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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Brian Kevitt and I am a rock climber. I am also a voter. I am writing you today in opposition to your proposed policy to erase safe access to climbing in America. Unfortunately, I have started to witness an uptick in removing access to lands specifically in regards to outdoor activities by land managers in cities, counties, statewide and now nationally. I fail to understand how limiting safe access to these areas will inspire Americans to protect these lands. If you remove activity access people will no longer take ownership in these areas like I do as a climber. When people do not have access and take ownership they will not go out of their way to protect the land. They will also not vote in favor of spending for these areas which affects not only the lands we want to protect but those that protect them, (meaning USFS employees).

I would like to remind you that 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. Secondly, 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. Third, 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. Fourth, 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. Additionally, 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. Finally, 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. As a voter and an American, I am demanding that you reconsider you proposed plan. Thank you.