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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello,

I believe very strongly in protecting our public lands and I am grateful for everything the USFS does in service of caring for our wilderness. I do not, however, believe in an approach to conservation that makes it difficult for people to access and (safely) enjoy these spaces. I am concerned that the proposed changes to the rules regarding fixed anchors for climbing will result in less safe access to the outdoors for many people.

The culture of climbing in the US is one with a strong ethos of leave no trace and minimizing the impact of our presence. I understand the motivation behind the changes to the policies for permanent anchors. I am writing to ask that the new guidelines are revised for the following reasons:

1. Climbers have been using fixed anchors for many many years. Disallowing them restricts access in an unprecedented way.
2. Restricting access for climbing in wilderness areas to "existing climbing opportunities" is unenforceable. People are free to wander in wilderness areas. It will create confusion and in the worst (but realistic) cases-pit climbers and land managers against each other.
3. The safety of the sport is dependent on the existence of these anchors and the culture of the sport has evolved over half a century to minimize their impact.
4. Prohibiting fixed anchors means people exploring the wilderness will not be able to make the necessary decisions to safely navigate. Some situations require emergency fixed anchors. Others require knowing for certain an anchor is present. Others require having the ability to replace faulty hardware. Anchor placement and maintenance should managed to incentivize safety. (Imagine a climber gets to the top of a route and either the anchor that was supposed to be there isn't or the anchor hardware is not safe to use. Even if the climber was able to get down again without the fixed anchor and immediately applied for permits to address the anchor, there is no knowing how many people may try to use the faulty fixed anchor before the permit is approved and the anchor is fixed. This is a major safety AND access issue.)
5. Prohibiting anchors may lead to the loss of climbing routes. Which similar to the loss of hiking trails or other established means of accessing the outdoors. This will limit who and how many people can enjoy their activities of choice in our wilderness areas.

Thank you for listening to my point of view. I hope that the USFS is able to amend the rules governing fixed climbing anchors in a way that does not unnecessarily restrict access or create unsafe conditions for climbers. The climbing community has a culture of written and unwritten rules for protecting our climbing areas. Instead of writing rules that will result in the removal of anchors and making the process of maintaining existing anchors difficult, please consider working with the processes the climbing community has in place for limiting unnecessary fixed anchors and bolts and taking care of the ones that exist.

Mikhaela Dietch

29 years old

Climber for 23 years