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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AORE to host a Climbing Wall Summit at the 2010 AORE Annual Conference

KEYSTONE, COLORADO – The Association of Outdoor Recreation & Education (AORE) will host a Climbing Wall Summit at the 2010 AORE Annual Conference in Keystone, Colorado on Saturday, November 13th from 8:00am to 10:00am in the Grey's Peak Room at the Keystone Conference Center. The Climbing Wall Summit will bring together a panel of climbing wall experts to discuss current issues relevant to the management of indoor climbing walls as they relate to best practices, industry standards, staff training and certification, facility management, equipment purchasing and inspection, facility management, insurance, risk management and structural inspection. The Summit will be facilitated and moderated by a recognized industry professional and is intended to provide the AORE membership with the opportunity to seek expert advice and interpretation of indoor climbing best practices. In addition, the Summit will provide the panelists with an exclusive look at the scope and influence of the AORE membership and our needs and issues as they relate to climbing wall management.

The intended outcomes for the Climbing Wall Summit are:

1. Educate the AORE membership on climbing wall management best practices and industry standards.
2. Bring the AORE membership and the climbing wall industry into alignment.
3. Set a baseline for what are acceptable practices and recommended strategies in the management and operation of indoor climbing walls.
4. Address common issues specific to climbing wall management among the AORE collegiate, university, military, and municipal recreation membership.

The invited expert panelists include representatives from Adventure Rock, American Mountain Guide Association, Angel Law Offices, LLC, Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education, Black Diamond Equipment, Climbing Wall Management LLC, Climbing Wall Association, Eldorado, Entre Prises, Great Trango Holdings, Inc., Nicos, Professional Climbing Guides Institute Professional Climbing Instructors Association, Petzl USA, Reb Gregg Law, Rockwerx, Spectrum Sports International, Stratus Insurance, Services, TruBlue Auto Belay, and Vertical Endeavors.

For more information on the AORE and the 2010 AORE Annual Conference, visit www.aore.org

AORE 2011 Conference
CLIMBING WALL SUMMIT
November 13, 2010
Morning OPEN Session

Facilitator: Tim Moore

Panel:

Rick Vance – Petzl
Chris Danielson – Trango
Steve Holmes – Eldorado climbing walls
Jared Wells – Eldorado Climbing Walls
Ed Crothers – AMGA

Pat Mackin – Nicos / Vertical Endeavors /
CWA
Guy deBrun – AORE
Jason Kurten – AORE
Bill Zimmerman – CWA



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Casey Newman – Trango / CWA
Jon Tierney – PCIA
Will Friday – PCIA
Cameron Allen – Stratus Insurance

Adam Koberna – Entreprise
Cody Sorensen – Spectrum Sports
Eric Olson – Adventure Rock
Rick Picar – PCGI

Rick Dawson – Hello

Tim – Intro and format of forum.

1. What are the AORE Climbing Wall Committee's thoughts on the future of climbing management?

Jason – I was the chair of the climbing wall committee when the white paper was established. Recounted a brief history of climbing history and made recommendations for practices to the AORE BOD. It asked that AORE follow the CWA standards. It also asked to begin recommending climbing wall certifications for staff.

2. What are the trends in state government regulation of indoor and recreational climbing facilities, and how do those trends affect the AORE membership?

Bill – There is increasing regulatory tendencies occurring across the nation. Usually generated from a high profile accident that attracts a great deal of attention by the state. [EXAMPLE given] What happens often is a regulatory rule making process afterward. State agencies write rules that bypass the law making process and incorporate definitions about climbing walls that affect the industry. The effect is that we become regulated by a set of rules not originally intended to pertain to us. The rules can be very cost prohibitive for AORE members. Some states do not make distinctions between amusement parks and climbing walls. It's a state by state decision.

Ed – I commend Bill for his attention to following this.

Will – This information alone is worth you supporting the CWA.

Jason – We are not immune as AORE members. It is determined by who is interpreting the regulations in your state.

Bill – If you hear about an incident in your state, I need to hear about it. We can go in and help the regulatory agencies understand the situation. If you have to be tested or trained, this clearly puts it into a recreational sport category. If you only clip into an auto system, go up and go down, it's hard to say that it's a recreational sport. The industry as a whole needs to consolidate its efforts. In MA a large number of entities banded together to send a message to the regulatory agencies.

