

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/18/2024 5:50:29 PM

First name: Stephen

Last name: Laney

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in response to the proposed directives related to climbing management on Forest Service (NFS) lands detailed in ORMS-3524 draft Directive. Rooted in my personal experience as a climber for the past seven years, I am expressing my thoughts and concerns about these changes.

Climbing has been a pivotal part of my life and my family's experiences. Climbing challenges me physically, emotionally, and intellectually; it connects me to nature and introduces me to a community of passionate outdoor enthusiasts. Living in Idaho Falls, I have had the privilege to participate in the vibrant climbing community and embrace the great outdoors in places like The Fins and City of Rocks, and throughout central and southern Utah.

The proposed directive, as it stands, may unintentionally affect not just my own climbing opportunities, but the broader climbing community. For many us, fixed bolts and gear play a critical role in our safety management strategies as we climb. They are not simply installations, but rather, an integral part of the sport that ensures we can return home to our families after each excursion.

In my personal experience, climbers and route-setters who I have had the pleasure to know and learn from, have always demonstrated a profound respect for the land. They go to great lengths to ensure the fixed gear they place is both safe and environmentally conscious, each contributing to the overall sustainable development of climbing routes.

While I agree that oversight and regulations are important, I firmly believe any such rules should be created with extensive input from experienced climbers and route-setters. Removing or restricting fixed bolts based on a broad policy, rather than a nuanced understanding of the sport, will likely result in compromised safety and diminished climbing opportunities.

I urge the Forest Service to work closely with Local Climbing Organizations and experienced climbers when formulating rules and restrictions. Decades of combined experience and expertise within the climbing community should not be overlooked in these discussions. The future of climbing on NFS lands depends not only on regulations but on respecting and upholding the values innate to the climbing community - that is, preserving nature, prioritizing safety, and fostering human connection.

The maintaining and development of new routes play a precious role in climbing's rich legacy. I believe we should be able to enjoy climbs safely, and at the same time, preserve the land for future generations. I hope my children and their children will have the chance to experience the deep connection to nature and exhilaration that comes from climbing. That is the picture of the future we should aim for.

Thank you for considering my comments. I understand the complexity of the task at hand, and I am appreciative of the steps the Forest Service is taking to include climbers in this process.

Sincerely,

Stephen Laney