

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/23/2024 11:45:54 PM

First name: J

Last name: S

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a wife to an active duty military member and a mother of two children. We highly value our time together, as it is never guaranteed. As a family, we choose to spend that time climbing, either indoors at a gym or outside in nature. We try and climb once a week, and prefer to do so outdoors, weather permitting. My spouse has over 20 years of climbing experience, and encouraged us to try the sport about 3 years ago. Over the last 2 years, we have climbed on established bolted routes in New Mexico and Arizona. We have plans to travel to other National Parks with the intent to climb other bolted routes. Climbing has provided so many invaluable life lessons to our children, not limited to a deep respect and curiosity of nature and the outdoors, perseverance, confidence, risk assessment, and self awareness. Their heroes include Natalia Grossman, Jakob Schubert, Adam Ondra, Alex Honnold, Anraku Sorato, Tamoia Narasaki, and Brooke Raboutou.

For me, sport climbing has saved my life, literally. As a person struggling with mental illness, climbing has become my therapy. Climbing outdoors is more accessible than mental healthcare in the United States. As a military spouse, establishing healthcare with every military ordered move is a huge challenge. Finding a qualified therapist is almost impossible. Rather than struggle with finding a therapist and dealing with insurance and copays, I am able to go outside and be present in nature. Sport climbing is my meditation and a vital aspect of my mental health. When I am climbing, I am exercising my brain and my body. I have to be aware of what I am doing in the present moment, especially when doing so outdoors. The feeling of accomplishment, exhaustion, and adrenaline after completing a day of climbing is addictive.

As a mother in her 40s, I have no desire to learn traditional climbing where I am expected to place my own gear. I am also not comfortable with my children learning how to place their own gear. The higher risk of injury and death is not conducive to our purpose for climbing. Maybe if I discovered climbing at a younger age, allowing more time to gain experience I would not be as opposed to traditional climbing. Banning bolted routes will significantly reduce my family's access to climbing outdoors, and will essentially limit us to only climbing indoors at a gym. As enjoyable as gym climbing can be, it does not compare to climbing in nature.

Please, please do not take away access to this healthy outlet for my family and myself. Please, please strongly reconsider your stance on banning bolted routes. Doing so takes away an opportunity for families like mine to participate in such a beautiful sport.

Below are some facts, specific to my current home in southern Arizona, that support the existing policies under the 1964 Wilderness Act.

1. The Southern Arizona climbing community has a long and positive history on National Forest system lands in the region.

2. The Southern Arizona climbing community has been effectively collaborating with the Coronado National Forest for decades to improve forest lands and steward climbing areas via dozens of volunteer efforts including:

- System trail maintenance
- Climbing area erosion control work
- Litter cleanup
- Graffiti removal
- Fixed anchor maintenance
- Raptor monitoring

NOTE: § A considerable amount of community resources has been committed to these collaborative stewardship efforts, including support from local businesses and non-climbing organizations

3. Rock climbing is a well-accepted and celebrated activity on the Coronado National Forest (CNF), with routes established well before the 1964 Wilderness Act. The CNF celebrates rock climbing on its homepage as a major forest activity.

4. National Park websites, such as Yosemite and Rocky Mountain, have pages dedicated to rock climbing, climbing ethics, and leave no trace ethics in their parks.

5. Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the 1964 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 and Park character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

6. It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness and National Park 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 a climbing route.

7. 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, and support expeditious maintenance of fixed anchors.

8. 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

9. The rule changes and development of the management plans come with no funding mechanism attached. The changes will place an unnecessary and unsustainable management burden upon the already short-staffed Forest Service and Park Service.

?10. The US Forest Service and National Park Service should consider existing fixed anchors in and outside of wilderness to be approved and appropriate until such time that a resource analysis can be done to determine if each fixed anchor is inappropriate.

11. USFS and NPS locations need to begin or continue working with the local climbing community as an essential part in maintaining climber safety and promoting outdoor recreation.

Again, I encourage you to strongly reconsider this proposed ban. Thank you for your time and consideration.