

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/29/2024 9:55:39 PM

First name: Joshua

Last name: Dees

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

Climbing is a meaningful part of my career and my family life. I literally learned to love, respect and care for the outdoors through my early introduction to climbing and the influence of the climbing community. I have imparted that love and respect to my son and I see him do this with his family and friends. Restrictions on climbing activities could have unintended consequences across a broad number of factors and as such I am submitting comments intended to help surface considerations we as the climbing community feel are important.

*Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

*It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

*Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

*Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

*Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

*Prohibiting fixed anchors could alienate a significantly large group of paying visitors and could have material impact on revenue for the parks, land management systems and the surrounding local economies.

*Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.