

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/15/2024 4:20:49 PM

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Comments: Dear USDA Forest Service,

I am writing to provide input on the proposed directives related to climbing management on National Forest System (NFS) lands, specifically the addition of section 2355 to the Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2300.

As an avid rock climber, the freedom to access wilderness and National Service Lands for climbing is of immense importance to me and my fellow climbers. These lands not only offer unparalleled climbing experiences but also foster a deep connection with nature. The ability to access these areas for rock climbing is a fundamental aspect of our recreational activities, deeply intertwined with our appreciation and respect for the natural environment.

The inclusion of fixed anchors and equipment in climbing activities on NFS lands is a critical factor in ensuring safety. The use of such equipment significantly reduces the risk of accidents and the need for rescues, thereby minimizing the impact on the resources and personnel of the NFS. Safe climbing practices enabled by these installations allow us to engage in our sport responsibly, respecting the integrity of these natural areas while ensuring our safety.

The proposed directive's emphasis on aligning climbing opportunities with land management objectives, natural and cultural resource protection, and the responsibility to Indian Tribes is commendable. It reflects a balanced approach to outdoor recreation, ensuring that climbing activities are harmonious with the overarching goals of preserving and protecting NFS lands.

To retain authorization of the placement or replacement of fixed anchors and equipment in wilderness areas is very important and we wish to retain the right to replace anchors and bolts to ensure that the areas that are currently established can still be accessed and safely climbed.

The approach recognizing the unique characteristics of each wilderness area and ensuring that climbing activities are tailored to maintain their pristine nature is commendable but I would like to strongly advocate that all areas that have already been established fall into a category of active stewardship where climbers can replace bolts and anchors as needed to maintain safety and at least equal access and the ability to climb in those areas as we have now.

I appreciate the Forest Service's efforts in seeking public input and look forward to a positive outcome that supports climbers and the areas that fall into this category.

Thank you,

Ben