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Title:

Comments: Rock climbing has been a large part of my adult life. At this point, it is fair to say that being a rock climber is fundamental to my identity. Because I am also a mother-and my two now adult daughters grew up outside and alongside me and my husband as we climbed throughout California and the United States-rock climbing, in our family, has become a generational activity. As such, for more than 30 years, my husband and I have been conscientious about teaching best practices with regard to the safe enjoyment of this inherently dangerous sport as well as minimizing the unavoidable impact that accompanies even the most responsible outdoor adventurer be she a rock climber, mountaineer, fly fisher, hiker, nature photographer, trail runner or river rafter. (Pick your favorite outdoor pastime.)

I am writing today to urge you in the most strenuous manner possible to reconsider your latest draft climbing management guidance as it pertains to Section 2355 of the Forest Service Manual, and specifically with respect to your proposed policies for fixed anchors in both wilderness and non-wilderness. Calling fixed anchors "prohibited installations" not only runs counter to 60 years of policy and practice with respect to rock climbing in wilderness, but it also reinterprets the Wilderness Act. At the same time the United States Forest Service is proposing severe restrictions that will dramatically alter the very nature, let alone safe practice, of rock climbing across America, Congress is acting in conjunction with climbing advocacy groups to pass legislation that will protect climbing from the unnecessary restrictions and prohibitions currently proposed by the USFS. Congress understands the importance of protecting wilderness and non-wilderness climbing and is moving forward in legislating for the judicious placement and replacement of fixed anchors in wilderness and non-wilderness areas.

I ask the USFS to understand that its latest draft of the climbing management plan has the potential to erase some of this country's most iconic climbing routes and destinations and will endanger climbers' lives by exponentially increasing the associated risks. Climbers have learned to be good stewards of the land and have stepped in to help the USFS where its resources, both in personnel and budgets, have been limited. Please do not turn your back on this history of cooperation.