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First name: Mark

Last name: Rafferty

Organization: Black Hills Climbers Coalition

Title: President

Comments: Dear USFS,

As representatives of the Black Hills Climbers Coalition, we are writing to express our collective concern regarding the recent draft recreation management directives proposed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). These directives have raised significant apprehensions within our climbing community, particularly in relation to the classification of fixed anchors as prohibited "installations" in both designated Wilderness areas and, notably, across all climbing locations in the Black Hills.

First and foremost, we wish to convey our strong desire to actively participate in the decision-making process surrounding these proposed directives. The Black Hills Climbers Coalition is deeply invested in the responsible and sustainable enjoyment of our region's climbing resources. We believe that our collective knowledge and experience within the climbing community can contribute valuable insights to the discussion.

Our primary request is for representation and partnership at the table during discussions and decision-making processes concerning these directives. Having a seat at these discussions will allow us to articulate the concerns and perspectives of the Black Hills climbing community directly. We understand the need for a balanced approach that addresses safety concerns while ensuring the continued enjoyment of climbing activities in the Black Hills as per the agency management directives.

The potential impact of these directives extends far beyond safety considerations; it also influences the accessibility and sustainability of climbing throughout our region in addition to the loss of revenue from rock climber based tourism. By actively involving us in the decision-making process, we can work collaboratively towards solutions that preserve both the safety of climbers and the diverse climbing experiences that make the Black Hills a unique and cherished destination.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to the opportunity for open dialogue and collaboration. Please consider our request for inclusion as we collectively navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by these proposed directives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The Black Hills Climbers Coalition Board:

Mark Rafferty | President

Brandon Emery | Vice President

Jim Slichter | Treasurer

John Lang | Secretary

Peyton Rafferty | Publicist

Chris Hirsch | Chair of Bolting Repair Committee

Ron Yahne | Co-Member at Large

Jason McNabb | Co-Member at Large