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Comments: I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed measure to establish additional regulations on climbing route setting. This proposal, while well-intentioned, would impose an undue burden on both the climbing community and the Forest Service, creating barriers and regulatory demands that are disproportionate to the minimal environmental impact of climbing.

Climbing, as a sport, inherently has a very low environmental footprint, especially when contrasted with other outdoor activities. For instance, hiking, while a popular and seemingly benign activity, necessitates the creation of extensive trail systems. These trails can significantly alter natural vegetation and disrupt wildlife habitats. To mitigate this, hiking trails are deliberately limited and designed to minimize their environmental impact. Climbing, in comparison, is markedly less invasive at baseline and already incorporates intention for minimal impact. Climbing routes are not created haphazardly; they are meticulously planned and established with a profound respect for the natural environment. Climbers typically use existing rock faces, selecting those that are devoid of vegetation to avoid any potential harm. This careful selection process ensures that the integrity and beauty of natural rock formations are preserved, and any potential impact on plant life is minimized.

The climbing community's commitment to environmental stewardship extends well beyond the careful planning of routes. Our practices are designed to coexist with and respect local wildlife habitats. Climbing schedules and routes are thoughtfully arranged to avoid disturbing animal and bird nesting patterns, underlining our deep respect for natural ecosystems. This respect for nature is further exemplified by our adherence to the 'Leave No Trace' philosophy, a cornerstone of all respectful and sustainable outdoors enthusiasts.

Furthermore, climbers are proactive in conservation efforts, understanding that our privilege to climb comes with the responsibility to safeguard the environment. This ethos guides all our activities, ensuring that climbing remains a sustainable and low-impact sport.

The existing rigorous standards and regulations governing route setting already reflect this ethos. In regions where this new measure would apply, protocols for establishing and maintaining climbing routes are firmly in place. These include guidelines for installing and replacing bolts, as well as the careful cleaning and preparation of routes. Such practices enhance the safety of climbers and protect all users of natural spaces by preventing uncontrolled rockfall.

Considering these practices, the proposed regulatory measure appears disproportionate to the actual impact of climbing. It risks creating unnecessary hurdles and straining an already overburdened regulatory system, particularly in managing the maintenance of established routes. If implemented, this regulation could diminish the accessibility and enjoyment of outdoor climbing, a recreation that has long coexisted harmoniously with nature.

In conclusion, there is no justifiable reason to single out climbing for such stringent regulation. The proposal is unwarranted and counterproductive, failing to recognize the existing balance between the climbing community's activities and environmental conservation. I urge you to reconsider this measure in light of the demonstrated commitment of climbers to environmental stewardship and the minimal impact of our sport.

Thank you for considering my views on this important matter.