

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/5/2024 5:26:36 PM

First name: Michael

Last name: J

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a rock climber with 25 years of climbing experience in multiple locations in the US, Canada and Europe. One of the hallmarks of climbing is self-sufficiency and safety. Many historic, famous and irreplaceable climbing destinations exist on land covered by the Wilderness Act and are a foundation of American climbing. The continued existence of fixed anchors is essential to preserving this legacy and encouraging responsible enjoyment of federally protected land.

Fixed anchors often form the core of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that have permitted use of fixed anchors for more than 50 years will continue to protect Wilderness areas while providing for low-impact 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. Climbers from around the world have safely relied on these anchors for many years. Climbing anchors do not have an unreasonable impact on the wild nature of our protected lands.

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. Fixed anchors are often a life saving aspect of wilderness climbing and are not created needlessly.

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.

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.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael J