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Comments: In the summer of 2017, when we asked our sons to take us out and show us what they are doing every weekend, little did we know that they would literally show us the ropes. We have enjoyed many climbing outings in various areas with them since within the United States and around the world, including National Forest climbing locations in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, Kentucky, and Montana. My wife is an avid climber and described to me what possible effects this climbing management policy (RM2355) would have on the safety of climbers. I am providing comments on this policy for the safety of my sons and my wife while they are out recreating on our public lands.

Yes, climbing is an inherently dangerous sport, made safer by the placement and active maintenance of bolts and anchors on climbing routes. Removing or unnecessarily delaying replacement of those critical pieces of safety hardware are making a dangerous sport even more dangerous and possibly deadly. Search and Rescue (SAR) teams are already overworked with the influx of ill-prepared visitors to National Parks and Wilderness Areas.

Requiring a lengthy review process to justify every single bolt or anchor in National Forests and Wilderness Lands or to review every single bolt or anchor to allow replacement of failing gear will be extremely costly to an agency that is woefully underfunded to begin with. Reviews by government agencies are inherently slow and can be an arduous process. I see there are no additional funds being budgeted for these efforts. The guidance in the proposed policy should have also included Forest Service procedures for securing funding and resources in support of climbing management objectives through agency budgeting and congressional appropriations.

I also take exception to the requirement that law enforcement conduct patrols at climbing opportunities. This is serious overreach and would be a waste of precious Forest Service resources of which are limited and seriously underfunded.

In talking with other friends who also climb, they suggested that the policy direction for Wilderness Areas be changed to allow for historically present fixed anchors to remain in place and to be maintained by local climbers and climbing organizations. They are the experts in this field and really understand the nuances of what it takes to replace hardware placed in rock. Get them on your side. Collaborate, don't dictate.

I am not an avid climber, like other members of our family, but I do see that there are some very big shortcomings with this currently proposed policy. I suggest that you go back to the drawing board, secure any and all necessary funding from Congress, and then come to the table with the explicit intent of collaborating with ALL local climbing communities to come up with an agreed upon executable plan. I think you would be better served and gain the trust of climbers in the process. And maybe you'll learn a thing or two about what it takes to create and maintain climbing areas from those who do it out of pure passion.