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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Subject: Comments on Proposed Wilderness Climbing Policies

Dear USFS

I am writing to provide feedback on the proposed wilderness climbing policies, expressing my concerns and suggesting improvements for consideration. I believe that it is crucial to strike a balance between preserving the Wilderness character and ensuring the safety and legacy of climbing activities.

Fixed Anchors and Wilderness Safety:

Fixed anchors serve as a fundamental component of climbers' safety systems. It's essential to recognize that they are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Adhering to existing climbing policies that have allowed judicious use of fixed anchors for over half a century is key to safeguarding climbers and Wilderness character simultaneously.

Reasonableness of New Guidance Policies:

I find it unreasonable for federal agencies to introduce new policies that outright prohibit Wilderness climbing anchors nationwide. Over decades, these agencies have effectively managed and authorized fixed anchors. Rather than imposing sweeping prohibitions, a more effective approach would be to build upon the existing framework, incorporating climbers' perspectives and experiences.

Safety Implications of Prohibiting Fixed Anchors:

Prohibiting fixed anchors could pose safety issues by hindering the regular maintenance of these anchors. Climbing communities have responsibly undertaken this maintenance, and any new authorization process should not impede critical safety decisions made in the moment. The management of fixed anchor maintenance should encourage safe replacements without jeopardizing climbing routes.

Obstruction to Wilderness Exploration:

The prohibition of fixed anchors might obstruct the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Climbers must have the flexibility to make in-the-moment decisions when navigating challenging terrain. Land managers should foster an environment that allows climbers to explore Wilderness while preserving the natural character of these areas.

Preservation of Climbing Legacy:

Prohibiting fixed anchors poses a threat to America's rich climbing legacy, potentially erasing some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policies should prioritize protecting existing routes from removal, ensuring that the legacy of climbing is preserved for future generations.

In conclusion, I urge USFS to consider these perspectives and work collaboratively with the climbing community to refine the proposed policies. By doing so, we can strike a balance that respects both Wilderness character and the safety and legacy of climbing.