

American Mountain Guides Association
4720 Walnut Street, Suite 200
Boulder, CO 80301
(P) 303.271.0984 | (F) 720.336.3663
www.amga.com | info@amga.com

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Bighorn National Forest
Powder River Ranger District
Bighorn National Forest
2013 Eastside 2nd Street
Sheridan, WY 82801-9638

comments-bighorn@usda.gov

RE: American Mountain Guides Association Comments on Tensleep Canyon Climbing Management Plan Project

Dear U.S. Forest Service Officials,

The American Mountain Guides Association respectfully submits these comments on the Bighorn National Forest Tensleep Canyon Climbing Management Plan Project.

The American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) is a 501(c)(3) educational non-profit organization that provides training and certification for climbing instructors, mountain guides, and ski guides throughout the United States. Founded in 1979, the AMGA has trained over 13,000 climbing and skiing guides who provide outdoor experiences for the general public that emphasize safety, stewardship, and education. As the American representative to the International Federation of Mountain Guide Associations (IFMGA), the AMGA institutes international standards for the mountain guiding profession in the United States and serves as an educational body for land managers, guide services, outdoor clubs, and other recreation stakeholders. The advocacy arm of the AMGA supports sustainable use of public lands, facilitates stewardship projects, and works in cooperation with guides and land managers to promote best practices and preserve access to areas utilized by the guided public.

Recreation Special Uses

Recreation special uses such as outfitting and guiding provide substantial benefits for the public, the Forest, and local communities. In an increasingly urban society, outfitters and guides connect people to the outdoors and foster an appreciation for public lands. They provide valuable interpretation of natural and cultural resources, they promote an ethic of conservation and stewardship, and they help to foster the next generation of public lands advocates. Outfitters and guides also support local communities by contributing to the vibrant and growing outdoor recreation economy. To ensure outfitting and guiding services on the Bighorn National Forests continue to provide benefits for the public, the Forests, and local communities, we offer the following comments on the Tensleep Canyon Climbing Management Plan Project for the Bighorn National Forest.

Outfitter/Guide Use

As part of this Climbing Management Plan Project, the Bighorn National Forest will consider outfitter and guide use consistent with the forestwide strategy to continue permitting outfitter/guide services on National Forest System lands.

The scoping notice for this project envisions sport climbing instruction in Tensleep Canyon as the primary commercially permitted activity. AMGA supports this intent and believes it is beneficial for the public to have the opportunity to climb with a guide. Guides create a safe experience, enhance resource protection, and facilitate access for those who do not have the expertise or equipment to undertake climbing on their own. With these benefits in mind, AMGA supports the identified need and draft proposed action in the scoping notice and encourages the Bighorn National Forest to continue to expand the number and type of permits available for guided rock climbing.

Need: Consider priority use permits and their allocated use service days in order to maintain or enhance forest plan desired conditions for recreational opportunities while protecting resources.

Draft Proposed Action: Through adaptive implementation and monitoring, issue commercial temporary and term permits consistent with Forest Service Special Uses Handbook direction (FSH 2709.11).

More specifically, AMGA supports the implementation of priority use permits for the authorization of guided sport climbing in Tensleep Canyon. Longer term priority use permits will minimize administration for the agency and permit holders, and will serve to enhance the forest plan desired conditions for recreation opportunities while protecting resources.

The AMGA believes the commercial use allocations identified in the document “2017 Rock and Ice Climbing Allocation Table III-7” are appropriate and will enable the public to experience rock climbing in the project area with an instructor or guide.

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Tensleep Canyon Climbing Management Plan Project. We look forward to working with the Bighorn National Forest to promote the appropriate use of the National Forest System while protecting world class recreation and natural resources at the same time.

Sincerely,



Matt Wade
Deputy Director
American Mountain Guides Association
matt@amga.com