

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/29/2024 11:00:06 PM

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Comments: As a climber, I am writing to suggest improvements to the proposed policy that would ensure safe access to climbing.

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. Speaking from personal experience, I have never found an instance where a fixed anchor in good repair was less safe than a temporary anchor built from placed gear, and I have climbed in multiple wilderness areas including Red Rocks Conservation Area and The Enchantments.

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.

And lastly, 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.

I respect the agency's desire to regulate Wilderness lands in a way that protects all users -- however, the proposed policy as it stands poses a real physical danger to climbers and a metaphorical danger to climbing in this country. Please consider modifying the proposal to continue to allow for fixed anchors and their maintenance.