

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/29/2024 9:33:29 PM

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Title:

Comments: I trust this letter finds you well. I am reaching out to express my concerns regarding the recently proposed draft guidance that may impact outdoor climbing programs conducted by summer camps in our national forests. As an active participant and supporter of the camp industry, I am deeply invested in ensuring the continuation of educational programs that contribute to the positive and sustainable introduction of thousands of campers to the outdoors.

I understand the significance of regulatory measures to protect the environment and ensure the safety of forest visitors. However, I believe that a collaborative approach is necessary to strike a balance between conservation efforts and the valuable educational experiences provided by summer camps. In light of this, I respectfully request the withdrawal of the current draft guidance and the establishment of a study group that includes representation from the camp industry.

Summer camps play a pivotal role in fostering a love for nature and responsible outdoor activities among young individuals. Many of these programs rely on fixed hardware, such as climbing structures, to facilitate educational and recreational experiences. These structures are carefully designed to minimize environmental impact while providing a safe and controlled environment for campers to learn and appreciate outdoor activities like climbing.

Outdoor climbing, in particular, has proven to be an effective tool for instilling a sense of adventure, teamwork, and environmental stewardship in campers. The hands-on experience of navigating climbing structures fosters a deep connection with nature and encourages a lifelong appreciation for outdoor activities. Restricting or eliminating such programs may inadvertently hinder the development of a generation that values and understands the importance of preserving our natural resources.

I propose the formation of a study group that includes representatives from the camp industry, environmental experts, and US Forest Service officials. This collaborative effort will allow us to assess the potential impact of proposed restrictions on fixed hardware in outdoor climbing programs within national forests. Together, we can develop a comprehensive understanding of the environmental concerns and work towards finding solutions that maintain the integrity of our national forests while preserving the valuable educational experiences provided by summer camps.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and am confident that a collaborative study group will lead to a more informed and balanced approach to regulating outdoor climbing programs within national forests. I look forward to the opportunity to work together in ensuring that our forests continue to be a source of education, adventure, and environmental conservation for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Justin Bennett - Camp Rockmont