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First name: Aaron

Last name: Gibson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS,

My name is Aaron Gibson, I live in Norman, Oklahoma and have been an avid hiker, backpacker, mountaineer, and climber for about 35 years. I relish the opportunity to get outdoors and explore our wilderness and non-wilderness National Forest lands. I practice many types and forms of climbing depending on what the terrain and season offers. Temporary and fixed anchors are an essential part of my safety system. I rely on them for both safe ascents and descents. It has never been my view that anchors, as they relate to climbing are illegal or prohibited "installations" under on Forest Service lands. In fact, such anchors have a long history in the annals of exploration and mountaineering. Removing them would fundamentally damage the essence of the experience of climbing. Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues and impose unnecessary obstacles to the maintenance of fixed anchors. Replacement and maintenance of fixed anchors has always been a responsibility of the climbing community. Such 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.

It is important for the community of people who want to venture into the vertical realm to have access to Forest lands that continue the historical use of fixed anchors. 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.

I support, the continued use of fixed anchors as part of America's rich climbing legacy. I hope you take these comments to heart when considering changes to Wilderness policy.

Sincerely,

Aaron Gibson