

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/27/2024 9:47:49 PM

First name: Matias

Last name: Altamirano

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am Matias Altamirano and reside in Takoma Park, MD. I am writing to express my deep concern with the draft policies that would make fixed climbing anchors (bolts, pitons, slings) prohibited in America's Wilderness areas. These policies would overturn nearly 60 years of sustainable Wilderness climbing precedent and impact some of America's most iconic climbs in Yosemite, Rocky Mountain National Park, Joshua Tree, Linville Gorge, the Wind Rivers, Sierra Nevada, and many others.

Climbing is a sustainable and legal recreation activity in wilderness areas. It is the way I commune with nature and the reason I have a deep connection with USA's wilderness areas. This connection makes me both a Stuart and an advocate for the protection of these resources.

Some of the reasons I am concerned with the draft policies are listed below, and I suggest improvement to the guidance:

- * 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

- * 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.

I hope my comments along with those of the climbing community are helpful for better policy and management of the wilderness areas we all love.

Best,

Matias Altamirano