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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS,

I am sincerely concerned that this proposed framework would do more harm than help. I am a professional in renewable energy and consider myself a steward of the outdoors; I care deeply about protecting our wilderness. I also have more than a decade of climbing experience and I know that standards for the skills and equipment required for climbing outdoors have evolved (and are continuing to evolve) to reduce risks involved in the sport and best serve the individuals that participate in climbing activities, and I would hate to see our public land managers ignore these standards due to communication issues and/or a general lack of knowledge within the domain of this recreation.

Fixed anchors reduce risks involved for climbers by offering the equipment needed in order to return to the ground safely. Without fixed anchors, climbers will likely use trees/other forms of vegetation in lieu of the absence of fixed anchors. Over time, the wilderness character could be significantly negatively impacted due to the use of ropes on vegetation. I think that has a much bigger impact on wilderness character than small, barely visible fixed anchors. Furthermore, reducing or limiting fixed anchors will increase the number of accidents, fatalities, and rescues.

I do not think that fixed climbing gear diminishes or compromises any aspect of the value and integrity of the natural world, just as human-made signs along trails do not diminish or compromise the value and integrity of nature (in fact, it enables individuals to access nature, and therefore argue that trail signs, and similarly fixed climbing gear, enhances the value of nature through human experiences). Furthermore, climbing advocacy groups are already initiating and helping manage fixed climbing equipment around the world. USFS can work closely with these groups, such as the Access Fund, so as to not burden the responsibilities of the park to make the best decisions regarding maintaining fixed gear.

In conclusion, I foresee that these proposed evaluations and procedures will result in unintended negative consequences, whether that be reducing the safety in current climbing standards, limiting access and experience amongst individuals, or increasing unnecessary administrative overhead for public land managers. I do think, however, that the USFS can communicate more effectively with climbers and climbing groups so that individuals can recreate responsibly in wilderness areas around the nation. As for preserving the integrity of our wilderness, I'd like to argue that climbing offers individuals a unique perspective of nature that ultimately increases one's willingness to contribute to a sustainable world, and that the impacts of fixed climbing equipment in outdoors are of minimal impact to natural rock formations but significantly benefit the safety of climbers around the world.

Sincerely,

Jane