Cameron – I'd like to clarify on the example Bill spoke to. If the inspector had performed a proper inspection, that incident never would have happened. The cable was rusted.

Bill – You can report incidents to www.climbingwallindustry.org



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Jon – Directors of facilities really need to have an idea of what’s happening on the floor. We need to report to Bill what’s occurring. This is similar to the 15 passenger van issue that hit us broadside.

Jason – This includes near misses that may indicate deficiencies in the training.

Rick – Everything Bill has said pertains to the whole industry. If you as a user group band together and follow one internal regulatory set if offers a great protection if brought to legal view.

Cody – Due to training, you all should know how to perform the necessary inspections.

Bill – The structure guidelines by the CWA is superior to any state regulations. We need to follow these so we can self regulate as an industry.

3. Is the industry and/or University climbing gyms moving toward certification for all wall staff?

Guy – There are 856 CWI certified staff and 43 providers. If you look at recent studies, the general AORE is performing in house training and not certifying. The reasons for this are: Certifications are new [2007], cost of doing so is prohibitive, and there’s a philosophy that folks feel they are sufficiently educated to perform their own training. Where does regulated training end? Do we have training for hikes next?

Ed – You have to look at your staff to determine your needs. If you have staff that is just working through school, maybe good internal training is sufficient. But if going into the industry, they should get the certs.

Will – At the student level, they can develop professionally. It also helps students develop an ability to have dialogue with directors due to a better understanding of the practices.

Bill – There are a lot of people who are unconscious competent. They need guidelines/standards to follow. This isn’t the people in this room. It’s from the folks who are not in the know. My goal with these industry standards will allow self instruction which can be more economic. I also wanted it to create open competition to provide the training, but following the same set of standards across the board. With multiple standards, it confounds the issue. My goal is to have this occur in the next three years.

Casey – As we are here discussing, it represents an interest to make this occur.

Will – As the PCIA we are in support of the standards and would like to work with other providers to harmonize standards sooner than three years. From a cost perspective, programs need to understand there is a cost associated, but we are going to try and keep costs down.

Jon – We need to understand that clients deserve to have a uniform set of practices performed by facilities. We have an opportunity in this industry to help clean up our educational practices to do this. I’m in favor of having a national standard of practices so that we know staff has the same basic set of skills upon training. The question revolves around length of course. It should be based on curriculum content, not time. How long it takes is less relevant. There is a benefit to having a third party



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oversight, by a variety of any medium. There is a cost, but I would suggest that it's an investment. An investment in education and advocacy. Encourage your students to commit to this as well, as costs are minimal.

Jason – There is a model for this already accepted by directors. It is the aquatic pool. We need to deliver a product that clients are prepared to receive. It is easy to answer a question of training by a client by demonstrating a national certification.

Guy – I'm not sure if we need to have provider certs as it negates a lot of the experience and training we have done personally.

Tim – I wonder what academics are doing to embed these trainings in their programs?

Eric – These standards help protect us by self regulating.

AUDIENCE: The pool is different than a wall in that most people are familiar with swimming. A climbing wall can be a completely unfamiliar environment.

Will – These trainings are not designed to take a complete beginner and certify them. It should be done over time.

Bill – I agree, experience needs to be in place before just certifying.

AUDIENCE: You cannot equate this to a wild. Med model, but it seems you are trying to.

Bill – Certification is a credential. If you need experience to rise to the level of competency there are a variety of ways to do this.

Jason – Pools started this process 100 years ago. Over the last ten years at A&M students have started demonstrating a more familiar competency with climbing.

Ed – Back to the wild. Med. model., 15 years ago some folks didn't know what a WFR was. Now OB and NOLS require this for staff. It may be that these certs are coming down the pipe for the climbing wall industry. We want to self regulate this.

4. Do climbing wall managers need to have an outside vendor conduct a climbing wall structural inspection on a regular basis?

Pat – I believe they should. It's something that is going to protect us. Meeting a standard.

Tim – How regular of an interval?

Pat - The jury is still out on that.



