

AMERICAN SAFE CLIMBING ASSOCIATION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



A REVIEW OF OUR
EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN
CLIMBING HARDWARE
RESOURCES IN 2023.

**THE ASCA PROVIDES
HARDWARE, TOOLS,
AND EDUCATION TO
DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS
WHO MAINTAIN FIXED GEAR
AT CLIMBING AREAS
ACROSS THE COUNTRY.**

OUR MISSION

The American Safe Climbing Association is a non-profit organization of climbers who are dedicated to making the sport of rock climbing safer by replacing unsafe bolts and anchors and by educating climbers, land managers and the public about climbing and anchor safety.

Since 1998, the ASCA has supplied over 65,000 bolts and 38,000 anchors for replacement work, along with lower-offs, tools, and other supplies.

The ASCA was born in Yosemite and our replacement efforts initially focused on some of the longest classic routes in the western US, but rapidly expanded to crags all across the country.

The ASCA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and we rely entirely on support from the climbing community to do this work.



THANK YOU

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GREG BARNES HAS RUN THE ASCA SINCE THE YEAR 2000. HE HAS ALSO VOLUNTEERED A GREAT DEAL OF HIS PERSONAL TIME REPLACING MORE THAN 2000 BOLTS ON CLASSIC ROUTES ACROSS THE WEST, MOSTLY BY HAND DRILLING.

Dear Supporters,

I am thrilled to present our Annual Report for 2023. As we reflect on our accomplishments and challenges, I am proud to share the progress we have made in advancing our mission of making the sport of rock climbing safer by replacing unsafe bolts and anchors along with educating climbers, land managers and the public about climbing and anchor safety.

Success of our Lower Off Initiative:

This past year marked a significant milestone in our efforts towards enhancing safety in climbing areas. Our Lower Off Initiative, aimed at equipping popular single pitch routes across the country with clip and lower style anchors, has seen remarkable success with 5899 lower offs distributed in 2023. This brings the total number we have supplied over the years to more than 21,000! Only through collaboration with dedicated volunteers, local climbing organizations, and generous supporters like you, have we been able to supply this huge number of modern, durable lower off systems in climbing areas across the country.

Increase in Number of Bolts Provided to Stewards:

Furthermore, I am pleased to yet again report a substantial increase in the number of bolts and anchors granted to stewards and local climbing organizations. In 2023 alone we provided LCO's and individual stewards with 6,652 high quality bolts for replacement efforts. **This brings our overall bolt replacement total to over 68,000!** Through our hardware grants, we have provided essential resources to communities working hard to maintain climbing areas responsibly.

These grants have empowered stewards to address critically needed bolt replacement work across the country and in select international destinations popular with American climbers. By supporting these volunteer, grass root efforts, we are fostering a culture of responsibility and stewardship within the climbing community, strengthening our collective commitment to preserving climbing access and protecting our resources.

Looking Ahead:

As we look ahead to the coming year, we remain dedicated to our mission. We will continue to expand our Lower Off Initiative, target priority areas in need of anchor replacement, and will also put additional focus on enhancing our education efforts for land managers and the growing number of climbers alike.

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our volunteers, partners, and donors. Your contributions have been instrumental in driving our success and advancing our shared vision for fixed anchor stewardship in climbing.

In closing, I extend my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your ongoing commitment to the ASCA. Together, we will continue to make a lasting impact on the climbing community and the resources we steward as a community.

Sincerely,

**Greg Barnes
Director, American Safe Climbing Association**

OUR

WORK IN

2023

+6% BOLTS

+11% ANCHORS/LOWER OFFS

THE AMOUNT OF HARDWARE REPLACEMENT WORK COMPLETED INCREASED AGAIN IN 2023. EVEN AFTER SUPPLYING A RECORD NUMBER OF BOLTS AND ANCHORS TO STEWARDS IN 2022, DEMAND STILL INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY IN 2023.

The ASCA is the only organization in the USA with the sole mission of addressing the maintenance of aging climbing bolts and anchors.

