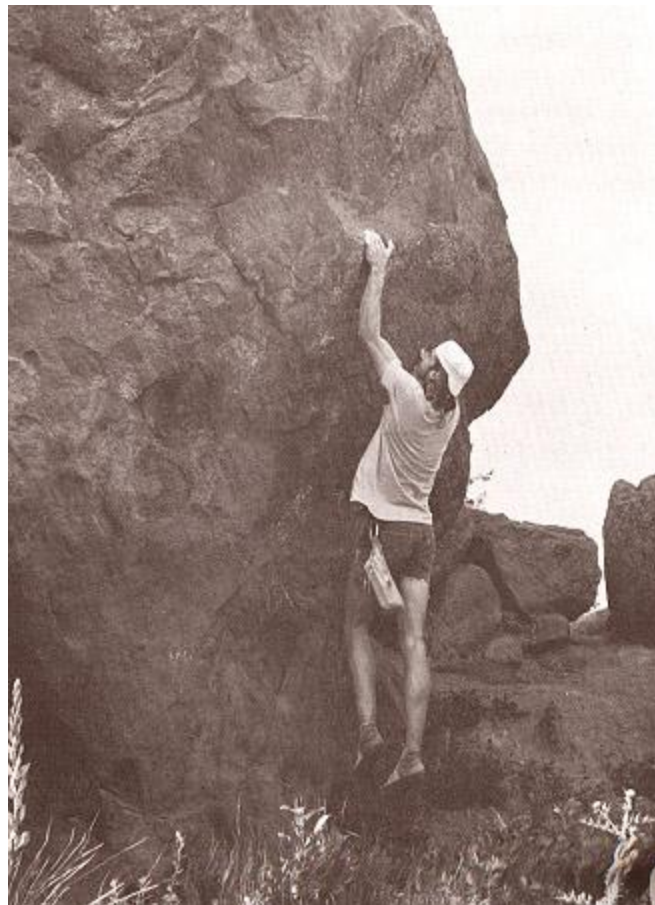


Flagstaff Mountain Bouldering Tours

Connecting Land Managers and the
Bouldering Community



Flagstaff Mountain Introduction

- Flagstaff Mountain is one of the oldest continually climbed on bouldering areas in the country with documented problems going back to the 1950s
- It is situated directly adjacent to the urban environment of the climbing center of Boulder and within a short drive of over 2 million people
- A paved road goes through the bouldering areas, making access very easy

