Rock climbing is of growing interest to a growing population in France. Rock climbers have limited places with access and changing management policies could influence future access. Climbers use hiking trails and they often camp, just as other visitors do, but they also often travel to very lightly used places and they are the only humans recreating on rock escarpments. A thoughtful analysis of climbing impacts, ways to control those impacts and ways to maintain climbing access is important to this unique sports group of public and private lands visitors.

**Purpose**

Inform policy discussions through investigation of the different management issues in the US and France by meeting with bolters, naturalists, climber federations and different management agencies.

**Specific impacts of Rock Climbing**

Impacts of climbing can be divided into 3 major categories:

1. **Ecological** – mostly impacts to soil and rock due to multiplication of routes and damage at base of cliff; fauna due to climber disturbance; and flora due to trampling or mechanically removing vegetation

2. **Social** – most social impacts are due to conflicts with other types of groups due to noise or visible presence of climbers on escarpment

3. **Cultural** – impacts in the US to sacred sites or in both countries to archeological sites is feared

**Comparing Protected Areas in France and US**

- **France**
  - Protected Areas: 5 different types (Vary in management, restrictions or both)
  - PA philosophy: Conservationism (Naturalness)
  - Climbing management: Different contexts:
    - Mediterranean: small cliffs / high pressure / few strictly protected areas
    - Mountain: numerous and large cliffs / low pressure / many strictly PA
    - PA: Strict restrictions but Management very rare

- **US**
  - Protected areas: No survey
  - Wilderness: Federal law + local implementation
  - PA philosophy: Conservationism (Naturalness)
  - Climbing management: Wilderness: always strictly managed
    - Non Wilderness: famous site: strictly managed / Non famous site: no management

**Comparing Managment in Protected Areas in France and US**

- **France**
  - Ecological: Limit wildlife disturbance and vegetation impact
  - Social: Limit Visual impact and frequentation/noise
  - Cultural: Prevent deterioration

- **US**
  - Ecological: Management
    - Trail, Signs, bolting or remove bolt, campground
  - Social: Closure (Temporary, Permanent, part or all the cliff)
  - Cultural: Climbing ethic, use of bolts (new and removing), use of power drills, group size (commercial) chalk use or color

- **US**
  - Permanent or Temporary Closure
  - Minimum distance to historic site

**Beyond Climbing**

1) **Voice of climbers**: in France => federation (FFME), in US => local climber with Access Fund Support (Local Climbing Organization: LCO)

2) **Protected Areas**: France => Restriction mostly for Ecological purposes (Closure), in US => More holistic management (Ecological, Social, Cultural)

3) In the US => Park Service leads in setting restrictions, other agencies follow

4) **Outside Protected Areas**: in France => nothing (owner decides), in US (outside of Wilderness) => Famous sites managed strictly / Non famous site not strictly

5) **Liability**: in France => Federation, in US => Individual climber

6) **Trad Climbers and Sport Climbers may require different management policies**

7) In France (FFME, CDESI, Naturalist association) and US (LCO), expectation of dialogue before new climbing site approved

8) **Responsibilities**: in France => climbers avoid responsibilities (“clandestine passenger” Rottillon), in US => climbers take responsibilities (maintenance, clean-up)

9) In France, need research on climbers and work with climbers to raise awareness, change behavior, maintain access (training).