We are proud to be the resource that removes the financial burden of top quality replacement hardware for stewards at climbing areas across the country.

With volunteer rebolters active in 35 states along with several international destinations popular with visiting Americans, we are committed to supporting this much needed ongoing maintenance and replacement work.

HARDWARE GRANTS

THE MAJORITY OF OUR FUNDS RAISED GO DIRECTLY TO SOURCING HIGH-QUALITY HARDWARE IN LARGE QUANTITIES THAT IS SHIPPED TO REBOLTERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, FREE OF COST TO THE CRAG STEWARDS.

HERE IS WHAT WE DISTRIBUTED IN 2023.



3738 MECHANICAL BOLTS

The Stainless Steel 5-Piece bolt is an excellent mechanical option for bolt replacement. This sleeve-style bolt is a construction grade fastener that we commonly use as a climbing anchor. Expansion is created by tightening a threaded bolt which draws a tapered cone expanding a sleeve against the walls of the hole.



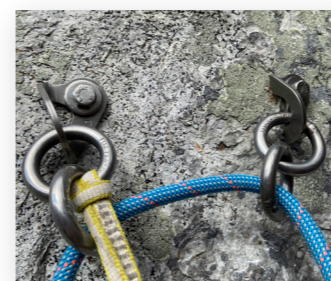
2914 GLUE IN BOLTS

Adhesive anchors (aka "glue ins") are an increasingly popular option for stewards who are maintaining and upgrading climbing hardware resources. These are the strongest and lowest maintenance bolts available to climbers, and have become increasingly popular in recent years, although they have been quite common in Europe for decades.



5899 CLIP-AND-LOWER ANCHORS

The goal of our Lower Off Initiative is to equip popular single pitch routes across the country with robust anchors that allow descent without untying and retying the lead line. The ability to clip and lower to descend and clean a route greatly increases the safety margin for all climbers.



960 RING ANCHORS

Ring anchors are a great option for rappel stations, and make excellent top anchors on multi-pitch routes. They are high strength stainless steel, provide easy points to clip into and organize belays, and hold up to a significant amount of wear. We often provide these with a quick-link attachment so they can be easily replaced when heavily worn.



TOOLS AND OTHER SUPPLIES

The ASCA supplies many other items that are needed for rebolting work. Adhesive and caulking guns for glue-in bolts, spinner and puller tools to extract old hardware, "tuning forks" to remove buttonheads, drill bits, patch epoxy, hole brushes, and more!

THE LOWER-OFF INITIATIVE



5899 LOWER OFFS DISTRIBUTED IN 2023

THATS AN 18% INCREASE OVER 2022!

We remain committed to standardizing clip and lower style anchors on single pitch routes across the country. Belay miscommunication and error at the top of single pitch routes is one of the leading causes of climbing accidents and fatalities. Durable lower-off hardware at the anchors greatly reduces accidents by allowing fast, efficient, and safe descent without having to untie or retie the lead line.

CORRECT USE OF LOWER-OFF ANCHORS

Anchor hooks and many other lower offs are not designed to be climbed above. Do not climb above anchors when using only lower offs for protection.

Do not clip lower off anchors from above and down climb to them when attempting to set up a top rope. This is dangerous and can result in accidentally unclipping your rope from the anchor.

When top roping on any fixed anchors, only the last climber should lower directly on the lowering hardware to increase the working life of the wear part. Use personal gear to top rope up until the final climber lowers.

When the final climber reaches the anchor they clip into the steel hooks/carabiners, get tension from their belayer, and then clean personal gear that was used for top roping before lowering. Never send a beginner up to clean gear while unsupervised.

If you are leading the extension to a route with lower offs installed at the first anchor, clip a quickdraw to one of the bolt hangers of the anchor as you pass, not one of the lower offs.

If there are lower offs on the first pitch of a multi-pitch route you should build your anchor to climb the next pitch above by clipping the bolt hangers or quicklinks with personal gear, not the lower off.

