

The Salt Lake Climbers Alliance through the Years: Serving the Climbing Community, Protecting Recreation, Promoting Conservation

For over a decade, the Salt Lake Climbers Alliance (SLCA) has been the leading force in sustaining Wasatch Front climbing resources. Thanks to the ongoing dedication and support from members, volunteers, the local climbing community and local businesses, the SLCA continues to expand its important work to preserve access and encourage stewardship of the environment. Whether restoring climbing areas, protecting access, or promoting safe and sustainable climbing principles to the climbing community, the SLCA serves Utah's climbing community in critical arenas.

The SLCA was founded by a small, dedicated group of local climbers volunteering their time to preserve climbing access to some of their favorite Wasatch Front crags. With a volunteer Board of Directors and Advisory Board (and over 500 volunteers), the SLCA has worked diligently over the past ten years to benefit the local climbing community through numerous successful initiatives, including:

- **Climbing Area Restoration (Adopt-A-Crag Days):**
 - *American Fork Canyon:* crag and trail improvements at the Division Wall, the Membrane, and the Hell Cave including bolt replacement
 - *Little Cottonwood Canyon:* trail mapping and plant survey, erosion control, invasive plant removal, trash clean-up, trail and staging area improvements, and graffiti removal in the bouldering areas of the canyon
 - *Ferguson Canyon:* trail and crag improvements, trash clean-up, graffiti removal
 - *Big Cottonwood Canyon:* Salt Lake Slips restoration and trail improvement
 - *Pete's Rock:* clean-up and graffiti removal
 - *Maple Canyon:* Pipe Dream cave terracing, bridge to Pipeline Wall
 - *Joes Valley:* seasonal installment of toilets

- **Preserving Climbing Access:** The SLCA provides a critical voice for climbers in local, state, and federal access issues that affect Utah's climbing resources. The SLCA serves as a liaison with land managers and government agencies, advocating for climbing access on behalf of the climbing community.

- **Promoting Safe and Responsible Climbing:** In partnership with the American Safe Climbing Association, the SLCA has helped replace old, worn-out bolts and chains on popular routes throughout the Wasatch; the SLCA brochure has provided information and guidance to both local and visiting climbers.

2002-2012 SLCA STATS:

- Number of years in operation: 10

- Number of Adopt-a-Crag events: 17
- Number of Stewardship Projects: 12
- Number of volunteers: approximately 500
- Number of volunteer hours: approximately 5,000
- Estimated total value for volunteer hours: \$95,000
- Number of crags cleared of graffiti: 7
- Number of community events: 6

The Roots of the SLCA

In 2001, a Ranger with the Wasatch-Cache National Forest Salt Lake Ranger District (Carol Majeske) contacted Allen Sanderson, then-Regional Coordinator with the Access Fund, seeking a representative from the local climbers' organization to discuss a climbing access issue at Storm Mountain Picnic Area in Big Cottonwood Canyon in the Wasatch Mountains. Although the Access Fund was active throughout the region, no formal climbers' organization existed. After a series of phone calls, Allen connected with several local Wasatch Front climbers and held an informal public meeting with the U.S. Forest Service to discuss the climbing access issue in Big Cottonwood. With the help from the Forest Service, climbers established a protocol with the concessionaire running the picnic area to allow free access through the site to the surrounding crags. Local climbers immediately recognized the need for a climbing organization to address numerous critical issues facing the climbing community. More importantly, they recognized the need for a central voice for climbers in Utah. Thus, following numerous public meetings, the Salt Lake Climbers Alliance was incorporated as 501c3 tax-exempt non-profit organization, and the original Board of Directors was elected in early 2002:

- Chairman: Steve Downes
- Access: Mike Beck
- Treasurer: Matt Goreham
- Anchors: Merrill Bitter
- Secretary: Deanne Pranke
- Communications and Publications: Hillary Silberman
- Projects: Jonathan Knight
- Advisory Emeritus: Ted Wilson

Accomplishments and Highlights of the SLCA through the Past Decade:

Year after year, the SLCA has provided an invaluable service to the climbing community, as demonstrated by a history filled with successes:

