

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/16/2024 2:11:41 AM

First name: Dimitri

Last name: Bevc

Organization:

Title:

Comments: As an American climber with over 47 years of experience making ascents in U.S. Wilderness Areas throughout the country, I am voicing my opposition to the draft policies that would prohibit fixed anchors. These policies would be unsafe, leading to more rescues, and effectively unenforceable, criminalizing climbers, who as a group have been some of the best stewards of wilderness and staunch conservationists.

Here's a few points to consider:

*Fixed anchors, crucial for climber safety, fall outside the definition of "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Decades of existing policies, allowing judicious anchor use, effectively protect wilderness character while enabling primitive and unconfined climbing experiences.

*The recent proposals by federal agencies to establish broad-based restrictions on fixed anchors within designated wilderness areas represent a significant departure from long-standing practices of authorization, management, and active installation of such anchors. The unreasonableness of this abrupt policy shift merits further scrutiny and open dialogue.

*Prohibiting the installation of new fixed anchors in wilderness areas could jeopardize climber safety by hindering the responsible maintenance of existing anchors, traditionally undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often require immediate action, and any authorization process for anchor replacement should not hinder such decisions. A system that incentivizes safe anchor replacement without risking the removal of established climbing routes is needed.

*Prohibiting fixed anchors impedes the responsible exploration of wilderness climbing areas. Land managers should recognize the necessity of in-the-moment decisions for climbers navigating complex terrain and allow for the responsible use of anchors within established guidelines.

*The implementation of regulations prohibiting the placement of fixed anchors within designated wilderness areas poses a potential threat to the continued existence of America's rich climbing legacy and could potentially lead to the removal of some of the world's most noteworthy climbing achievements. As such, the development of climbing management policies must prioritize the protection of existing routes from closure or alteration in order to safeguard the historical and cultural significance of these established lines.

*Restricting new climbs to existing lines on non-Wilderness land simply can't be enforced and will confuse both climbers and land managers. Climbing policies for non-Wilderness areas should encourage responsible bolting, with restrictions implemented only where cultural or natural resources require protection.