

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/20/2024 4:23:00 AM

First name: Anon

Last name: Anon

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recently released draft policies by the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) that propose the prohibition of fixed anchors, including bolts, pitons, and slings, in America's Wilderness areas.

These proposed policies have the potential to overturn nearly 60 years of sustainable Wilderness climbing precedent and could significantly impact iconic climbing locations such as Yosemite, Rocky Mountain National Park, Joshua Tree, Linville Gorge, the Wind Rivers, Sierra Nevada, and many others. The classification of fixed anchors as "prohibited installations" in Wilderness areas poses a threat to Wilderness exploration, established routes, and the safety of the climbing community.

It is disheartening to witness these proposals hindering climbers' ability to replace old, unsafe bolts and obstructing the longstanding tradition of responsible climbing. This not only jeopardizes America's climbing legacy but also poses a safety risk to our community.

I would like to bring to your attention that concurrent legislation, namely the bipartisan Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act and America's Outdoor Recreation Act, is progressing through Congress with unanimous support. If enacted, this legislation would direct the NPS, Bureau of Land Management, and USFS to develop new national climbing management guidance that ensures safe, sustainable access to Wilderness climbing.

I urge you to reconsider the proposed policies and take into account the potential consequences on the climbing community and the rich tradition of responsible climbing in these areas. Collaborating with the climbing community and considering the outcomes of the pending legislation would be crucial in finding a balanced approach that respects both the conservation of Wilderness areas and the safety of climbers.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that restricting the establishment of new routes solely to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is impractical and unenforceable. Such a policy may lead to confusion among land managers and climbers alike. It is essential that non-Wilderness climbing management policies continue to allow opportunities for the placement of new anchors, with restrictions only being imposed when comprehensive analyses determine that climbing activities pose a significant risk to the protection of cultural and natural resources in a particular area.

This approach ensures a more flexible and informed approach to managing climbing activities while safeguarding the conservation goals of these areas. It is imperative that these policies strike a balance that serves both the climbing community and the preservation of our precious natural and cultural resources.

Thank you for considering this important aspect of climbing management policy.