

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/5/2024 6:09:14 PM

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Comments: I am concerned about the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service proposed prohibition of fixed climbing anchors on their managed public lands. Rock climbing is enjoyed by thousands of people in the United States, and the economic benefits of this activity have been well-documented (see Shaw and Jakus 1996; Grijalva et al. 2002a and 2002b). Banning the use of existing anchors and placement of new ones would result in the loss of economic benefits, and very likely, the loss of lives. Studies by myself and others have demonstrated that climbers are cognizant of risks, and rely on anchors and rock climbing protection to safely descend from the top of cliffs and mountains. More deaths in climbing can be attributed to unsafe descents and the use of poor anchors than to climbing ascents. For example, old-school anchors include nylon webbings tied off to trees and rock features, and these pieces of webbing age and ultimately fail. In contrast, new permanent anchors are durable and rarely fail. I strongly urge the NPS and USFS to reconsider the proposed bans because the economic losses would be substantial, and result in additional risk of death and injury.

References

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