

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/20/2023 12:30:38 AM

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Comments: I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed legislation that aims to ban bolting/fixed anchors in wilderness areas. As an avid supporter of outdoor recreation and a dedicated member of the climbing community, I believe that such a ban would have far-reaching and negative consequences for climbers' safety, the preservation of Wilderness character, and the rich climbing legacy of our nation.

Fixed anchors are an integral part of climbers' safety systems and have been employed responsibly for decades without compromising the principles outlined in the Wilderness Act. The existing climbing policies, which allow judicious use of fixed anchors, have successfully struck a balance between safety and environmental preservation. A nationwide ban on fixed anchors is an unreasonable measure that contradicts the longstanding practices and authorizations by federal agencies.

One of the primary concerns is the potential safety issues that may arise from prohibiting fixed anchors. The regular maintenance of fixed anchors is a responsibility that the climbing community takes seriously. Imposing unnecessary obstacles to this maintenance process can create safety hazards and impede critical decisions that often need to be made in the moment.

Moreover, prohibiting fixed anchors poses a significant threat to the exploration of Wilderness areas. Climbers should be allowed the flexibility to make in-the-moment decisions when navigating complex vertical terrain. Restricting fixed anchors not only obstructs appropriate exploration but also risks erasing some of the world's greatest climbing achievements and our nation's climbing legacy.

In addition to these concerns, I would like to address the issue of restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands. This approach is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

While I understand the importance of preserving Wilderness character, I believe that a collaborative approach is key to finding a solution that accommodates both the concerns of the climbing community and the goals of environmental conservation. The climbing community is eager to work towards a compromise that ensures safety, environmental sustainability, and the preservation of climbing routes.

I urge you to reconsider the proposed legislation and instead focus on developing climbing management policies that strike a delicate balance between safety, environmental conservation, and the preservation of climbing routes. The climbing community is open to engaging in a dialogue with policymakers to explore alternative solutions that meet the needs of both parties.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I hope you will take into consideration the concerns raised by the climbing community and outdoor enthusiasts who value the delicate balance between recreation and environmental conservation. I look forward to a collaborative effort that ensures the continued enjoyment of our nation's Wilderness areas for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Perry Gowdy