

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/5/2024 1:12:03 AM

First name: Aaron

Last name: Knoop

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

I recently heard about the draft policies to make fixed anchors, such as bolts, pitons, slings, etc, prohibited in America's Wilderness Areas. I wanted to write to express my concern with the change in these policies and to encourage a change in the proposal. I and my family have enjoyed climbing in multiple locations across this beautiful country for many years and look forward to our trips every year to experience a new and exciting location - this year takes us to Joshua Tree and New River Gorge. When planning for these trips, I always look for those climbing routes that have fixed anchors as they are a critical aspect to climbing safety that these new policies will impose unnecessary obstacles to. Fixed anchors are critical to climbing safety and replacing old or damaged anchors, or installing new anchors to enhance safety, do so much for my family's enjoyment of our wilderness areas. Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, an important 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.

Please consider allowing the installation and maintenance of fixed climbing anchors to proceed as it has for several decades and help us protect America's rich climbing legacy by not classifying climbing anchors as prohibited installations in Wilderness Areas. Please also refrain from restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands as it 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.

Thank you,
Aaron Knoop
Mason, Ohio