

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/25/2024 3:11:16 AM

First name: Kyle

Last name: O&#39;Rourke

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am vehemently opposed to the proposed directives under FSM 2355 concerning climbing management on National Forest System (NFS) lands. The introduction of restrictions on the use of fixed anchors and climbing equipment in wilderness areas is an unnecessary and overly cautious approach that will significantly hinder the climbing community without providing substantial environmental benefits.

Fixed anchors are essential for the safety and accessibility of climbing routes. They provide a secure point of attachment, reducing the risk of accidents and injuries. The proposal to limit or regulate these anchors underestimates their importance and could potentially lead to more dangerous climbing conditions. Climbing is an activity that inherently involves risk, but fixed anchors are a tried and tested method to mitigate these risks.

Moreover, the impact of fixed anchors on the environment is minimal compared to other human activities allowed in these areas. When installed and used responsibly, they have a negligible effect on rock formations and surrounding ecosystems. The proposal seems to ignore the fact that climbers are among the most environmentally conscious users of wilderness areas, often engaging in conservation efforts and practicing leave-no-trace principles.

The proposed directives also seem to overlook the historical and cultural significance of climbing on NFS lands. Climbing is not just a recreational activity but a sport with a rich history that has been integral to the exploration and appreciation of these natural landscapes. Implementing restrictive measures on climbing equipment could dilute this heritage and deter future generations from engaging in this valuable outdoor activity.

Furthermore, the proposed changes could have a negative economic impact on local communities that rely on climbing tourism. Many areas near NFS lands benefit significantly from climbers who visit for outdoor recreation. Restricting climbing opportunities could lead to a decrease in visitors, adversely affecting local businesses and economies.

In conclusion, the proposed directives under FSM 2355 are unnecessarily restrictive and do not take into account the actual impact of climbing on wilderness areas. Climbing with the use of fixed anchors should continue to be recognized as a low-impact and sustainable activity that aligns with the principles of wilderness conservation. I strongly urge the Forest Service to reconsider these proposals and recognize the value that climbing brings to NFS lands and the wider community.