include bouldering, free climbing, ice climbing, and direct aid climbing) has occurred in North Carolina's state parks since the 1950's, when routes were established in and around Hanging Rock State Park in Stokes County. As the popularity of rock climbing increased, it became a common recreational activity at three additional state parks: Crowders Mountain, Pilot Mountain, and Stone Mountain. Today, rock climbing also occurs at Chimney Rock State Park. Additional climbing areas may be added in the future, subject to DPR approval.

As rock climbing's popularity increased, DPR recognized the need to establish guidelines regarding access, the designation of climbing areas, natural resource protection, and visitor safety. This led to the establishment of the first DPR climbing policy in 1973. This policy established designated climbing areas. Several modifications have been made to the guidelines since their inception in 1973. These most recent changes specifically address the increased demand for group climbing at North Carolina State Parks. The guidelines outline the process of obtaining a group climbing permit and the requirements for group climbing at NC State Parks. This process will ensure that both group and individual climbers can enjoy their outdoor experience.