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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

I am writing today to let you know that I am opposed to the proposed ban on fixed anchors for climbing. As a federal employee who has done considerable amounts of work in federal wilderness areas, I understand how one might view fixed anchors as inherently at odds with the both the spirit and intent of the wilderness act. That said, we as land management agencies seem to draw arbitrary lines in the sand and this is one of those arbitrary lines that will have a net negative impact regardless of intent which is too often the case when we make these decisions. I look to the Frank Church wilderness where I have toiled countless hours, unable to use a wheel barrow (invented in 200 AD!) to support my work in minimizing impact by recreational users while jet boats cruise up and down the Salmon River at their leisure. Please explain to me how my wheel barrow is worse for the wilderness than a jet boat. I'll wait.

In the mean time, let's talk fixed anchors. Sure, you need an impact drill to set them. They require regular checks to ensure they are in good working order for the safety of our community. They're shiny? What I do know is that in the older days of climbing before people actively engaged in fixed anchor systems that we instead saw damage to the environment. No fixed anchors means people are more likely to use trees or leave tat (webbing and cord left behind to facilitate a temporary anchor to get down from the thing which one has climbed). Ever been to a popular climbing areas where all the trees at the top of the cliff died because they were being used as anchors? It sucks and community groups have worked hard to keep quality anchors in place that protect the environment and the climbers. I don't understand why you'd change course now? There has been ample opportunity to exclude climbing as a wilderness appropriate activity yet that isn't the case. Has it just become too popular and you want to slow it down? You can require permits for new routes without disallowing the maintenance of existing ones. My understanding is that agencies agree that rock climbing is appropriate for the wilderness. Why then would you enact policy that makes climbing in the wilderness inherently more dangerous and increases its ecological impact? What is the end game? What are you hoping to achieve with this policy beyond make unenforceable bureaucracy that is difficult for climbing communities and land managers alike?? Who wins in this proposal? Is there not already legislation on the floor to help deal with the issue of how to manage these decisions? Don't fail to remember that we as land managers have no more say in decisions about how to use public lands than anyone else. These lands belong to every American, not just the few beaurocrats who find themselves in the top positions of these agencies.

We will continue to climb, it's up to you to make the right decision about how we get down. Drop this policy and spend some more time figuring out what you want to achieve and come back with policy that actually meets your own objectives.

Thank you for your time,

Stephan Harig