Lower off anchors on popular single pitch routes help to address many common accidents that arise with complacency and high traffic, but still require climbers to pay close attention to their systems.

Climbing comes with high consequences if mistakes are made. Always understand the system you are using for protection and weight/re-inspect before you transfer to a new protection system.

STEWARD & LCO FEATURES

As we reflect on the past year's accomplishments, it's important to underscore the pivotal role of volunteer crag stewards and Local Climbing Organizations in our mission.

Fixed hardware, often trusted implicitly by climbers, is not guaranteed to be safe. A great variety of different types of anchors have been placed by first ascensionists over the years and many of them were never designed to stand up to the amount of traffic they receive or the corrosion created by environmental factors.

Recognizing this, the ASCA spearheads efforts to ensure the integrity of climbing routes by standardizing high quality replacement hardware and providing best practices at areas across the country while always striving to minimize climber impacts.

Volunteer crag stewards emerge as unsung heroes in this endeavor. Their dedication and passion breathe life into our initiatives, as they tirelessly work to inspect, replace, and maintain fixed hardware across climbing sites nationwide. By proactively addressing aging hardware, these stewards mitigate the risk of accidents and preserve the integrity of climbing routes for generations to come.

Beyond their technical expertise, volunteer crag stewards also serve as ambassadors of climbing ethics, promoting respectful and sustainable practices among fellow climbers. Through education and outreach, they empower climbers to take ownership of their impacts and instill a sense of collective responsibility for preserving our natural playgrounds.

The ASCA remains steadfast in our commitment to supporting and amplifying the efforts of volunteer crag stewards. Through continued collaboration and advocacy, we strive to expand our network of stewards, ensuring comprehensive coverage of climbing areas in need of hardware replacement.

As we navigate the evolving landscape of climbing, let us not forget the invaluable contributions of these dedicated individuals. Their passion, expertise, and unwavering commitment are the bedrock of our mission to promote safe, sustainable climbing practices. Together, we can embrace the spirit of stewardship and ensure that the joy of climbing remains synonymous with respect for nature and the communities we serve.

Cheers,

Nate Liles
Development Director
American Safe Climbing Association



"My beginnings as a hardware steward started around 2020 in Darrington Washington. I had spent a couple of weeks of the pandemic on a climbing rampage and had partaken in a highly memorable ascent of the bolted climb Penny Lane which had been severely damaged by rockfall. My partner and I reached out to members of the local climbing community were slowly brought into the fold of the Darrington stewardship scene.

Curt Veldhuisen, Matt Perkins and Mark Hanna were some very early mentors of mine in Washington. All three of these men are long storied first ascensionists, active stewards, and have put a lot of time into modernizing the many 1/4" button heads in Darrington. It was Curt who taught me how to place bolts the next summer and took me along for my very first FA on the north side of Exfoliation Dome.

This passion followed me down the coast when I moved to Joshua Tree for my first season of guiding in the Mojave. I was still extremely interested in crag stewardship and began to look for online resources to educate myself in the processes of rebolting. By the end of the 2022 spring season I had applied for my first bolt permits and was introduced to Mark Wagner of the Joshua Tree Rebolting Project.

The Summer of 2022 I was able to complete my first large scale project, which was the restoration of the damaged bolts on the North Buttress of 3 O'Clock Rock in Darrington. In 6 days of work I was able to restore Penny Lane, as well as fix damaged hardware across 4 of the main climbs on the buttress.

In 2023, I began my heavy involvement with the JT Rebolting Project and began to really hone my craft as a bolt replacer. Mentoring under and working alongside folk like Kevin Powell and Mark Wagner has been an incredible experience, and has allowed me to become much more efficient in my efforts. As time moves forward, I have begun to look towards tackling larger projects and hope to continue my efforts of educating future hardware stewards."

2

DAVE BINGHAM



I started climbing in Vermont after purchasing a rack of pitons and some first-generation British wedges when I was in high school. My very first rock lead was a probable FA at the lichen-covered Bolton Notch in 1976.

