



## **Cathedral Spires Cynical Pinnacle Reroute 2020-2022**



### **Overview**

In 2018 the Boulder Climbing Community's (BCC) trail program, formerly known as the Front Range Climbing Stewards (FRCS) set out to construct a full reroute trail to the Cynical Pinnacle at the Cathedral Spires Park climbing area. In Partnership with the Jefferson County Open Space (JCOS) this ambitious project was made a reality. After the culmination of close to 21 weeks of work stretched over three years the reroute was completed in the fall of 2022. Over the course of the 3 years, the BCC has worked with several organizations to complete this project including the American Conservation Experience (ACE) in 2020, the Southwest Conservation Core in 2021, and the Access Fund Conservation Team in 2022. The primary objective for this project was to design, map, and construct a full reroute of the Cynical Pinnacle trail due to the instability and deterioration of the existing trail.

## Project Synopsis

The Cathedral Spires Park climbing area hosts a handful of iconic climbs and formations that have a historical use of climbing long before JCOS acquired the land in the mid-nineties. The nine formations within the park boundary contain 95 published climbing routes with potential for new routes still available. The majority of the climbing appears to be focused on the Cynical Pinnacle formation, as it hosts various routes considered to be the best in the state including the Center Route, a 5.9 multi pitch climb that for the grade, is argued to be one of the best in the country.

The Original climbing access trails in the area were not designed beyond taking climbers up the most direct route to reach the base of the wall. Taking that into consideration, the step nature of the area, loose and eroding granite, and unstable soil, makes the trails unsustainable for current and future use. In 2018 the new reroute for the Cynical Pinnacle was proposed (**Figure 1**) and construction was to begin in 2020. Volunteers and various conservation groups were key to the completion of this large-scale project and the BCC has much appreciation to the partners and members of the community that gave their time and resources.

The goal for 2020 was to construct the initial 3,000 ft of trail, 1,850 ft of which JCOS trail crews would construct, leaving the remaining 1,150 ft for the BCC to construct. Due to the ambitious nature and numerous large-scale construction projects, an American Conservation Experience (ACE) youth corps crew was contracted to work for three weeks on this project. The BCC was responsible for assigning proper tasks for the ACE crew to accomplish as well as training them in best rigging practices and proper dry-stone masonry techniques. Many sections of the new reroute were located near existing historical quarries which allowed the crews to split stone efficiently (**Figure 2**) and move it short distances to the worksites. With the readily available stone, BCC and ACE were able to construct large stone structures such as staircases and retaining walls quickly, which allowed the crews to cover a lot of ground during the six-week work session. With the Covid 19 Pandemic beginning in spring of 2020, the BCC took proper precautions requiring masks and practiced social distancing whenever possible.

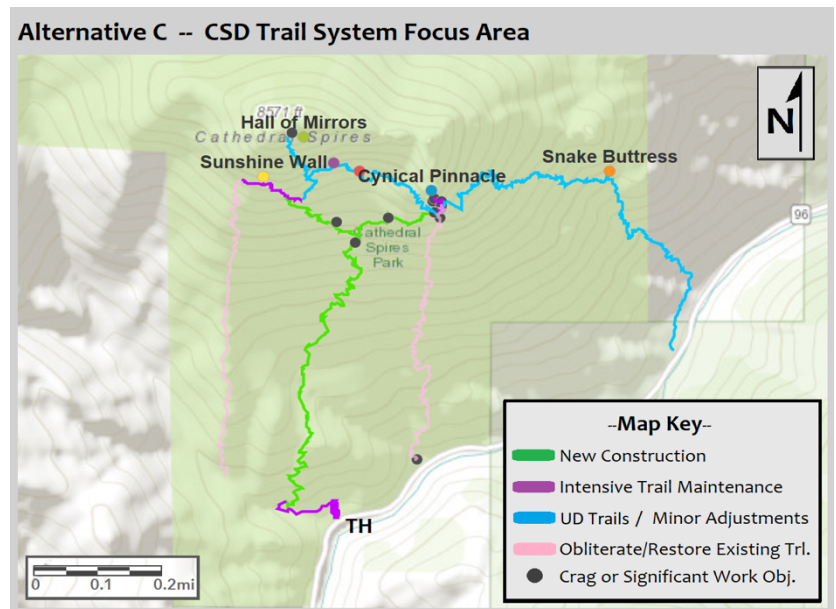


Figure 1: The green line shows the route of the new approach trail to the Cynical Pinnacle. The green line towards Sunshine Wall hasn't been built as a part of this project. (2018)



*Figure 2: Ace crew members learning to split stone using feathers and wedges (2020)*



*Figure 3: BCC and ACE crew members working together to split stone which then was transported by hand to the worksite (2020)*

