

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/5/2024 4:06:14 AM

First name: Nikita

Last name: Alexeivich

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

As an engaged member of the climbing community, I am writing to express concerns regarding the current policies on fixed anchors in both Wilderness and non-Wilderness areas managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS).

1. Impact of Authorization Process on Safety Decisions:

In climbing, safety is paramount, and critical decisions often need to be made spontaneously. Any process requiring authorization for fixed anchor maintenance must be streamlined to ensure it does not hinder these crucial in-the-moment decisions. Policies should be oriented towards encouraging safe anchor replacement, rather than risking the removal of established climbing routes.

2. Exploration in Wilderness Areas:

The prohibition of fixed anchors significantly impedes the exploration of Wilderness areas. For climbers, navigating complex vertical terrain requires the ability to make instantaneous decisions. Land managers should facilitate exploration in Wilderness by adopting policies that recognize the unique needs of climbing activities, thereby preserving America's rich climbing heritage and the integrity of world-renowned climbing achievements.

3. The Role of Climbing in Exploration:

Climbing is more than a sport; it is an integral part of exploration, a value deeply embedded in the history of the United States. Curtailing climbing activities, particularly the establishment of new routes, is at odds with this spirit of exploration.

4. Consequences of Prohibiting Bolting and Fixed Anchors:

A blanket prohibition on bolting and the addition of fixed anchors is likely to lead to unintended and counterproductive outcomes. Such restrictions may not deter these practices but could instead promote reckless and unsafe climbing methods. Moreover, this approach risks creating discord within the climbing community and with external stakeholders.

5. The policy limiting new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" in non-Wilderness lands is problematic. This approach is not only unenforceable but also likely to sow confusion among both land managers and climbers. It is crucial that non-Wilderness climbing management policies continue to support the establishment of new anchors, barring specific findings that warrant restrictions to protect cultural and natural resources.

In conclusion, it is imperative that climbing management policies be developed in a manner that respects the needs and safety of the climbing community, encourages responsible exploration, and protects our climbing legacy. Thank you for considering these perspectives in your policy-making process.

Sincerely,

Nikita Alexeivich