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First name: Noah

Last name: Anon

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Dear USFS,

I am writing to voice my interest and concern regarding the new policies you are developing regarding fixed climbing anchors in America's wilderness lands. I began climbing at the age of 8 and have had the privilege to explore and enjoy wilderness areas across the U.S. through climbing. A ban on fixed anchors would be a severe blow to the climbing community in America as well as an unwarranted shift in policy. I have outlined some key reasoning to consider regarding a ban on fixed anchors.

1.Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. They have been allowed and appropriately managed for over half a century. A ban on fixed anchors in portions of America's public lands will create serious safety issues that could result in severe consequences. People will continue to climb, however, a ban on fixed anchors will result in unsafe conditions on the walls and most likely lead to preventable deaths and injuries.

2.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.

3.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 in all cases EXCEPT where proper and ethical analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

4.Finally, prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. It is YOUR duty as a government agency to protect what the public (the people you serve) value. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment. I ask that you reconsider the current policy change that is on the table. Climbers can be dedicated and passionate stewards of our public lands, but we MUST work together.