

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/10/2023 12:07:02 AM

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Comments: Greetings, my name is Benjamin Helms.

I have loved exploring National Forest land and Wilderness Areas for my entire life. As a child, this started as backpacking and hiking and transformed into climbing as a young adult. From Linville Gorge in North Carolina to the Cache La Poudre Wildness in Colorado, I have, respected, and actively participated in protecting these areas. I feel so strongly about their protection, that I've devoted my career to working with the Forest Service and Park Service, performing field studies on fire ecology in Fort Collins and rare and engaged plants in Asheville. I believe that land management agencies like the NFS and NPS always strive to walk the line between environmental protection and resource use and enjoyment. This is why I am deeply disturbed by the FSM 2355 Climbing Opportunities #ORMS-3524. Despite stating that "climbing is an appropriate use of NFS land" this proposal would make it extremely difficult to engage in climbing activities and would actively harm the character of wilderness areas. This proposal will force retreating climbers who are caught in an emergency or unable to top out to leave slings on trees and traditional protection to repel from routes. If the climbers can top out, they may endanger plant communities that are endemic to cliff ecosystems. This is why it is critical to allow the placement of bolted anchors which are inert, camouflaged, and much safer for the climber. Basing the use of fixed anchors on the USFS's Minimum Requirements Analysis is as good as banning anchors and their maintenance outright because the USFS is stretched much too thin with far too little funding to prioritize an expedient analysis. This could lead to dangerous conditions for climbers and encourage climbers to place fixed anchors without approval which is bad for the climbing community, forest service, and the environment.

As a climber, environmentalist, and public servant, I encourage the Forest Service to reconsider this proposal and include climbers in the decision-making process because we all share the same priority, protecting and enjoying our beautiful wilderness areas.