

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/12/2024 8:26:42 PM

First name: Anthony

Last name: Wong

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a rock climber that routinely climb in USFS land and designated wilderness area. I am extremely concerned about how the development of such guidelines may harm American climbing. As an avid outdoorsperson and immigrant, I fell in love with the US because of the boundless wilderness and recreation potential on this land, while being relatively close to modern civilization. Thanks to this I picked up rock climbing after moving to America. Therefore, I am extremely concerned about how the development of such guidelines may harm American climbing.

In my local area (New Hampshire) the climbing development and management have been really successful. We have a diverse array of climbing styles and ethics allowed freely, precisely because there is not much top-down government intervention. We work with USFS, local land owners and conservation groups directly. So far it has been working well and I don't understand the need of top-down managements. It is against the valuable American ethos of self-governance.

Despite climbing being exponentially more popular in recent years, it will never be as popular as other mainstream outdoor activities (biking, hiking, scenic driving, etc.). The ecological impacts, even in per-participant basis, is likely to be smaller as most popular climbing area are close to the road. Local trail building/erosion prevention (which local climbing associations are more than happy to do) would suffice and the area of land affected by climbing is quite limited in comparison to much longer hiking trails. So the argument of "minimizing ecological impacts" is almost a straw man. In the case of protecting local fauna and flora and cultural heritage, climbers have been very obedient to area closures (e.g. no one really climbs at the Main Cliff at Rumney during Peregrine closure).

The word "minimum requirement" is especially concerning. A lot of "sports climbing" is in heavily travelled (much more so by other user groups rather than climbers) wilderness area (e.g. Red Rock in Nevada). If the word "minimum requirement" is interpreted by so anti-climbing management body, the whole Red Rock sports climbing could disappear, which is a huge blow to American climbing. Even for traditional climbing, bolts and bolted anchor are often not "necessary", but useful to reduce impacts and improves safety. If climbing has to be "managed" or "regulated" at all, I don't see the reason of enforcing a top-down "fixed hardware" committee rather than strengthening and democratizing the current bottom-up approaches.