

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/25/2024 4:38:08 AM

First name: chris

Last name: marshall

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom this may concern. I am writing to express concern with the proposed draft policies that would make fixed anchors prohibited in America's Wilderness areas. There are untold implications for reversing the current policies. The implications are vast and range from serious safety concerns to public land users, impacting a rich and diverse outdoor industry reliant on safely maintained fixed anchors, and impact individuals choice to interact with the wilderness in a historic and legacy filled pursuit. Please consider the following:

\* 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.

I am asking for:

(1) allow the continued use of existing fixed anchors without further review, unless there are site-specific resource concerns

(2) allow for the maintenance of existing fixed anchors without prior approval, unless there are site-specific resource concerns

(3) authorize the placement of new fixed anchors in wilderness with a simple and efficient permitting process that does not require an MRA (as is current practice under NPS Director's Order 41).

I have carved out a life through the appreciation of the natural world, both in and out of designated Wilderness areas. The relationship with the landscape has shaped me into a better human being, and has also created an opportunity to share these impactful places with others. This proposal threatens to eliminate experiences like these for future generations. Please consider the impact that this policy will undoubtedly have on people's relationship to the Wilderness.