As a dishwasher and janitor at the famous Trapp Family Lodge, I fell in with a gang of Yosemite xc ski instructors including the Bard brothers, Gene Drake and Audi Joerg. Audi was an old man then, but god-like to me, having done early FA's in Smugglers Notch and the Gunks with Fritz Wiessner. Gene Drake told the story how he pissed off the locals in Tuolumne for rap-bolting – a decade before it was a thing. I guess I related to his renegade approach and willingness to break the rules rather than just follow the crowd.

I learned early on that my short, stocky frame was not perfect for dancing up hard moves, but worked great for brutally hard work and endurance athletics. My ADHD made me bored quickly, and after climbing the standard routes at City of Rocks, Idaho, I started seeing new route potential everywhere – something that still sticks with me.

I haven't kept count, but I've established at least 400 routes in my 50 years of climbing, a time in which bolts and fixed anchors evolved a lot. Some of those early bolts were the "ticking time bombs" we all dread. My first re-bolt was probably the classic Strategic Defense at the City, which originally sported ¼ taper bolts. Yikes!

My passion is still making new routes, a dirty, dangerous, technical and strenuous job. It's no shock that only around 2% of climbers do first ascents! Re-bolting has a lot of the same elements, but without the ego satisfaction of being the first. I've re-bolted a handful or two or routes, far fewer than the true re-bolt heroes. But we are inching ever closer to upgrading Idaho classics at City of Rocks, Snake River Canyon and the Fins.

This year I look forward to assisting pioneer Kim Miller is restoring the hallowed Greg Lowe route Infinite, at City of Rocks.

The ASCA has been the driving force in supporting the re-bolting efforts nationwide, and I am so grateful for supplying the continually evolving hardware to make it possible. Thanks to Greg, Nate and all the worker bees out there!

JAY ANDERSON

I am a lifelong outdoor enthusiast enjoying retirement. Climbing is my late-life passion - I started at age 58 and have spent much of the past 4 years falling off rocks and plastic.

I started sewing with retired ropes in late 2022 and created designs for belts, gear slings, guitar straps, neckties, and baskets. I gave items to family, friends, guides, and caretakers of our public lands. Many people suggested selling sewn goods, but I was not interested in Etsy, tax records, and websites.

Three events triggered the Will Sew For Bolts idea. I donated a basket and set of slings to a CW HOG benefit auction in Idaho which raised \$200. My mentor, Rick Picar, asked his crew for donations to ASCA to re-bolt Castle Rock State Park, CA. When I took guitar and cello straps to music stores to capture photos, the owners demanded to purchase straps.

While driving home from the music stores, I had the idea to trade sewn goods for donations to ASCA and the name "Will Sew For Bolts". The tagline is "help us turn old ropes into new bolts" which captures the dual mission of saving ropes from the landfill and supporting ASCA's nationwide re-bolting effort.

The model is simple. Donations go straight to ASCA. The donor sends me their receipt. I send the goods to the donor. No money comes to me. I donate all the materials, labor, and shipping.

The first donation was from one of the music store owners for a guitar strap and matching belt. I wasted a couple months trying to get donations from the musician crowd with no success. I turned to the climbing community and launched Facebook and Instagram pages in July which coincided with ASCA's 100% match. Supporters helped spread the word, and donations started rolling in. Donors requested banjo straps, camera straps, bracelets, yoga straps and dish baskets. Santa even ordered a horse halter in purple! By year-end WSFB had driven \$5366 in direct donations to ASCA - about \$8400 counting the July and December matching funds. That's a lot of bolts and a lot of rope starting a second life

My home crags are the sandstone formations atop the Santa Cruz Mountains. My climbing and guiding education, under Rick Picar, was focused on the inappropriate, deteriorating, mechanical fixed anchors in the sandstone. During that period, excellent work was done in Sanborn County park to re-bolt popular crags with stainless steel glue-in bolts. The safety improvements were dramatic, the rusty glue-covered eyesores were gone, and everyone is more efficient at these popular climbs because they can trust the bolted anchors.