2002

- *First Annual Adopt-a-Crag*: With the founding of the SLCA came the first annual SLCA Adopt-a-Crag Project in Little Cottonwood Canyon. The Adopt-a-Crag Program (created by the Access Fund) is the SLCA’s signature stewardship event, uniting the climbing community in partnership with land managers to preserve climbing areas.
 - *Project*: Little Cottonwood Canyon (cleaned tons of trash and scrap metal out of the canyon); *60 volunteers*: 120 *volunteer hours*
- New Partnerships:
 - *Access Fund*: “the national advocacy organization that keeps U.S. climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment”
 - *Wasatch-Cache National Forest – Salt Lake District*
- Educational Efforts: SLCA produced an educational brochure on climbing in the Wasatch Front Range, access concerns and regulations, climbing etiquette, and local climbing information

2003

- *Adopt-a-Crag Project*: The Membrane Wall, American Fork Canyon: access trail work, retaining wall and bridge construction, bolt replacement, and erosion control measures (spread wood chips supplied by the Forest Service); *50 volunteers*: 400 *volunteer hours*
- New Partnerships:
 - *Uinta National Forest – Pleasant Grove District*
 - *The Salt Lake and Utah Valley climbing communities*

2004

- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 1*: Pete’s Rock, near Mt Olympus in the Wasatch Range: SLCA received a grant for the Pete's Rock Conservation and Restoration Initiative to permanently remove visible, painted numbers from Pete's Rock (a practice considered to be inappropriate and aesthetically unappealing).
- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 2*: Division Wall and Hell Cave, American Fork Canyon: SLCA provided additional erosion mitigation measures, maintained access trails, terraces and retaining walls were built at both crags and old rusty bolts were removed and replaced with new ones.

2005

- *SLCA fundraiser: Black Diamond Equipment Ltd.*: With over 300 in attendance, this event marked the first formal effort to unite the local climbing community in support of the SLCA’s important efforts.
- New Partnership:
 - *American Safe Climbing Association*: “a nonprofit organization of dedicated climbers who replace unsafe anchors and reduce the visual and environmental impacts of climbing”

2006

- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 1:* Salt Lake Slips, Big Cottonwood Canyon: new access trail constructed from Storm Mountain Picnic Area, construction of four staging areas to mitigate the severe soil erosion occurring under the main routes; *43 volunteers; 300 volunteer hours*
- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 2:* Maple Canyon: construction of Pipe Dream Cave terraces, installation of bridge to Pipeline Wall; *40 volunteers; 280 volunteer hours*
- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 3:* High Uintas, Mirror Lake Scenic Byway, Ruth Lake: trail staircase constructed up the eroded bank (near Good Medicine Wall); *50 volunteers: 250 volunteer hours*
- New Partnerships:
 - *Volunteers for Outdoor Utah:* “an organization fostering responsibility among Utah residents by promoting active stewardship on their public lands”
 - *White Pine Touring:* local rock climbing guide company in Park City
- *SLCA Fundraiser: The Front Climbing Club:* 150 attendees

2007

- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 1:* Salt Lake Slips, Big Cottonwood Canyon: revisited past project for trail maintenance and restoration work
- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 2:* Pipeline Trail, Little Cottonwood Canyon: constructed a new access trail from the Little Cottonwood Park and Ride to the Pipeline Trail, hillside restoration, graffiti removal, and trash pick-up; *70 volunteers: 490 volunteer hours*
- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 3:* Power Plant, Little Cottonwood Canyon: Power Plant bridge restoration; *8 volunteers: 72 volunteer hours:*
- 2007 project supplies and materials paid for by SLCA: \$1,706.57
- *SLCA Fundraiser: The Front Climbing Club*

2008

- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 1:* The Egg, Little Cottonwood Canyon: new access trail designed and constructed (trail to the Egg and The Coffin starting from the Little Cottonwood Canyon Park and Ride); *75 volunteers: 525 volunteer hours*
- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 2:* Lone Peak, Wasatch Front: crag clean-up; *6 volunteers: 30 volunteer hours*
- 2008 project supplies and materials paid for by SLCA: \$927.68
- Stewardship Projects:
 - American Fork Canyon - Division Wall, Upper Division Wall and Pig Pen: secured parking spaces for climbers at the campground for access
 - Joe’s Valley Bouldering: seasonal installation of latrines to minimize climber impact in the area; *cost: \$240.00*

