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First name: Mead

Last name: Anon

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I'm highly concerned about the potential ban on climbing anchors in the proposed policy. I completely understand that climbing is a high-impact sport that involves complex land management, trail management, and management of vertical surfaces as well. The sport is an important one not just to me but to America as well. It's got a rich history of heroes, athletes, and pioneers that will continue to evolve as the sport grows.

As the sport grows, the needs evolve as well. I believe that placement and replacement of fixed anchors should be regulated in partnership with local climbing coalitions and the relevant county, state, and national organizations. An outright ban will create a slew of problems that will affect and strain resources at all levels.

Nobody in the climbing community wants just anyone to walk up to a cliff and start drilling for fixed anchors. Local climbing coalitions have members who have experience with placement and replacement of fixed anchors to ensure that areas are not over-developed and when anchors are placed, that they are placed safely. With the growth of climbing, there are increased safety concerns with anchors because not everyone knows how to evaluate them for safety. As anchors age, they do need to be replaced with modern bolts and hangers to be sure that when these routes are climbed, they can be climbed safely. And whether or not they are perfectly safe, people will try to climb these routes, which I find highly concerning.

Ending the replacement of fixed anchors will eventually prove to be disastrous for the safety of climbers and put a strain on resources because old anchors will eventually cause wilderness accidents which involve complex and expensive rescues.

The Access Fund even provides grants to local climbing organizations to help fund the replacement of fixed anchors as part of a wide network of individuals who help maintain crags. Every local climbing organization spends countless hours cleaning up and doing trail work at crags, which helps everyone who uses wilderness areas.

If you have a look at places where land management and anchors are well-managed, you'll see that climbing can be effectively managed just like any other sport such as hiking, camping, or mountain biking. Hueco Tanks State Park is one of the most heavily managed areas and is a great success story of partnership with climbers and the state park. Areas such as Grayson Highlands State Park welcome climbers and help manage the climbing access and maintenance within the park. At the Red River Gorge, the Access Fund employs climbing stewards to help educate climbers on outdoor ethics while there.