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Organization:

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Comments:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed directives related to climbing management on National Forest System (NFS) lands, as outlined in the notice for public input.

While I understand the need for the USDA Forest Service to address the impacts associated with increased climbing on NFS lands, I am concerned that the proposed directives, particularly the addition of Section 2355 to Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2300, may have unintended consequences and negatively impact the climbing community, the environment, and the principles of responsible outdoor recreation.

My primary concerns with the proposed directives include:

Restrictions on Climbing in Wilderness Areas: The proposed FSM 2355.03, para. 4, suggests that climbing in wilderness areas is appropriate only when conducted in accordance with applicable law and Forest Service directives. This raises concerns about potential restrictions that may limit access to wilderness areas for climbers, hindering the enjoyment of these natural spaces.

Climbing Management Plans: The requirement for climbing management plans, as proposed in FSM 2355.21, raises concerns about the practicality and feasibility of developing such plans, particularly in the context of limited funding and resources. This may place an unnecessary burden on both the Forest Service and the climbing community.

Fixed Anchors and Equipment in Wilderness: The designation of fixed anchors and fixed equipment as installations for purposes of the Wilderness Act, as outlined in FSM 2355.32, para. 1, may lead to unnecessary restrictions on the use of essential climbing equipment. It is crucial to find a balanced approach that preserves wilderness character while allowing for responsible climbing activities.

Special Use Permits: While encouraging the issuance and administration of special use permits (FSM 2355.03, para. 9) may enhance visitor access to climbing opportunities, there is a need to ensure that the permitting process is reasonable, transparent, and accessible to all members of the climbing community.

I urge the USDA Forest Service to reconsider the proposed directives and engage in further dialogue with stakeholders, including climbers, environmental organizations, and the general public. Collaborative efforts will help ensure that any new policies strike a fair balance between the conservation of natural resources and the enjoyment of outdoor activities.

Thank you for considering my input on this important matter. I trust that, together, we can find solutions that protect our public lands while fostering responsible and inclusive outdoor recreation.

Sincerely,

David Tracy