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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear, US Forest Service

I write to express my concerns with the recently released draft policy FSM 2355 Climbing Opportunities #ORMS-3524

As an avid climber and explorer of our nation's great wilderness areas I have personally used, placed and maintained fixed anchors to safely descend and ascend rock faces. By reclassifying fixed anchors as prohibited installations and requiring an MRA process this policy will seriously inhibit the enjoyment of wilderness through climbing

As a climber I frequently rely on fixed anchors to safely ascend and descend rock faces in our nation's wilderness. These experiences, which are a key part of the enjoyment of wilderness to me and the climbing community, would generally not be possible without the fixed anchors. The proposed policy as written, threatens to deprive me and, more importantly, future generations of climbers of the opportunity to enjoy wilderness through climbing.

In coordination and conjunction with my local climbing organization (the registered non-profit The Northern Arizona Climber's Coalition) I maintain and replace fixed anchors on behalf of the climbing community. Over the last ten years, I have personally replaced hundreds of aging, unsafe bolts and anchors. This proposed policy's process of creating a multi-step agency approval process - one with no fixed timeline or funding - for fixed hardware replacement and installation will likely result in me discontinuing my fixed hardware replacement volunteer work. For me and for volunteer climbing stewards across the country, adding the burden of the MRA process will likely result in a severe curtailment of community stewardship.

Finally, as a climber I have had the amazing opportunity to explore our wilderness by new routes. This tradition has a rich history in Wilderness and the ability to use in-the-moment decision-making to judiciously place fixed anchors for safety is critical in order to allow wilderness climbing to continue.

Additionally I am concerned by the policies restriction of fixed anchors outside of wilderness areas to existing climbing opportunities. This is vague and unenforceable. Fixed anchors should be allowed by default until analysis determines they should be restricted in a specific area for cultural or natural resource protection.

I urge the US Forest Service to revise this policy to align with the widely supported PARC Act and designate fixed anchor placement, use and maintenance as allowable in our nation's wilderness.

Thank You,

Blake McCord