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First name: Britt

Last name: Crawford

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear US Forest Service Service,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed prohibition on installing fixed bolts in Wilderness areas. Fixed anchors play an essential role in climbers' safety systems and should not be classified as prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. I urge you to follow the existing climbing policies that have allowed the judicious use of fixed anchors for over half a century, as this approach will better protect Wilderness character while still enabling primitive and unconfined climbing experiences.

Implementing new guidance policies across the country to prohibit Wilderness climbing anchors is unreasonable, especially when federal agencies have historically allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades. It is crucial to consider the significant safety issues that would arise from such a prohibition. Regular maintenance of fixed anchors is essential for safety, and imposing unnecessary obstacles to this maintenance, by means of an authorization process, could jeopardize climbers' well-being. Critical safety decisions often need to be made in the moment, and any management of fixed anchor maintenance should prioritize safe replacement without risking the removal of climbing routes.

Moreover, prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers must recognize the importance of allowing climbers to navigate complex vertical terrain and make in-the-moment decisions. By restricting the establishment of fixed anchors, we limit the ability to fully experience and appreciate the unique challenges that Wilderness climbing offers.

Additionally, the prohibition on fixed anchors has the potential to threaten America's rich climbing legacy and even erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. It is of utmost importance that climbing management policy protects existing routes from removal. These routes hold cultural and historical significance, and preserving them contributes to the diversity and richness of the climbing community.

Finally, I must highlight that restricting the establishment of new routes solely to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion among land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should allow for new anchors unless there is a comprehensive analysis that determines that climbing must be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources. In conclusion, I strongly urge the US Forest Service Service to reconsider the proposed prohibition on installing fixed bolts. Instead, I encourage you to embrace the existing climbing policies that have provided a balanced approach to preserving Wilderness character while ensuring the safety and enjoyment of climbers. Let us work together to maintain the integrity of our Wilderness areas and protect the legacy of climbing for generations to come. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Britt Crawford