

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/24/2023 10:38:32 PM

First name: Aaron

Last name: Morgan

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear United States Forest Service,

I am writing as an avid climber and an advocate for responsible outdoor recreation to express my concerns about the proposed ban on bolts and fixed anchors in wilderness areas managed by the USFS. This policy change raises significant safety concerns for climbers and contradicts the longstanding relationship between climbing and wilderness exploration. I would like to present the following points for your consideration:

1. **\*\*Safety and Compliance with the Wilderness Act\*\***: Fixed anchors are not only essential for climber safety but also do not violate the provisions of the Wilderness Act. Historical climbing policies have allowed the use of fixed anchors in wilderness areas for decades, striking a balance between protecting wilderness character and facilitating unconfined wilderness climbing experiences.

2. **\*\*Consistency in Policy\*\***: The proposed blanket prohibition on climbing anchors in wilderness areas contradicts the USFS's own history of managing and authorizing such equipment. This sudden policy shift overlooks the established practices and understanding that have governed climbing in these areas for years.

3. **\*\*Maintenance and Safety Issues\*\***: Prohibiting fixed anchors could significantly compromise climber safety. The climbing community often undertakes the responsibility of maintaining these anchors. Limiting this practice could impede crucial safety decisions that need to be made promptly in climbing scenarios.

4. **\*\*Impact on Wilderness Exploration\*\***: The ban on fixed anchors unnecessarily restricts exploration in wilderness areas. Climbing often involves making immediate, informed decisions in complex terrain, and policies should support rather than restrict this aspect of wilderness adventure.

5. **\*\*Preservation of Climbing Legacy\*\***: A prohibition on fixed anchors could jeopardize America's rich climbing heritage, potentially erasing historic and world-renowned climbing routes. Policies should protect and preserve these routes, not contribute to their loss.

In light of these points, I urge the USFS to reconsider the proposed ban on bolts and fixed anchors in wilderness areas. A policy that acknowledges the importance of climber safety and the value of wilderness exploration is essential.

**\*\*Request for Non-Wilderness Climbing Management Policy\*\***

I am writing to address the policy concerning the establishment of new climbing routes on non-Wilderness lands managed by the USFS. The current approach, which restricts new routes to "existing climbing opportunities", is problematic for several reasons:

1. **\*\*Enforceability and Clarity\*\***: This restriction is practically unenforceable and creates confusion among both land managers and climbers. It lacks clarity and does not provide a definitive framework for either party to effectively manage or engage in climbing activities.

2. **\*\*Need for Flexibility in Policy\*\***: The non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for establishing new anchors. Such an approach allows for the growth and evolution of climbing while ensuring that any necessary restrictions to protect cultural and natural resources are based on thorough analyses and evidence.

Given these concerns, I propose that the USFS revises its policy to allow for the establishment of new climbing routes in non-Wilderness areas, with the provision that such activities be monitored and restricted only when there is a clear, evidenced need to protect specific resources.

Thank you for considering these points. I believe that a balanced, clear, and enforceable policy is in the best interest of both the climbing community and the preservation of our natural and cultural heritage.

Sincerely,

Aaron Morgan