

The Planner  
Scabby Range Nature Reserve  
National Parks and Wildlife Service  
PO Box 472  
TUMUT NSW 2720

**SUBMISSION BY THE CANBERRA CLIMBERS' ASSOCIATION (CCA) ON  
THE SCABBY RANGE NATURE RESERVE DRAFT PLAN OF  
MANAGEMENT JUNE 2008**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Scabby Range Nature Reserve Draft Plan of Management. The Canberra Climbers' Association (CCA) endeavours to have an open and collaborative relationship with all Land managers in promoting good rock climbing practices, and towards the maintenance and management of rock climbing areas within National Parks, State Forests and Nature Reserves.

In our view, climbing and preserving environmental and cultural values are synonymous. Climbers share a deep love of the environment and are considerate in their impact.

Please find enclosed our submission.

Yours faithfully,

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8 October 2008

Enclosure:

1. Scabby Range Nature Reserve Draft Plan of Management. Submission by the Canberra Climbers' Association

# **Scabby Range Nature Reserve**

## ***Draft Plan of Management***

### **Submission by the Canberra Climbers Association**

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#### **Introduction**

Rock climbing as an adventure pursuit is relatively new in Australia but has been practised world wide, particularly in Europe and North America for hundreds of years. Rock climbing and abseiling, derivatives of mountaineering, have evolved into highly technical activities that cater for all levels of ability and skill. Over recent decades, the sport has seen progressive improvements in techniques and equipment that have significantly enhanced safety and reduced the risk of injury or death.

A rich and spirit-filled rock climbing history exists within the boundaries of the Namadgi National Park and adjoining areas such as the Scabby Range Nature Reserve. Rock climbers have been scaling these granite cliff faces and outcrops for four decades<sup>1</sup>, and continue to do so today. Scabby Range Nature Reserve holds great cultural heritage for generations of climbers and future enthusiasts.

Many of the well-known areas, which are now very popular within the ACT community, were first visited and explored by rock climbers and current members of the CCA. These areas, such as Booroomba Rocks are highly regarded by generations of climbers, not only within the ACT, but Australia wide. It should be noted that Scabby Range Nature Reserve saw active climbing before it was declared a Nature Reserve with the earliest climbs recorded in the 1970s.

#### **History of rockclimbing at Mt Scabby**

The Scabby Range Nature Reserve includes a significant rock climbing area. Rock climbers refer to the cliff as Mt Scabby or Silhouette Slab. The cliff is located about two kilometres southeast of Mt Scabby and can be seen from parts of Yaouk Road.

Rock climbing at the cliff was pioneered in the 1970's and 80's with about thirty climbing routes developed, details of which have been published in the local rock climbing guides titled *ACT Granite*. The cliff is up to one hundred metres high and about three hundred metres long.

The cliff is significant and important to rock climbers. By comparison to other climbing areas accessible from Canberra, it is a big cliff and has particular appeal to rock climbers seeking multi-pitch adventure climbs. The difficulty of access, the length of the walk to the cliff and the wilderness environment further heighten this atmosphere of adventure climbing.

As there are no public vehicular access roads to the Nature Reserve and the boundaries of the Nature Reserve are either private land or the ACT border, rock

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<sup>1</sup> The first recorded climb in Namadgi National Park was at Booroomba Rocks in Jan 1966.

climbers have to obtain permission from landholders to cross their land to gain access to the nature reserve and then navigate through a trackless wilderness to the cliff. Indeed, the need for climbers to gain landholder permission has been noted in *ACT Granite* for many years. The CCA is aware that all climbers respect the need for landholder permission and actively seek this permission before passing through private land.

### **Visitation and impact by rockclimbers**

As a consequence of Mt Scabby's remoteness, there are very few visits by rock climbers. Therefore, rock climbers have a negligible impact on the wilderness environment at the Scabby Range Nature Reserve. Exact visitation numbers are unknown but anecdotal evidence would indicate that in a full calendar year it is unlikely to exceed 10-15, noting that visitation during the winter months would be almost negligible.

### **Rockclimbing as a legitimate activity**

Our view is that rock climbing is compatible with the wilderness values of the Nature Reserve and should be a permitted activity. Climbing in remote areas has many similar characteristics to bushwalking. Climbers who undertake multi-pitch adventure climbs, do so not just for the challenge, but also as a "journey" into the natural environment and landscape, discovering its richness and diversity along the way. The style of climbing at Mt Scabby is of the "traditional" style where all anchors are temporarily placed then removed on completion of the climb with no damage to the rock or vegetation. This style of climbing is very attuned to preserving and maintaining the environment in its natural state.

Climbers like bushwalkers seek nothing in terms of facilities or services. They merely seek to transit through the Nature Reserve in a self-sufficient manner, carrying everything on their backs and with minimal impact.

Additionally, rockclimbing has been an accepted and minimum impact activity in all protected areas of the high country in the ACT, NSW and Victoria for decades. Therefore, any changes to climbing as a permitted activity would be inconsistent with the practice in adjoining Alpine Parks. Accordingly, we recommend suitable changes to Section 6 of the Draft Plan of Management to reflect the fact that rock climbing is a permitted activity within the Scabby Range Nature Reserve.

### **Section 6 Strategies**

We also believe there should be greater certainty about access to the Nature Reserve. The draft plan of management indicates there are three access points and NPWS staff have advised that although there are gates across these access roads the gates are not locked until the reserve boundary is reached. However the access roads are private roads and the landholder can at any time refuse entry.

We recommend that provided the public stays on the access roads and all gates are left as they are found, the landholder should not be able to refuse entry except in

exceptional circumstances. Whilst CCA members respect the right of the landholders to refuse entry, a greater level of certainty is required given the lengthy drive required to reach the outskirts of the Nature Reserve. Refusal on the spot is not only an inconvenience and distressing to the parties concerned, but also an unnecessary waste of time and cost to the visitors.

### **Recommendations**

The CCA makes the following recommendations:

- Acknowledge that rockclimbing has historically been conducted in the Scabby Range Nature Reserve.
- Acknowledge that rockclimbing is a legitimate recreational activity within the Scabby Range Nature Reserve.
- Acknowledge that rockclimbing impacts within the Scabby Range Nature Reserve are minimal.
- Negotiate greater certainty of access with the landholders where entry is made via approved access points.