

To whom it may concern,

As you may already be aware, the access road to Yonah Mountain has been closed for several years, essentially cutting off public access to this unique resource. Since 1995, several organizations have tried in vain to secure some sort of access to Yonah's summit that would have parking within reasonable distance from the top of the mountain. However, only the Army Rangers and the Forest Service have been allowed to use the road since then.

There are several user groups that are now denied a reasonable method of visiting their public lands. Yet these same groups pay taxes, which in turn finance the upkeep of the closed roads through a contract with the Army Rangers. The residents along the road are still allowed to use the road at taxpayer's expense. Of course, they pay taxes as well, but their monetary contribution is scarcely any more substantial than that of any other citizen.

During this same time period almost 3 million dollars has been spent acquiring additional tracts of land around the mountain. Yet the \$84,000 needed to complete the access road for public use can't seem to make it into the budget. The land for the approved new access was secured by private funds with the understanding that if the property were acquired the Forest Service would build the road. No funding has yet to be appropriated and this access is closed to the public even though we paid for it. The Army has recently built a passable road and trail system up this property for their use but we are still denied access. A gate with a "no trespassing" sign currently blocks this access.

Since many of the people sending this letter are rock climbers, mention must be made of the enormous contributions of this particular user group. They spearheaded the fund raising for property for the new road. Climbers readily volunteer their free time to help remove litter, repair trails, water bars and other essential features of any lands that we tend to impact. Climbers also contribute dollars to worthy organizations such as the Southeastern Climber's Coalition and the Access Fund, organizations that take this money and spend it on the materials needed to make these repairs and putting more land into conservation. One example is the recent acquisition of Boatrock, a small tract located in a fast developing area in Atlanta. If not for the efforts of the Southeastern Climber's Coalition and others, this tiny green space would have been lost forever to urban sprawl. Now, this area is a small park that has been designated as a green space for the entire community to share, not just climbers.

We sincerely hope you will listen to our small voice and help us take action to keep Yonah Mountain as a lovely natural area for ALL to enjoy, not just a select few. You can be assured that climbers will be there to help whenever help is needed. We are not the only user group that has a stake in this issue. Hikers, hunters, sport rappellers, cyclists, other outdoors sports groups and nature lovers are being turned away. Public access to such a fine resource is critical for the enjoyment of our public lands and would be beneficial to the tourism industry and other aspects of the local economy.

Please help us find the funding for the Forest Service's approved road plan. The land has been purchased, the impact studies completed, the plans drawn and approved. The amount of money needed is very small in proportion to what is already being spent on this mountain every year. For more information visit www.coolclimbing.com/yonahaccess1 or www.seclimbers.org.

Sincerely,