

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/29/2024 9:18:09 PM

First name: Nicholas

Last name: Leiby

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong objection to the USFS draft proposal to restrict the maintenance and addition of new fixed anchors on climbing routes. As a climber with over a decade of experience and a proud member of both the Access Fund and the American Alpine Club, I believe fixed anchors play a crucial role in safety and expanding wilderness access to a diverse community of climbers in many communities.

Fixed anchors have significantly improved climbing safety and have allowed a broader range of individuals to experience the beauty of the wilderness. Imposing restrictions on fixed anchors would limit the ability of many climbers to enjoy wilderness climbs, and may lead to an increase in accidents and injuries. In addition to the cost to the individuals involved, the USFS may face added burden in managing the aftermath of such incidents.

Moreover, I find it unreasonable to expect the USFS to perform detailed analyses for the maintenance or establishment of new fixed anchors. The USFS lacks the necessary resources for such extensive evaluations, and this approach could compromise the safety of recreational climbers. Relying on the expertise of the climbing community for responsible fixed anchor maintenance and installation is a more practical and effective solution. This is especially true given the distinct needs and conditions in different parks, where local and community oversight is better able to make assessments.

Another challenge is that restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable. This will create confusion between land managers and climbers. Unless there is a particular reason to restrict new anchors in a specific location (e.g., to protect natural or cultural resources), Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors.

I urge the USFS to reconsider the proposed limitations on fixed anchors in climbing routes. By recognizing the safety benefits fixed anchors provide and promoting collaboration with the climbing community, we can ensure a safer and more accessible wilderness experience for all climbers.