

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/23/2024 11:03:18 PM

First name: Victoria

Last name: Pintar

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I saw the proposed policy changes for fixed anchors and equipment and I strongly discourage them from being put in place. I deeply care about wild places, I recreate in one often that's miles from my home, and I have watched firsthand the increase in usage and demands since COVID. I'm not sure what the main goals or motivation for these proposed policies stems from but know that the person writing these words cares deeply for nature, for our parks and forest service land, and believe we have an obligation to care for them.

Here are some of the reasons I'm in opposition to the proposed changes and the ways I can see if causing safety issues and an increased burden on land management staffing, in addition to taking away vertical access to the most iconic climbs in the US.

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.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

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.

Thank you for your time and for working to protect our lands.