

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/3/2024 7:00:45 PM

First name: Misa

Last name: Heater

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please allow properly maintained climbing anchors on public wilderness lands. They are much safer than hastily rigged systems and a required feature for the descent of a cliff. If they are not maintained then it will be much more difficult and dangerous for a climber to descend from a cliff, leading to many more injuries and rescue missions in the future. The Access fund has this to say about fixed climbing anchors, and I agree with them wholeheartedly. I have used many fixed anchors myself throughout my years of climbing and have never been bothered by a tiny bit of metal or webbing that can hardly be seen at ground level.

Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands 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.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.