

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/23/2024 6:12:18 PM

First name: Ilana

Last name: Newman

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Rock climbing on Forest Service and public land across the United States has been life-changing for me. So much peace can be found, high up on a rock face or mountain, looking out over the world. Being outside, and climbing, inspires me to protect our natural resources and be a better steward for the natural world.

Prohibiting fixed anchors in Wilderness areas will cause accidents and deaths - that's the bottom line. It will also make climbing even more inaccessible for those who want to learn and explore. Replacing old anchors is a safety issue, and does not affect the Wilderness experience except for those who may find themselves in danger without the ability to create or replace fixed anchors.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half-century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

When things go wrong in Wilderness areas, climbers need to be able to make decisions that are best for their safety, and the environment around them. Fixed anchors that are well maintained are more environmentally friendly than leaving non fixed gear that will eventually become trash, in the case of an emergency.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ilana Newman