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First name: Colleen

Last name: Blanton

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

I am a law-abiding citizen in graduate school for Social Work and Public Health. I am in these fields to give back to my community and support those who live in rural spaces. Additionally, I identify as a climber. I use climbing as a way to ground myself and show up for clients and the community. Without outdoor climbing, I would likely experience burnout in these fields and contribute less to society.

I request that outdoor climbing on USFS land be protected. The fixed anchors that the proposed legislation seeks to monitor are an essential piece of climber safety. These anchors are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Ideally our law makers will choose and see that following the 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.

As someone taking courses on climbing and safety and ever improving my skills in the alpine environment, I can attest that to prohibit fixed anchors will create safety issues. When climbing, climbers often need to make decisions in the moment. They cannot safely rappel down to submit a fixed anchor application with a potential for it to be approved. Climbers are responsible for educating the climbing community about safely using fixed anchors. There should be a process that monitors safe anchor replacement and maintenance without removing climbing routes.

Exploring Wilderness areas is something I use for myself and encourage my clients to enjoy. It also directly correlates with public health. Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Appropriate exploration should be permitted to occur safely. By restricting fixed anchors, climbers are unable to make safe decisions while navigating complex vertical terrain.

During my undergraduate career 10 years ago, I studied history and international relations. Much of my historical focus was on that of the United States of America. Another area of history important to me is that of America's rich climbing legacy. Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Protecting Wilderness means protecting existing routes, climbing management policy must ensure this is the case.

Unenforceable laws will increase the risk of climbing. Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable. This will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers alike. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should support opportunities for new anchors unless analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural or natural resources. As climbers we respect closures. Often our favorite place to sport climb in the mountains of Colorado is closed for Peregrine Falcons. We are respectful of their breeding period and do not interrupt. However, when we are allowed to go to this crag, the fixed anchors keep us safe.