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First name: Laura

Last name: Dawson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in support of the Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act, or PARC, which I believe should be included in the Expanding Public Outdoor Experiences or the EXPLORE Act. I would first like to emphasize that I am a frequent visitor to Santa Clara County Parks in California, because these are the parks closest to where I live and work. I am also a frequent visitor to National Forest Land, specifically Stanislaus National Forest, or Bureau of Land Management Land. I try to spend as much time as possible in National Parks as well. I am also a taxpayer. I care very deeply about the environment and about our land, and I highly value my ability to access this public land. I also spend time volunteering in our public lands, hoping to help preserve and protect these wonderful spaces. While I do many activities in our public lands, such as running, biking, hiking, backpacking, and skiing, I am also an avid rock climber. Rock climbing has become very popular indoors in gyms, however my roots in rock climbing started before the advent of gyms. Rock climbing is a path for me to explore my limits, explore wild spaces, and fully experience the outdoors. Fixed anchors in the Wilderness, or in the National Forest, or in a National Park (such as Yosemite or Pinnacles) are absolutely necessary for me to safely enjoy my rock climbing experience. Without a fixed anchor, I would not be able to safely descend from many of the pinnacles in Pinnacles National Park. I do understand they are fixed, they could be considered a blight (though if you are not a rock climber I'm not sure how you would see them), but honestly not more of a blight than a bridge over a section of river which would be too dangerous to navigate without the bridge. Many of these anchors have existed for decades; they have been allowed, managed, and authorized for decades. They should continue to be allowed and managed as they have in the past without any additional requirements which would make it more likely that moving forward, this activity would no longer be prudently safe. For decades, the climbing community has been able to work locally with land managers when necessary, or worked on its own to keep our activity low impact. In fact, the climbing community has, as a whole, done a good job of evolving in a way which emphasizes using as little fixed protection as able, and having as negligible an impact on the rock as possible while still being able to explore the vertical world in a reasonably safe manner. Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs exploration and will threaten a rich legacy of rock climbing in the United States.

If it is absolutely necessary to add further bureaucracy to this activity, then I would propose having local climbers provide the oversight of the area. Local climbers have worked under a partially self imposed rule of adding "the minimum number of bolts or anchors to facilitate primitive unconfined recreation or otherwise preserve wilderness character" for many years now. Currently in Wilderness areas, rock climbers are not allowed to use power drills. So in order to even install a bolt in the wilderness, it is an arduous process of hand drilling the hole for the bolt and installing the bolt. Sometimes this is in softer rock, such as at Pinnacles National Park, but sometimes this is in very hard granite. Having climbed in both areas, I can very honestly and truthfully say, that climbers do already only install the minimum number of bolts. In fact, if you sent a park employee who is a non climber, or even a beginner climber, up most of the routes of any grade in either the Wilderness or National Parks, they would tell you more, not less bolts were needed to create an experience which didn't feel unnecessarily risky. As climbers, we are aware of and manage this risk. I do not think land managers or park employees are the correct people to be making these decisions. Further, if they are making the decisions, and the agency does not find the funding or resources to create the Minimum Requirement Analysis, so the existing bolts and anchors are not properly maintained, then those land managers will be open to a risk of litigation which is not prudent.

In addition, I have significant concern regarding mentions of maintaining existing climbing opportunities, without an acknowledgment of the potential for exploration of new climbing opportunities. It is vitally important that both new and existing climbing opportunities are maintained so people can have the joy of finding new areas and rock climbs, and be able to equip these climbs in a way which meets the needs of the climbers in terms of safety, the spirit of exploration and excitement, as well as using a minimum number of fixed pieces of protection. Having spent countless hours on National Forest Land, hiking, backpacking, and rock climbing, I can honestly also say I cannot envision how the limited staff of the NFS would manage to do a Minimum Requirement Analysis or

determine if cultural resources were at risk on all of the land. Over 30 years of exploring these areas, I have encountered one NFS employee, in a parking lot. There are much better uses for the limited resources of the NFS than attempting to police rock climbing, especially when the ethics of our activity do an excellent job of restricting our activities. Allow us to continue being partners with you in making sure the recreation on our public lands is both accessible and in line with wilderness values.

I do not think the authors of these rules have any nefarious reasons for deciding to interpret rules in such a way as to eliminate or restrict rock climbing on our public lands. I do think they were trying to ensure that the Wilderness character is preserved for future generations. These rule changes however, will then have unintended consequences, actually creating a situation where future generations cannot explore and test themselves in the same manner as we as rock climbers have for so many years. Please consider the importance of this legislation.

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