Last summer, Will Sew For Bolts partnered with Bay Area Climbers Coalition and Castle Rock Climbing School to re-gain momentum on re-bolting Castle Rock State Park. I now have many hours of experience struggling to remove all sorts of weird metal and even placed a few glue-ins. It is analogous to backcountry skiing where you spend 1-2 hours skiing uphill and 3-5 minutes skiing down. I also pick up trash, help people find the anchors, retrieve stuck ropes, and I'm a moderator on our local Facebook climbing page.

3



4

BIGHORN CLIMBERS COALITION



2023 was a big season for the Bighorn Anchor Initiative! We updated hardware on 122 routes in the bighorn basin! 114 routes in Ten Sleep Canyon, 2 routes in the Eastern Bighorns @ Piney Creek, and 6 routes in Cody.

BCC Board Member and Ten Sleep Resident Aaron Townsley joined the BCC in early 2022 transitioning into the role of Bighorn Anchor Initiative Director by late summer / early fall of that year. Now having boots on the ground in the canyon the BAI under Aaron's direction with the help of a few volunteers and a longtime local steward Louie Anderson we were able to update 114 routes in the canyon in 2023 alone.

Every route on this list received a pair of Climbtch lowering Hooks replacing many dangerously worn existing lowering systems and supporting the #LowerOffInitiative. Many of these routes received new SS mechanical and or glue in bolts both at the anchors and or protection bolts as needed.

These numbers include 2 big project days where we inspected and updated every single route at 2 of the most popular crags in the canyon Crag 6 & Grasshopper Wall / Sector D'or et Bleu. The BAI has plans for more large project days like this in 2024 to tackle all the routes in need at The Superratic & Downpour Walls along with many other areas & routes.

The BAI would like to say a HUGE THANK YOU to the following volunteers Nick Wheicht, Brad Burns, Patrick MacLane, Louie Anderson, Terry O'Neill, Mike Snyder and Bighorn National Forest Lead Climbing Ranger Ryan Sorenson for their help.

The BCC 501c3 Non Profit Organizations that operate entirely on donations from the climbing community! Please consider donating to both organizations to support more of this work.

bighornclimbers.org/membership

5

WASHINGTON CLIMBERS COALITION



The Washington Climbers Coalition is a volunteer-led 501(c)(3) non-profit organization who, since 2004, has been working to make Washington a better place to climb through advocacy, stewardship, and education efforts. We work with land managers, as well as local and national outdoor advocacy groups such as Climbers of Color and Access Fund, to protect the places we love to climb.

One of our long term stewardship projects is our Bolt Replacement Program (BRP), formerly called WARP (Washington Anchor Replacement Program). This is an ongoing project to replace aging and unsafe fixed hardware on routes across the state of Washington.

We provide hardware, tools, and technical support to our volunteers who then do the work. In 2023 our volunteers replaced bolts throughout Washington, including work at Index, Washington Pass, Calendar Butte, The Exits, Frenchman Coulee, and The Tieton.

As an all-volunteer organization, we have very low overhead. All of the donations we receive are channeled directly into education, stewardship and advocacy programs, and we are committed to making sure that all of our expenditures are closely focused on our mission. We invite your participation and we depend on your support.

washingtonclimbers.org

2023 FINANCIALS

The ASCA is a small nonprofit but still manages to be the leading organization in the USA working to replace and maintain the fixed hardware resources that climbers rely on. We have only two paid employees and much of our success in this massive undertaking comes from the huge number of crag stewards volunteering their time across the country.

We remove the large financial burden of anchor replacement by granting material directly to local climbing organizations and individual stewards. This allows funds raised locally by those organizations to be focused on other stewardship needed at our crags: trail work, proper human waste disposal, signage, tools, etc. Centralized hardware disbursement also contributes greatly to standardizing the types of hardware we use at our crags with very long lasting solutions for the local environment.

