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Organization:

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Comments: To the US Forest Service,

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed changes to fixed anchor use and new route development on non-Wilderness lands managed by the US Forest Service. While I support responsible outdoor recreation and environmental protection, I believe the proposed restrictions are overly broad and impractical, ultimately limiting access and hindering responsible stewardship of public lands.

Firstly, restricting the establishment of new climbing routes solely to "existing climbing opportunities" poses significant enforceability challenges. The ambiguity of this definition will undoubtedly lead to confusion and inconsistency amongst land managers and climbers alike. Moreover, it stifles the natural exploration and expansion of the sport, hindering the discovery of new climbing areas and routes on non-Wilderness lands.

Instead of a blanket restriction, the US Forest Service should maintain existing opportunities for the development of new routes with fixed anchors unless and until careful analysis reveals potential harm to cultural or natural resources. This data-driven approach allows for responsible stewardship while ensuring continued access and enjoyment of climbing opportunities on public lands.

Furthermore, the proposed restrictions seem to disregard the long-standing and successful collaboration between the climbing community and the US Forest Service in managing fixed anchor use. Climbers have a vested interest in protecting the environment and have consistently demonstrated responsible stewardship practices, including anchor maintenance and impact mitigation. This collaborative approach allows for the responsible use of fixed anchors while minimizing environmental impact.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the economic and social benefits that climbing brings to local communities. Responsible climbing development can attract tourism and generate revenue, contributing to the economic well-being of communities near climbing areas. Additionally, climbing opportunities provide valuable recreational outlets for individuals and families, promoting physical activity and mental well-being.

Therefore, I urge the US Forest Service to reconsider the proposed restrictions on fixed anchor use and new route development on non-Wilderness lands. Instead, let us continue to foster a collaborative approach that balances responsible enjoyment of climbing with the protection of our natural resources. This approach will ensure the continued sustainability of both the climbing community and the precious public lands we share.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nick Birnie