

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/9/2024 5:44:36 PM

First name: Patrick

Last name: McMurdo

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to provide my comments and feedback on the proposed directives related to climbing management on National Forest System lands, as requested by the USDA Forest Service. As an avid climber and a passionate advocate for responsible climbing practices, I believe it is essential to strike a balance between preserving our natural resources and providing opportunities for climbers.

First and foremost, I would like to express my concern regarding the restriction of establishing new climbing routes solely to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-wilderness lands. This approach may prove unenforceable and create confusion among both land managers and climbers. I urge you to reconsider this aspect of the proposed directives to ensure clarity and flexibility in managing climbing areas.

Climbing is not just a sport; it is a unique way for individuals to connect with nature and challenge themselves physically and mentally. It serves as a platform for personal growth, self-discovery, and fostering a deep appreciation for our natural surroundings. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain opportunities for new anchors.

I appreciate the USDA Forest Service's commitment to seeking public input and developing guidance that aligns with the 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act's directives. The proposed directives emphasize the importance of climbing opportunities on NFS lands and seek to balance the interests of climbers with the preservation of natural and cultural resources.

I support the proposed directive's approach, which acknowledges climbing as an appropriate use of NFS lands, including wilderness, when conducted in accordance with applicable laws and Forest Service directives. The requirement for climbing management plans in wilderness areas, where needed, is a responsible step to address potential resource impacts or use conflicts while ensuring climbing access.

Recognizing fixed anchors and fixed equipment as installations under section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act is a sensible approach, as it allows for case-specific determinations by Forest Supervisors regarding their placement or replacement. This flexibility ensures that the minimum necessary steps are taken to maintain the area's wilderness character and allow for primitive or unconfined recreation.

Furthermore, I support the encouragement of special use permits for climbing opportunities, as they enhance visitor access and education on low-impact climbing practices. Such permits can help strike a balance between responsible climbing and resource protection.

In conclusion, I believe that the proposed directives are a step in the right direction for climbing management on NFS lands. However, I urge the USDA Forest Service to carefully consider the concerns raised regarding the restriction of new climbing routes and to ensure that these directives strike a fair and balanced approach that benefits both climbers and the natural environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my input, and I look forward to seeing the final directive that reflects the values of responsible climbing and environmental preservation.

Sincerely,

Patrick