

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/29/2024 3:16:35 PM

First name: Colin

Last name: Bullock

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to provide feedback on the recently released draft policies regarding fixed anchors in Wilderness areas. As a member of the climbing community, I am deeply concerned about the potential implications of these policies on both safety and access to iconic climbing routes across America.

Safety Concerns: Fixed anchors are an integral part of climbers' safety systems and have been responsibly utilized for over 60 years without compromising Wilderness principles. Prohibiting them would not only hinder climbers' ability to navigate safely but also create unnecessary safety risks by impeding regular maintenance.

Disregard for Established Practices: The proposed policies ignore decades of established climbing practices authorized by federal agencies. Implementing new prohibitions on fixed anchors contradicts the longstanding approach of allowing judicious use of such equipment while preserving Wilderness character.

Impact on Exploration: Restricting fixed anchors obstructs climbers' ability to explore Wilderness areas effectively, limiting their capacity to make critical decisions in complex terrain. This impediment to exploration undermines the essence of Wilderness experiences and contradicts the spirit of adventure inherent in climbing.

Threat to Climbing Heritage: Prohibiting fixed anchors poses a significant threat to America's rich climbing legacy and risks erasing some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. It is imperative that climbing management policies protect existing routes from removal to safeguard this important aspect of our cultural heritage.

Unenforceable Restrictions on New Routes: The proposal to restrict the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is impractical and unenforceable. This approach will undoubtedly create confusion among both land managers and climbers, leading to potential conflicts and administrative challenges. Instead, non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until comprehensive analyses determine that climbing activities must be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources effectively. This approach ensures that climbing management remains flexible and responsive to evolving environmental considerations while preserving access for future generations of climbers.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to reconsider the proposed policies and work towards solutions that prioritize both safety and the preservation of America's climbing heritage. Collaborative efforts with the climbing community can lead to policies that ensure safe, sustainable access to Wilderness climbing while respecting the principles of Wilderness preservation.

Thank you for considering this feedback. I trust that you will take appropriate action to address these concerns and uphold the values of safety, access, and conservation in Wilderness climbing management.