

CLIMBING MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

April 2006

Devils Tower National Monument

The National Park Service (NPS) has reviewed and updated the Devils Tower National Monument 1995 Climbing Management Plan (CMP). Primary features of the CMP Update are an improved climber education program, safety standards and climbing access routes, as well as a continued June voluntary climbing closure. Other elements of the 1995 CMP remain valid including: seasonal falcon climbing closure, bolt replacement allowed/no new bolting, hammers allowed/no power drills.

The CMP Update process began with a public comment period held from May 15 to July 15, 2002, during which 39 comments (33 from individuals and 6 from organizations or companies) were received. A March 17, 2003 newsletter provided an update on the CMP Update process to interested parties. After considering the public response, comments received from affiliated Native American tribes and effects to resources, the NPS has selected the following actions for the CMP Update:

The Climber Education Program will continue with the following improvements:

- Climbing Ranger(s) will continue to be a part of the park's staff to provide climbers more information and service.
- A dedicated climber registration office, new in 2005, will continue as a replacement of the old registration system in the visitor center, and provide a venue for more climber education contacts with the climbing ranger(s).
- A climber education video will be available to increase climber awareness of safety, resource impacts and the Tower's cultural significance. The video will be available for climbers in 2007.
- A redesigned climber registration permit will provide improved climber information regarding safety, resource impacts and the Tower's cultural significance.
- Revised permits for commercial climbing guides will continue to have an emphasis on safety and education of prospective clients. Specific changes include: helmet requirement, June voluntary closure information being listed on the guide's webpage and printed material, IBP fee raise from \$200-\$300, monthly revenue reports, client notification to park for every trip, certification requirement from AMGA or equivalent.
- A redesigned park website will provide current information such as falcon closure, climbing events, orientation, equipment etc., to climbers prior to their arrival.
- Climber education outreach will continue to communicate important climber related management issues to local communities throughout the Black Hills.

Safety Standards

The National Park Service will be requiring commercial guides to be certified by the American Mountain Guides Association or equivalent organization that trains and tests guides for competency. This standard will improve safety for guided climbers which make up about 40% of Tower climbers.

Climbing Access Routes

Climbing access route maintenance will be completed to repair route erosion and eliminate social routes. Climbers will continue to be required to pack human waste off approach routes and the Tower. Human waste bag systems will continue to be sold at the bookstore in the visitor center.

June Voluntary Climbing Closure

The NPS will continue a voluntary climbing closure on Devils Tower during the month of June when many Native American traditional cultural activities occur at the Tower. This voluntary closure has been in effect each June since 1995 when a CMP was established.