2009

- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 1: Ferguson Canyon: built staging areas and trails; 110 volunteers: 880 volunteer hours*
- 2009 project supplies and materials paid for by SLCA: \$1,466.53
- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 2: Joe's Valley: Spring and Fall seasonal installation of latrines to minimize climber impact in the area; cost: \$1,020.00*
- *Awards: Access Fund's Stewardship Award for SLCA's dedication to restoring Ferguson Canyon.*
- **New Partnerships:**
 - *The American Alpine Club (AAC): "provides knowledge and inspiration, conservation and advocacy, and logistical support for the climbing community"*
 - *Cottonwood Canyons Foundation (CCF): "continuously improve the environment of Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons through stewardship and education programs"*
- **Other Highlights:**
 - SLCA helped the AAC with "Craggin' Classic": A weekend-long sport climbing, bouldering, and trad climbing event with service projects, film festival, billiards and poker competitions, live music, gear demos, and climbing sessions with professional athletes.
 - Liaison and Advisory Program Established: SLCA recruited liaisons for specific climbing areas to monitor and report on access issues and potential crag projects
 - SLCA hosts public meeting to discuss the chopping of bolts on the Geezer Wall
 - SLCA attends Access Fund's Land Conservation Summit, Las Vegas, Nevada: attended by Chair of SLCA, Jonathan Knight and Projects Chair, Jeff Porucznik.
- **Stewardship Projects:**
 - Pete's Rock: trash clean-up
 - Riverside Boulders: access trail maintenance and Upper Egg Trail step installation
 - Egg and Crescent Crack: sign removal
 - Beer Can Cave: graffiti removal

2010

- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 1: Little Cottonwood Canyon: construction project to East Gate Buttress, maintenance at the East Gate, graffiti removal from the Beer Can Cave Boulder; 75 volunteers: 337 volunteer hours*
- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 2: Little Cottonwood Canyon: "Purge the Spurge" day: netted hundreds of pounds of invasive myrtle spurge and re-seeded affected areas with native grasses; 25 volunteers: 125 volunteer hours*
- 2010 project supplies and materials paid for by SLCA: \$1,774.56
- *First Annual SLCA Fundraiser at Black Diamond: celebrated the spirit of climbing friend, Seth Shaw.*

- Stewardship Project:
 - Joe's Valley: Spring and Fall seasonal installation of latrines in order to help keep campsites enjoyable and minimize climber impact in the area; *cost*: \$1,200.00

2011

- *Adopt-a-Crag Project 1*: Ferguson Canyon, Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons: restoration of the Salt Lake Slips trail and staging areas, graffiti removal from the White Pine boulders, trash clean up in Little Cottonwood Canyon, restoration of past projects in Ferguson Canyon, and a bolt replacement clinic hosted at the Humane Society Wall; 60 *volunteers*: 240 *volunteer hours*
- New Partnerships:
 - *Wasatch Watershed Legacy Partnership*: “undertake creative and effective actions that conserve and sustain critical resources, create resilient ecosystems, and enrich the quality of life for the region, its residents, businesses, and canyon visitors”
 - *Conservation Alliance*: “engage businesses to fund and partner with organizations to protect wild places for their habitat and recreation values”
 - *Save Our Canyons*: “a non-profit organization that is dedicated to protecting the beauty and wildness of the Wasatch canyons, mountains, and foothills”
 - *Salt Lake County*
 - *Outdoor Alliance*: “ensure the conservation and stewardship of our nation’s land and waters through the promotion of sustainable, human-powered recreation”
- *Second Annual Black Diamond SLCA Fundraiser*: celebrating the generosity and dedication of the local business community
- Other Highlights
 - In 2011, the SLCA hired its first employee and Executive Director, Julia Geisler; the position was made possible by the newly established paid membership program, support from community leaders, and crucial funding from local businesses: Black Diamond Equipment Ltd., The Front Climbing Club, Petzl, Liberty Mountain, and Backcountry.com.
 - The Executive Director will serve to:
 - Preserve access to the local climbing resource.
 - Sustain and develop partnerships with local land managers, land owners, and stakeholders.
 - Create and promote education and outreach opportunities for the local climbing community.
 - Improve and increase awareness in the climbing community of: access issues, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and education/outreach opportunities.