We also provide specialty tools for extracting old bolts and placing new ones, along with education to get more stewards working at their local crags and to ensure a high level of craftsmanship when replacing old bolts with high quality new ones.

Most rock climbing in the USA is free to access for climbers, but there are significant costs to maintaining these areas as hardware ages and traffic increases. All avid climbers should consider the wealth of climbing resources we have available to us and help to shoulder the burden of maintenance however they can. Together we can ensure the sustainability of these areas and keep climbers safe at the crags.

Please consider supporting our work, along with sharing our mission and impact with other climbers who rely on fixed anchors regularly.

REVENUE

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS & GRANTS:

\$200,835

EXPENSES

BOLTS, ANCHORS, LOWER-OFFS, TOOLS, ETC.

\$118,636

SALARIES/EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

\$83,317*

*This includes all of our education work, fundraising, shipping/receiving, volunteer training, web development/ digital platform maintenance, payroll taxes, etc. Both of our employees are also active rebolters but this is unpaid volunteer work.

ADMIN, POSTAGE, WEB/CRM FEES, ETC.

\$11,446

TOTAL EXPENSES

\$213,399

ASSETS

\$66,930

1998 —
 2024

HISTORY

The ASCA was founded by Chris McNamara in 1998 with the goal of replacing old 1/4" bolt anchors on Yosemite trade routes but rapidly expanded to many different American climbing areas with aging hardware. Chris remains on the ASCA board today and has contributed tremendously to the replacement of aging anchors across the US and in many international climbing areas.

The ASCA is the leading organization tackling the massive challenge of upgrading our numerous early sport climbing venues with modern bolts and lower-off anchors, along with maintaining hardware at more modern areas that see large amounts of visitation.

68,614
BOLTS

18,130
ANCHORS

21,628
LOWER OFFS

2023

DONORS

The ASCA accomplishes a tremendous amount of hardware replacement and maintenance thanks to our volunteers and donors. The following list is of individuals and organizations who made exceptional financial contributions in 2023. Our work would not be possible without your generous support, thank you!

\$10,000 +

Angelo Family Foundation
Anonymous
Chris & Tor McNamara
Movement Climbing

\$5,000 +

Salesforce.com, Inc.
Sklar Family Fund
Steve Dodd
Lightner Sam's Foundation of Wyoming
Ratliff Fund

\$2,000 +

Adam Nguyen
American Endowment Foundation
Annie Ashenfelter
Central Wyoming Climbers Alliance
Carolina Climbers Coalition
David W. & Rebecca A. Harrison Fund
Kenton and Amy Brown Fund
The Maxfield-Hatchett Fund of Bessemer Giving Fund
Ray Strods
Southern Nevada Climbers Coalition

\$1,000 +

Boas Family Fund
Carl Sampurna
Dave Daly
David E. Smith Charitable Fund
Deborah Wallach
Ellen Sebastian DAF
HC and RJ Fund
Jeremy Fenn
Jesse Scarborough
Larkin Family Charitable Account
New Mexico Mountain Club
Matt Enlow
Moonstone Charitable Fund
Parisa Tabriz and Emerson Stewart Family Fund
Petzl Foundation
Philip Spinelli
Rick Spanel
Smith/Dixon Fund
Wendy Laakmann
William Dooris

\$500 +

Anonymous
Aramis Martinez
Busey Brews LLC
Cameron McMillan
Daniel Melvin
Denis O'Connor
Dwight Harts
Federico De Giuli
Helen Brookman
Helen & William Mazer Foundation c/o L. Berkowitz
Jay Anderson
Jereme Ransick
John Hovell
Jonathan Lindquist
Julie Haas
Krystal Davis
Leslie Choong
Lindsey Pearson
Michael and Suzanne Magalis Charitable Fund
Michael Stricklan
Mike Schmitt
Peter Munther
Phil and Julie Zigoris DAF
Phyllis Ponte
Todd & Donette Swain

Did we miss something? Email nate@safeclimbing.org with any questions or corrections.

THANK YOU.

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