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Bill – These standards are voluntary. My first advice is to follow the OEM instructions first. That's definitive. If wall manufacturers designate a time, that's what you need to follow. If nothing is written, we say 2 years for outdoor walls and 4 years for indoor walls. This was determined by looking at various engineering standards, etc. This is also easy for the state regulators to swallow.

Guy – We can follow the practices ourselves without needing regulations. Walls are like buildings, they are not going anywhere. My builder says it's not going anywhere.

Jon – I agree with Guy.

Will – Staff can perform their own inspections just like they do their own personal equipment.

Bill – We need to make sure they understand there is a difference between daily inspections and engineering structures. You may have to follow state laws here.

Rick – Equipment should follow a regulatory PPE inspection regime determined by manufacturers.

Casey – There is a grey area where the wall ends and the equipment begins.

Rick – I agree with Casey.

Bill – We define the wall by what the manufacturer leaves behind.

Tim - Who says the wall is defined this way yes, who says no? **[Folks raised their hands with an even amount of yes and no's]**

Jon – When we get called to do training, folks need to understand that we are not there to do an inspection. We need to educate our community to this point.

5. What is being done by wall manufacturers or hold manufacturers to standardize the production of climbing holds in order to create products that are safe to use on highly textured climbing walls. Are there torque specifications that can be developed? What about certified testing standards for holds, just like carabiners or gear?

Adam – Testing standards, torque, etc. we will meet these if they come from CWA. We do tests on our gear. In designing walls, we are responding to your requests. In holds, we have done the same thing. Folks want certain things in holds as demonstrated by your purchasing patterns.

Jared – I agree. Polyurethane seems to be the way the industry is going.

Chris – Not all urethanes are the same. The trick for buyers is to be aware that climbing hold manufacturers open doors all the time. Know the company's history and if they have product liability



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insurance. It's up to the buyer to know what they are buying. Route setters need to know what they are using.

Casey – In the CGA, the old CWA, we decided that urethane was less available. But we felt it was unrealistic to come up with a global program to determine standards. With technology it's coming easier to do so. But I feel the market should be able to figure itself out.

Tim – As a route setter what criteria do you look at for holds?

Chris – When buying new holds, smash two holds together. If they chip, they'll do that on the wall. As for standards, I don't know if this will occur for holds, as each wall is different. Different material holds work with different material walls. It's all about feel.

Adam – If standards are developed, any current hold manufacturer could follow these standards. None of us are afraid of standards.

Tim – Can you speak to design changes in holds?

Jared – It's about understanding your needs in a collegiate setting.

Adam – Everyone is more educated now. In the beginning clients did not know what bouldering was. Now they have a better understanding. It used to be a mystery. We love it. Clients want functionality.

Jared – We are asked to design into existing facilities. Keep pushing for this, as we are getting better at designing like this.

Chris – You need to look at where your sport is going. I feel climbing gym functions are going to enter collegiate settings. When building a wall, build with the future in mind.

Casey – In regards to holds design, Europe has standards.

Adam – Germany in particular is very advanced in their design criteria. We are building to these standards or subsets of the standards.

AUD - Andrew Miller, Appalachian state: We had a student swab a hold and develop a culture in the science lab. The results had a variety of illnesses within the swab. We take steps to educate and maintain our facilities, but can you offer suggestions.

Chris – There are no standards to cleaning protocol. There are a variety of methods. I have only heard of one incident where a wall decided to take all of the holds off and wash them. I'd be interested in hearing practices or experiences folks have.



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Cody – Your management practices need to address this. Throw it in your training.

AUD - Eliot Howard, UTSA: A study was performed about hospitalized injuries at climbing walls between 1990 – 2007. The results stated that climbing is more injury prone than other rec sports. I've always felt we had higher perceived risks than actual. Can you speak to this?

Bill – This is the result of the popularity of bouldering. Frequency has increased, but they are minor. It is a manner of informing our audience of taking personal responsibility. We are seeing this increase.

Ed – There are inherent risks in what we do. I encourage folks to not use the word “safe” in your materials. Safe means without harm.

Rick – We are not allowed to use the word safe at Petzl. Climbers can be different beasts. Outdoor climbers generally have a clear assumption of risk. Indoor climbers may not have a clear understanding of risk.

Casey – The general public does not have a clear understanding of risks. I agree that bouldering is the cause of the increase in injuries in the industry.