Flagstaff Bouldering I

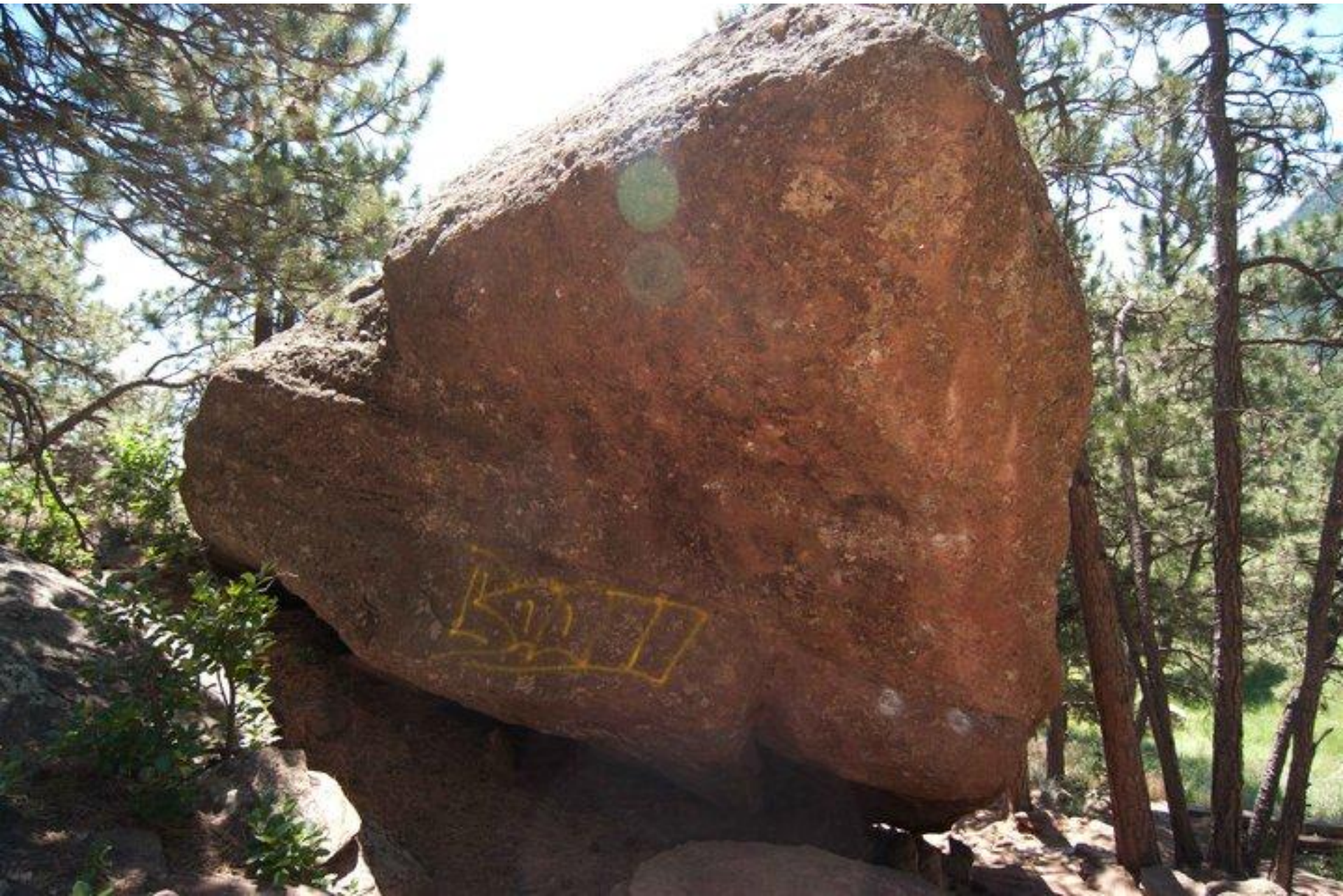
- The bouldering occurs on a variety of small outcrops and boulders composed of Fountain sandstone, situated on a steep hillside populated with Ponderosa pine trees
- Problems are typically short, very sharp and are climbed on throughout the year

Flagstaff Bouldering II

- Flagstaff Mountain has no guidebook in print at this time, only an electronic resource and word of mouth and older guidebooks
- Flagstaff Mountain bouldering is one of the most important yet underappreciated resources on the Front Range offering hundreds of problems of all grades, climbable year-round

The Situation

- Climber impacts have become more apparent, with a proliferation of social trails, pronounced erosion, greatly reduced vegetation, chalk build-up and spills
- Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) has been developing a management plan in the so-called West Trail Study Area (TSA) with implementation in progress



Starting the Process

- Trained as Volunteer Trail Guide with OSMP to act as a monitor and ambassador for OSMP while walking and climbing on OSMP lands
- After considering the example of the guided tours at Hueco Tanks, I proposed that OSMP offer guided tours of Flagstaff Mountain bouldering with the following goals in mind....

The Purposes of the Tours

- To promote accurate knowledge of problems and areas among local and visiting climbers
- To promote responsible climbing practices while bouldering at Flagstaff.
- To counter perceptions of Flagstaff bouldering as inferior or trashy, perceptions which lead to abuse by visitors
- To foster closer relations between OSMP and the local climbing community, in particular boulderers, with the impending adoption of the TSA plan

It took a while...

- My contacts at OSMP were enthusiastic but:
- There were legal issues, especially regarding liability for injury or worse while conducting the tours
- Language was created emphasizing that technical climbing or bouldering was not part of the tour and that no technical instruction would be provided

More details

- Emphasis throughout tour on environmentally sound bouldering practices
- OSMP Rangers to give their perspective



Results

- In the past year, I have given two tours, attendance around a dozen people, one in fall, one in spring. Enthusiastic reception overall
- I will be hosting another one in October of this year
- Enthusiastic buy-in from OSMP staff and rangers
- Familiarization with Flagstaff climbing landmarks for OSMP staff and rangers

Things to do differently

- Be more proactive on publicity
- Run two tours consecutively, upper areas one week, lower areas next week
- Get sponsors to contribute items to build interest
- Retain tour members email for future projects
- Debrief tour member via survey or other feedback