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First name: Savanna

Last name: Deger

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Humans have always been apart of Wilderness and this idea that only trails and pack animals should be permitted in wilderness is a purest and elitist mindset. Even with something "low impact" like hiking in wilderness, there are permanent structures in wilderness that enhance this outdoor recreation and lesson the impact of the environment- signs, bridges, infrastructure from maintaining trails (retention walls, wood, etc.), cabins, metal fire rings, and commercially run tent cabins such as the Yosemite High Sierra Camps. These things are not necessarily bad, as they can enhance the visitor experience in Wilderness and connection to nature.

Climbing is another way to recreate and experience Wilderness and outdoor places. With bolts, anchors, pitons (which are often historic as most climbers do not place new pitons), and other fixed gear, it helps keep climbing safe. Climbers often want to experience Wilderness and other remote locations and do not cause further damage than a trail post, a sign, horses or other people. Most of the time, fixed gear cannot even be seen because it is so small and does not pose a risk to the Wilderness Act.

First ascensionist do not place unnecessary bolts left and right- they are placed to keep climbers safe where tradition gear (like camalots, nuts, and other traditional gear) cannot be placed. Bolts are thoughtfully and intentionally placed to use the least amount and to also keep the climber safe. Additionally, the bolts themselves are heavy, and the equipment to hand-drill this hardware in also heavy and not enjoyable to carry long distances.

Bolts keep climbers safe in remote places like Wilderness.

id increasing usage of wilderness climbing routes, prohibiting service and installation of pitons, bolts, slings, and other fixed hardware would create a worsening public safety issue.

Rappelling is the primary cause of death in climbing accidents. When climbers rappel, they rely on a single anchor, and anchor failure during rappelling often results in death.

Prohibiting the maintenance of anchors or placing bolted anchors increases the risk of anchor failure.

Without the ability to leave behind equipment or modify existing slings or pitons, climbers will be encouraged to trust the existing gear left exposed to weather over the years.

The proposed directives FSM 2355 will exacerbate an already significant threat to the climbing public who use USFS wilderness to climb.

Aging hardware makes climbing routes and descents less safe, which causes more accidents. This would increase demand on already overworked volunteer Search and Rescue (SAR) organizations.

The new directives will make existing routes more hazardous by discouraging maintenance of bolts and anchors.

Volunteer SAR organizations are overworked because of increasing usage of wilderness. Proposed directives FSM 2355 would create even more demand on SAR.

Rappelling off of bolts or fixed anchors is often the only option for climbers to self-rescue before activating SAR resources.

The proposed directives would prevent climbers from safely retreating from routes without SAR rescue, for

example during inclement weather

The language in the new directives does not clarify whether volunteer SAR members would be permitted to place and determine the location of emergency rescue bolts.

Section 2355.03 paragraph 7 states that local government officials may determine if hardware is necessary for emergency purposes. However, volunteers typically make this determination with SAR groups. This language opens the possibility that SAR volunteers might be acting illegally while performing normal rescue operations. Volunteer SAR operates the majority of rescue operations in the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

Bolts and fixed rappel stations prevent resource degradation in fragile alpine environments.

Prohibiting fixed anchors encourages climbers to rappel off of trees and bushes, which can eventually kill cliffside vegetation.

Bolted anchors reduce trampling and social trail creation in delicate alpine environments by directing all climbers to a single location.

Proposed directive FSM 2355 will encourage the creation of dangerous new routes.

Discouraging bolt placements will make certain belays more dangerous.

On wilderness routes, bolts are already placed sparingly. In situations where no removable gear can be placed, bolts are placed to prevent catastrophic falls. Prohibiting these bolt placements will lead to more catastrophic falls in the wilderness and more SAR rescues.

FSM 2355 has no plan to support increased staffing to document all existing hardware and enforce these regulations.

Many routes require rappelling in some form.

Rappels typically require leaving behind some form of equipment

In the Wind River Range (Shoshone National Forest) climbers are encouraged to only leave behind gray, rock colored slings, and to clean-up any old slings left behind under boulders.

Even this hardly visible, self-regulated form of descent would be not permitted under the proposed directive.