

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/31/2024 1:09:26 AM

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Comments: I am writing to address the proposed policy that aims to restrict the establishment of new climbing routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS). As an active member of the climbing community, I would like to highlight the practical and regulatory challenges this policy may present.

The proposed restriction is likely to be unenforceable and could create significant confusion among both land managers and climbers. By limiting new routes to pre-defined areas, the policy overlooks the dynamic and exploratory nature of climbing. Climbing routes evolve organically, often driven by the discovery of new and safe paths. Imposing such restrictions without clear, enforceable guidelines could lead to inconsistent interpretations and applications of the policy across different regions.

Furthermore, the policy may inadvertently hinder the development of climbing as a sport and recreational activity. The establishment of new anchors is a fundamental aspect of developing new climbing routes. By restricting this aspect to existing opportunities on non-Wilderness lands, the policy could stifle the growth and evolution of climbing.

I propose that the USFS maintain opportunities for new anchors on non-Wilderness lands, allowing for the continued evolution and enjoyment of climbing. This approach should, of course, be balanced with the necessary analyses to ensure that new climbing activities do not adversely impact cultural and natural resources. Such analyses should be conducted in a transparent and collaborative manner, involving climbers, conservationists, and other stakeholders to ensure that decisions are well-informed and considerate of all interests.

A policy that is too restrictive could lead to unintended negative consequences, both for the climbing community and for the stewardship goals of the USFS. Instead, a more flexible approach, guided by periodic and thorough resource impact assessments, would be a more effective and sustainable way to manage climbing activities on non-Wilderness lands.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this important issue. I hope that the USFS will take these points into account when finalizing policies regarding the establishment of new climbing routes on non-Wilderness lands.

Sincerely,

Chris Williams