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First name: Alison

Last name: Feinberg

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS,

I am writing in opposition of prohibiting installing or replacing "permanent" anchors or equipment in Wilderness areas. I am a lifelong lover of and frequent visitor to wilderness areas. I chose where I live for the past 20+ years explicitly for it's access to wilderness. I fully support many regulations that limit activities to protect the wilderness character in these areas. However, as a lifelong climber, I do not see how fixed equipment on rock climbs interferes with the wilderness character of a place. Rock climbing and alpinism are historical uses in our nation's wilderness. Equipment such as pitons and bolts make these activities safer and even possible. The requirement that any equipment be placed by hand (something I support) limits where these will be found- only where necessary, given how labor-intensive it is to place them. Perhaps it is useful to imagine this equipment is like a bridge on a trail over river, something that is acceptable in wilderness to make passage safer for those who wish to explore wild places.

Here are other thoughts on the matter:

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.