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First name: Jordan

Last name: Schweizer

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Subject: Urgent Appeal for Reconsideration of Prohibition on Fixed Anchors in Wilderness Areas

Dear Forest Service,

I am writing to express my deep concern and opposition to the recent decision to prohibit fixed anchors in Wilderness areas. As an avid climber and an advocate for responsible outdoor recreation, I believe that this prohibition poses serious threats to both the safety of climbers and the essence of America's climbing legacy. Fixed anchors serve as a vital component of climbers' safety systems and have been used responsibly for over half a century without adverse impact on the Wilderness character. Importantly, they are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Adhering to existing climbing policies that have allowed for the judicious use of fixed anchors will better protect the Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It seems unreasonable for federal agencies to introduce new guidance policies that outright prohibit Wilderness climbing anchors across the country, especially when they have historically allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades. The climbing community has actively engaged in responsible practices, contributing to the preservation of our natural spaces and the enjoyment of climbers without compromising the integrity of Wilderness areas.

Prohibiting fixed anchors introduces safety concerns by creating unnecessary obstacles to their regular maintenance, a responsibility diligently undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often require real-time responses, and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Maintenance procedures should be managed to incentivize safe anchor replacement and prevent the inadvertent removal of climbing routes.

The prohibition of fixed anchors also obstructs the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Climbers should be granted the flexibility to make in-the-moment decisions necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain. Restricting this ability hampers the spirit of exploration that defines the climbing experience in these natural landscapes.

Additionally, prohibiting fixed anchors jeopardizes America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policies must prioritize the protection of existing routes from removal, ensuring the preservation of our climbing history and the continuation of this cherished outdoor tradition.

I urge you to reconsider and revise the current policy on fixed anchors in Wilderness areas. Engaging in collaborative discussions with representatives from the climbing community will help establish a balanced approach that ensures the safety of climbers, preserves the unique character of Wilderness areas, and safeguards America's climbing heritage.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to a positive resolution that benefits both the climbing community and the preservation of our natural landscapes.

Sincerely,

Jordan Schweizer

801-831-4238

laysarcs@gmail.com