- Raise funds to support these activities and support the Executive Director position.
 - New Board Members nominated and elected to the 2011 Board of Directors; new committees formed
 - 2011 Board Retirees: many thanks to Cynthia Leventhal, Jonathan Knight, and George Poulton for their years of service to the SLCA
 - SLA attends The Access Fund's National Access and Stewardship Summit: attended by Projects Chair of the SLCA, Jeff Porucznik. Jeff presented on developing recreation site and trail assessment procedures for bouldering areas.
 - SLCA attends the First Annual Outdoor Alliance Summit, The American Alpine Institute, Golden, Colorado: attended by Executive Director, Julia Geisler, and Chairman, Jonathan Knight. In support of Obama's "America's Great Outdoors" program, a focus on partnership between public and private entities to promote conservation through recreation
 - Wasatch Watershed Legacy Partnership: Executive Director, Julia Geisler, and Chairman, Jonathan Knight initiated representation in the partnership
- Stewardship Projects:
 - Grit Mill: graffiti removal
 - Little Cottonwood Canyon Trail opened on the south side of the canyon
 - The Thumb: old bolt replacement
 - Conservation Alliance Backyard Collective: Parley's trail head; installation of check dams and water diversion structures and the closure of a social trail
 - Joe's Valley: Spring and Fall seasonal installation of latrines in order to help keep campsites enjoyable and minimize climber impact in the area; *cost*: \$1,950.00

2012 Board of Directors, Officers, Advisory Board, Committees, and SLCA Liasons:

Board of Directors:

- Chairman: Jeff Porucznik
- Treasurer: Matt Goreham
- Administrator: Paul Tusting
- Mason Baker
- Sara Baldwin
- Brad Barlage
- Dustin Buckthal
- Rob Candland
- Jason Shumaker

Committees

- Fundraising/Membership:
 - Dustin Buckthal – Chair
 - Brad Barlage
 - Jason Shumaker
 - Paul Tusting
- Marketing/Outreach:
 - Rob Candland – Chair
- Personnel:
 - Dustin Buckthal – Chair
 - Sara Baldwin
 - Paul Tusting
- Policy and Conservation:
 - Jeff Porucznik – Chair
 - Sara Baldwin
 - Mason Baker
 - Jonathan Knight

Ad Hoc Committee:

- Directors & Officers and Event Insurance
 - Matt Goreham – Chair
 - Mason Baker

Advisory Committee:

- Mike Beck (Nadesan Beck P.C.)
- Dave Bell (Sego Realty L.C. & Bell Organic Gardens)
- Chris Grover (Black Diamond Equipment)
- Jeff Pederson (Momentum Climbing)

SLCA Liaisons:

- Jaima Andersen – American Fork Canyon

- Jeff Baldwin – Castle Valley Bouldering
- Mike Friedrichs – Maple Canyon
- Steve Heath – Little Cottonwood Canyon Bouldering
- Jim Knight – Rock Canyon
- Shingo Ohkawa – Alpine Areas
- Nathan Smith – Uinta Mountains
- Paul Tusting – Uinta Mountains
- Clay Watson – Little Cottonwood Canyon Routes

Previous SLCA Board Members:

- Public Relations: Eric Wynn
- Vice Chairman: Dave Budge
- Education and Outreach: Gwendolyn Adams
- Re-bolting Coordinator: Mike White
- Secretary: Zac Robinson
- Chairman: Jonathan Knight
- Events: Cynthia Leventhal
- Access: George Poulton
- Chairman: Steve Downes
- Access: Mike Beck
- Treasurer: Matt Goreham
- Anchors: Merrill Bitter
- Secretary: Deanne Pranke
- Communications and Publications: Hillary Silberman
- Projects: Jonathan Knight
- Advisory Emeritus: Ted Wilson

A Special Thank You to SLCA Sponsors:

- Backcountry.com
- Black Diamond
- The Front Climbing Club
- Liberty Mountain
- Petzl
- White Pine Touring, Momentum Climbing Gym, ProBar, Higher Ground Coffee, The Access Fund, IME, Scarpa, Carlucci's Bakery, Acteryx, Cliff Bar, Excalibur, Epic Brewery, Five.Ten, LaSportiva, Metolious, OR, Patagonia, Prana, Red Chili, Rock and Ice, Rockreation, Sign Teck, Sage's Café, Scarpa, Sterling, Uinta Brewing Company, Utah Mountain Adventures, Wild Country, Whole Foods