Chris – Fall training is important in this. If you are looking at building, I feel a uniform landing surface is important.

AUD - Ted Masaouwa: Do you differentiate inspection standards for walls constructed from different materials?

Steve – The CWA has standards in place. The walls we design come with their own inspection protocol.

AUD - Jeff Keenan, UW Stout: What is the recommended life spans of helmets?

Rick – We have a recommended life span on textile, not metal, of up to 10 years. Metal is an indefinite life span. This pertains to our products. Others have different timeframes. Shelf life is a better term than life span.

Tim – What is the shelf life of regular use?

Rick – It's difficult, because there are so many environmental and use variables. We are asked this a lot, but it depends on who is using it and where and how. My advice would be to get trained in inspecting your equipment.

Will – Seek out the personal protection training.

Rick – Petzl provides this training.



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AUD - Ty ..., Oregon State: If a wall is defined by what is left behind after manufacturing, do builders need to reconsider of what is left behind, holds, anchors, etc.?

Adam – There are a lot of reasons how we draw the line. Sometimes we have to hand you equipment because construction times don't coincide with wall completion. We feel the skin of the wall is the line for us.

Steve – We take the line out to the wall hanger. We include bolt hangers as part of the structural part of the wall. We do not see it as a piece of personal equipment. We do not allow clients to add bolt hangers.

Tim – What is your inspection protocol for your walls?

Steve – Depends on the wall. Each wall has its own standard inspection protocol. We agree with the CWA regarding inspection protocol by third parties.

Bill – When we conduct inspection training we stop at the textile equipment. We focus on the structural inspection.

AUD - Pat Langford, SUNY Colgate: We are building a new rec center, the administration does not understand wall building protocol. How can I approach them to make sure the wall built is appropriate for climbers?

Adam – Any builder can build what you want. We don't like building lame walls. We are given a box of what we can do – budget, framework, etc. This usually limits us a great deal. You all have to fight for the design with your administrators. Don't let them dictate what's cool. We deal with the same architects time in and time out and they still make the same errors.

Jared – I agree with Adam. Fight. Also, engage your builders at the beginning and educate your administrators.

Tim – There are colleagues that have accomplished good spaces. Use these folks as resources.

Chris – You have to figure out who are the right people to talk to. Sometimes you may only have a couple of minutes to speak to the administrators. Prepare ahead by talking to builders and prepare a one page report.

Tim – Get your committee chairs to do site visits and go climbing to understand it better.

AUD: Need to remember who the end user is as well. Involve them in the discussion and planning. It will allow you to get the product you want.

AUD - Josh Norris, Oregon State: You need to go to the end user and discuss functionality and cost.



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AUD - Brian Sheedy, Whitman College: Some of you are first timers to AORE, we would like to know what can be done to strengthen the relationship between you all and AORE members?

Rick P. – We need to provide you all our newsletters and email lists. We are here to learn and grow with your community. We are primarily dealing with outdoor guides.

Eric – Some folks feel there is a big gap between commercial gyms and collegiate facilities. I don't feel it is very different.

Cody – I was brought in as an auto belay specialist. You all don't use this equipment as much. It's great to see you all in the room.

Adam – Knowledge, folks have become much better educated since my time with AORE. I would like to see more integration between CWA and AORE.

Cameron – Having organizations work together to develop risk management is going to support the industry as a whole.

Will – We've seen good probing questions to training providers. Our organization has grown directly as a result of being involved with AORE.

Casey – The community needs to realize that we are more alike than dissimilar. We may have different opinions, but need to come together and not territorial.

AUD - Ben..., Colorado State: Without a standard to replace textile materials, how do you convince administrators to replace these things?

Rick – To go to the table over litigation about equipment is going to cost a base minimum of \$75k. You can buy a lot of rope with this.

Ed – What can we do as a panel to educate your administrators?

Tim – As an administrator, if you share info like CWA guidelines or Petzl documentation that may help, or have them call me or the folks on this panel.

AUD -Geoff Harrison, Boise State: Thank you BOD and panel for participating in this.

Applause....

Tim – To the audience, how many have walls in your institutions? [Response: 90% +/-]

How many are planning to build in the near future? [Response: 15-20%]