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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for reading my letter. I am John Mansperger, a climber from Ohio since 1980 who primarily rope climbs, leading rock and ice, on bolted and traditionally protected routes of single and multiple rope-lengths. I am an ardent environmentalist and have supported all manner of nonprofits protecting the natural environment since my teens. I am currently vice president of the Ohio Climbers Coalition, the local climbing organization for The Access Fund, having put in hundreds and hundreds of volunteer hours of work cleaning up natural areas and crags in Ohio: graffiti and trash removal, invasive plant removal, erosion control, social trail removal, and improvements benefiting all users. I was made aware of society's responsibility to Native American peoples when a part of the YMCA's Indian Guides program as a child, and have supported Native American educational and wellness nonprofits.

I am like most climbers I know, being conscientious of minimizing impact from our sport. The beauty of the natural environment is a huge part of the draw of climbing. Fixed anchors are a part of our sport, sometimes necessary for safe upward progress and descent; fixed anchor locations installed sometimes for decades. They are not 'installations' per the Wilderness Act. Climbers have been acceptably regulating their use of fixed anchors in the large majority of climbing locations. Climbing been my primary hobby and recreational activity for the past 43 years. I have climbed in many states, including on USFS and NPS lands. I have seen the sport evolve, and I have seen how it is practiced here in the U.S. and abroad. Nowhere in my direct experience have I heard or seen evidence requiring this huge change in the management of United States climbing areas.

This proposal puts climbers at risk, and this may result in more incidents requiring more responses and administration work by your agency going forward. Old, aged fixed anchors on less-utilized routes in more remote areas will be especially problematic. Fixed anchor conditions will not be known until used and the multi-step review process cannot be initiated in time to prevent high risk degradation that could lead to an accident. These anchors are needed for ascent but often times for safe retreat, and climbers already manage them as such.

This proposed multi-step 'installation' review; the Minimum Requirements Analysis, is actually a massive undertaking: by both climbers and government-funded personnel. It will require thousands of hours of review by you agency. If personnel are not available to perform this work, the process will be significantly slowed hindered. Is your agency staffed for the massive increase in administrative workload that will be required to practically manage this proposed management change? Is funding in place or forthcoming? Will future administrations be amenable to sustaining or increasing budgets to achieve the potential requirements of reasonably reviewing all the proposed challenges for every fixed anchor, climbing route - for every descent anchor, for every bolt/piton/fixed piece of gear over the last 50-70 years? I can't help but suspect that delay is the plan of some support of this proposal: make it slow and cumbersome, and climbing will become greatly impeded - and made less safe.

Thank you for reading this letter and I hope that my comments along with other climbers are considered before this proposed directive becomes policy. I so hope that future Wilderness exploration will not be hindered, and that access to longstanding classic climbing routes will not be lost.