

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/6/2024 8:49:06 PM

First name: Josh

Last name: Pugel

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to comment on the draft of the Authorization Process for Fixed Anchors in Wilderness. As an avid NPS and USFS hiker and climber, and someone who values the wilderness character and solitude provided in these areas, I understand the need for preservation. Along these lines, the climbing community also understands and values these qualities that the NPS and USFS preserves. Along those lines, I also value the safety and expansion of explorable territory that installations like bridges, roads, fixed cables, and fixed anchors provide to me. Fixed anchors have been a part of the climbing legacy that America has played a large role in and they are an essential safety system to preserve climbing within wilderness areas. Fixed anchors are a protected and non-restricted form of installation under the Wilderness Act, and as such, it is unreasonable to impose subjective policies to restrict and even remove fixed anchors that are generally invisible to the general population. If this guidance is the norm, then signs, roads, bridges, cables, and all installations should be subjected to the same strict consideration, even at the cost of the safety and wellbeing of those who use the parks and Forest Service land. Ultimately, that is untenable and not ideal for the use of these lands. Restricting new fixed anchors to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is not enforceable and will create confusion for land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new fixed anchors unless analyses determine fixed anchors and climbing should not be allowed in order to protect cultural and natural resources.