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Comments: I climb at the Stone Hill crags in the Kootenai National Forest near Rexford, Montana, more than 50 days a year and, in conjunction with the Northwest Montana Climbers Coalition, I have replaced more than 50 permanent anchors on existing routes.

Stone Hill has about 650 climbing routes -- more than 500 of them were established prior to 2003. Anchor standards have changed since 2003; the American Safe Climbing Association (who has donated close to 100 anchor sets to the NWMTCC) in 2024 considers nearly three-quarters of Stone Hill's anchors outdated and encourages that they be replaced.

The proposed legislation for Wilderness Areas says "existing fixed anchors and fixed equipment in wilderness may be retained pending completion of a Minimum Requirements Analysis, as funding and resources allow." Applying this standard to National Forests (as well as Wilderness) can potentially have deadly consequences.

When I'm at Stone Hill, I typically bring a concrete rotary hammer drill with me and replace anchors as I see fit, "updating the safety" of these old routes, replacing steel 3/8 in. "washer stack" anchors with 1/2 in. stainless steel hanger and chain sets that will last for 50+ years.

Requiring an MRA for anchors in the Kootenai National Forest would greatly impede the efforts of the Northwest Montana Climbers Coalition to update these existing routes and make them "safety compliant" to a 2024 standard. It is very scary to think that this essential safety work might not get done if the "funding and resources" of the National Forest are not available.

Climbers have been doing ALL of the physical work to make Stone Hill one of Montana's premier climbing areas since the mid-1970s; the Rexford Ranger District has been integral in allowing climbers to "manage" these crags and, as of 2023, climbers continue to have a great working relationship with the district. I encourage the forest service to allow this standard to continue in National Forests and Wilderness throughout the country.