In 2021, the BCC continued the work from 2020 with the goal to construct new trail to the junction between Sunshine wall and Cynical Pinnacle. This included 2,000 liner ft of new tread with 2 large scale stone work structures (**Figure 16** and **Figure 18**) and 6 smaller scale stone structures. Along with the stone structures, new tread was cut into the soil accompanied with mono tier retaining structures to provide support. Over the six weeks of work, the BCC completed the required sections with help from the Southwest conservation core for two weeks of the project. Via two weekend volunteer days prior to the Raptor Closures, volunteers cut a rough tread to the end of the trail, allowing BCC crews to focus on the stone structures. No longer working near the historical quarry site meant tracking down stone material to use as stone steps and hand carrying these rocks to the work sites. An additional challenge to this project was navigating the continuing presence of the Covid 19 pandemic. Crew members and volunteers wore masks while working in close quarters with each other (**Figure 4**).



*Figure 4: BCC crew moving a large rock with rock bar's with volunteers (2021)*



*Figure 5: BCC and SWCC crew rigging and moving a rock into place (2021)*



*Figure 6: SWCC crew member quarrying a rock for a stone structure (2021)*

In 2022, picking up from the work done in 2021, the BCC with help from the Access Fund Conservation Team finished the last sections of trail to complete the Cynical Pinnacle reroute. This included the crew having to hike up the 1.25mile trail with an elevation gain of close to 1,200ft every day for work for eight weeks. Three steep and technical staircases had to be built along with long stretches of cut tread with retaining structures. The Access Fund Conservation Team worked alongside the BCC for three weeks which was vital for quarrying rocks and building sections of trail. Staff from JCOP was also critical in completing this project with their help of clearing upright dead trees and having a staff member work with the BCC and learn technical rock building skills. With the completion of this trail, access to the Cynical Pinnacle is now safe and on durable surfaces which will prevent erosion and the impact climbers and hikers have on the area.



Figure 7: BCC crew member Chris helping volunteers move a large rock into place (2022)



Figure 8: BCC crew member Nate showing a volunteer how to quarrying stone for a staircase (2022)

**Project Outcomes**

Over the course of this completed project, the BCC has constructed 430 stone steps which will greatly increase the stability of the trail while helping hikers and climbers climb the over 1,200 ft elevation gain. The BCC also constructed over 2,263 square feet of stone retaining structure greatly reducing the impact of erosion of the trail and surrounding areas. In total the new trail reached 4,000 linear Ft. in length. More project outcomes and labor hours can be found below in **Table 1** and **Table 2**.

**Total Project Outcomes 2020-2022**

Table 1

Labor Type	Hours
BCC Trail Program	3,716.75
BCC Administrative Planning	150.25
Volunteer Labor	768
SWCC Labor	480
ACE Labor	840
Access Fund Conservation Team	330

Table 2

Project Outcomes	Amount	Unit
New Trail	4,000	Linear Ft
Stone Steps Installed	430	#
Retaining Structure	2,263	Ft <sup>2</sup>
Rubble Structure	443	Ft <sup>2</sup>
Rock Quarried	NA	Ft <sup>3</sup>
Rocks Moved via Rigging	251+	#
Rocks Moved by Hand	148+	#



Figure 9: Lower section Before (2020)



Figure 10: Lower section at the location of Figure 9. After (2020)



Figure 11: Through the historical quarry Before (2020)



Figure 12: Hardened trail through the historical quarry at the location of Figure 11 After (2020)



*Figure 13: Upper section through historical Quarry Before (2020)*



*Figure14: Stone steps built through upper quarry at the location of **Figure 13** After (2020)*



Figure 15: Step rocky terrain requiring technical rock structures Before (2021)



Figure 16: Rock structures constructed at the location of **Figure 15** After (2021)



Figure 17: Trees and step rocky terrain before stone structures were constructed Before (2021)



Figure 18: Large dead tree removed and replaced with large technical stone structures at location of **Figure 17** After (2021)





*Figure 19: The most realistic way to reach the base of the Cynical Pinnacle Before (2022)*



*Figure 20: One of the BCC's more challenging builds of this project. Having to cut through a narrow gap of slab on the left and rock formations on the right at the location of **Figure 19**. After (2022)*



*Figure 21: Where 2020's work left off Before (2022)*



*Figure 22: Building off of the work from 2020 beginning the first large staircase at the location of **Figure 21** After (2022)*



*Figure 23: Steep section of the project which would require stone steps and retaining structures Before (2022)*



*Figure 24: The first of three steep technical staircases built with stone steps and retaining structures at the location of **Figure 23** After (2022)*



*Figure 25: Rocky uneven surfaces where new tread will be constructed Before (2022)*



*Figure 26: Trail constructed with retaining structure supporting tread in location of **Figure 25** After (2022)*