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Title:

Comments: Request to Reconsider Prohibition of Fixed Anchors in Wilderness Climbing Areas

Dear United States Forest Service,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my concern and advocate for the reconsideration of the recent guidance policies that prohibit the use of fixed anchors in Wilderness climbing areas across the country. I believe that allowing judicious use of fixed anchors is not only in line with existing climbing policies but also crucial for the safety of climbers, preservation of Wilderness character, and the continued legacy of climbing achievements.

Fixed anchors play a vital role in climbers' safety systems and have been an integral part of climbing practices for more than half a century. It is my understanding that these anchors do not fall under the category of prohibited "installations" as outlined in the Wilderness Act. Therefore, adhering to existing climbing policies that have permitted and managed fixed anchors for decades would be a prudent approach to both protect Wilderness character and facilitate primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

The recent addition to the arguments emphasizes the unenforceability and potential confusion arising from restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands. This policy may create challenges for both land managers and climbers, as it is essential to maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine that climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources. Striking a balance that considers both the preservation of these resources and the enjoyment of climbers is crucial for sustainable land management.

The prohibition of fixed anchors through new guidance policies seems unreasonable, especially when federal agencies have historically allowed, managed, and authorized the use of such anchors. Creating unnecessary obstacles to regular maintenance, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community, raises concerns about the safety of climbers. Critical decisions often need to be made in the moment, and any authorization process should not impede these decisions. It is essential to manage fixed anchor maintenance in a way that encourages safe replacement without risking the removal of climbing routes.

Additionally, the prohibition of fixed anchors obstructs the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers should consider allowing climbers to navigate complex vertical terrain with the flexibility to make in-the-moment decisions. This approach is necessary for the responsible and sustainable exploration of Wilderness areas.

Lastly, the prohibition of fixed anchors poses a threat to America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy should prioritize the protection of existing routes from removal, ensuring the preservation of historical and cultural aspects of climbing.

I kindly request that you reconsider the recent guidance policies and work towards a balanced approach that prioritizes safety, preserves Wilderness character, and upholds the legacy of climbing achievements. I appreciate your time and attention to this matter and look forward to a positive resolution that benefits both climbers and the preservation of our Wilderness areas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Grayson Galisky