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Comments: I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed climbing management directive. As an avid climber, caver, and contributor to various conservation efforts, I recognize the importance of maintaining the delicate balance between preserving our public lands and facilitating recreational activities. I want to express my gratitude for the work the USFS has done in this regard and the tradition of collaboration with the climbing community.

While I understand the intent behind the directive, I have several concerns:

1. Cave Management Exclusion: It is unclear whether caves and caving activities are within the scope of this directive. I urge you to explicitly exclude caves, as their unique environments often necessitate the use of fixed anchors for safety and resource protection. Fixed anchors are crucial for caving exploration, scientific research, and volunteer efforts in monitoring and preserving cave ecosystems.
2. Climbing Tradition and Safety: Fixed anchors have been an integral part of the climbing tradition, offering vital safety measures. The Wilderness Protection Act does not explicitly prohibit fixed anchors, recognizing their role in ensuring a safe and enjoyable climbing experience. The collaborative efforts between climbers and the USFS have contributed significantly to climbing's growth, inclusivity, and positive impact on mental health.
3. Resource Degradation and Alternatives: Allowing fixed anchors helps protect the landscape by preventing climbers from relying on less durable and potentially unsafe natural features. Temporary bolts and anchors, which leave minimal impact, should be explicitly excluded from the directive, as they offer a compromise between safety and resource preservation.
4. Collaboration and Stakeholder Input: Many individuals within the climbing and caving communities, as well as professionals working with the USFS, NPS, and BLM, oppose the current form of the directive. To garner support, I recommend specific exclusions for caves and aligning the policy with the longstanding tradition of collaboration between land managers and the climbing community.

I appreciate your consideration of these concerns and recommendations. Your commitment to preserving our public lands and ensuring access for all is commendable, and I trust that the final directive will reflect a balanced approach.

Thank you for your time and dedication to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Georgia Schneider

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