

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/26/2024 6:17:38 PM

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01-26-2024

USFS

A letter sharing my concerns and experiences with fixed anchors in the USFS

Subject: Request to Reconsider Prohibition of Fixed Climbing Anchors in the USFS

Dear Sir or Madam,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my concerns and to advocate for a reconsideration of the recent decision to prohibit fixed climbing anchors in the USFS. I understand that the USFS is committed to ensuring the safety of visitors and preserving the natural beauty of our forests. However, I believe that a complete ban on fixed climbing anchors may have unintended consequences and overlook the benefits they bring to the climbing community and the overall outdoor experience.

Firstly, fixed climbing anchors play a crucial role in enhancing safety for climbers. When properly installed and maintained, fixed anchors provide stability and security during climbs, reducing the risk of accidents and injuries. Climbers heavily rely on these anchors to protect themselves and their partners, especially in challenging terrains. A ban on fixed climbing anchors could potentially lead to increased risks, as climbers may be forced to rely on less secure alternatives or face greater difficulties finding suitable natural anchors, putting themselves and the general public at more risk.

Moreover, fixed climbing anchors can help minimize environmental impact. By providing designated anchor points, climbers are less likely to create additional wear and tear on the surrounding rock formations. When climbers are left to find their own anchor points, there is a higher risk of unintentional damage to the environment, including soil erosion, damage to fragile vegetation, and disturbance to wildlife habitats. Prohibiting fixed anchors may inadvertently contribute to environmental degradation rather than preventing it.

Furthermore, fixed climbing anchors contribute to the economic vitality of the surrounding communities. Climbing tourism is a significant driver of local economies, bringing in outdoor enthusiasts who contribute to local businesses, accommodations, and recreational services. A ban on fixed anchors could discourage climbers from visiting National Forests, leading to a decline in tourism-related revenue for nearby communities.

And finally, America's own story of rock climbing has proven to inspire both climbers and non-climbers alike. It gives us something to be proud of and to cheer for, for example Warren Harding's 45-day-ascent on The Nose of El Capitan or Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgenson's more recent ascent up the Dawn Wall. Both of these stories captured international attention and inspired millions and neither would have been possible without fixed anchors.

I strongly believe that 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.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge the USFS to reconsider the blanket prohibition of fixed climbing anchors. A more balanced approach that considers safety, environmental impact, and the economic benefits of climbing tourism would be in the best interest of both USFS visitors and the surrounding communities. Collaborative efforts between the climbing community and forest management could lead to the development of responsible guidelines and practices that address concerns while allowing climbers to enjoy the unique challenges and beauty that our USFS have to offer.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to a positive and collaborative resolution to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Ryan Scheiber