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First name: Jakelynn

Last name: Wert

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear US Forest Service:

My name is Jakelynn Wert, and I am writing to urge that the new Climbing Management Plan released on November 17, 2023 will not move forwards. I am a 22 year old student at the University of Arizona who grew up in Tucson. I am up in the Catalinas quite a lot. It is a place I care about, and formative to my experiences as a young adult. I am passionate about environmental stewardship, and a very large part of that awareness and drive to protect the natural spaces around me came from experiences on the crag.

The climbing community I know works their best to respect and protect the spaces that they use, including many of the routes that would be affected by the new plan. We regularly work to maintain trails, host trash cleanups, and remove graffiti in collaboration with the Coronado National Forest. The community around this movement is strong, with individuals and local businesses leading the charge. This is some serious people power that can be utilized for the protection of the Pusch Ridge Wilderness Area. So many people care deeply about this place, and very few take it for granted!

Fixed anchors are not prohibited installations in the 1964 Wilderness Act, and climbers have been maintaining them for longer than that. The new guideline policies seem unreasonable when considering this history. Additionally, fixed anchors make climbing more safe, and more accessible, opening a door for the next generation to fall in love with and protect the Catalinas, Rincons, Cochise Stronghold and beyond.

I am fully supportive of cultural resource protection, but find lacking in the proposal exact details, intentions or the voices of local Tribe leaders. I would find more information in this area very helpful.

I am also unclear as to how the guidelines will be implemented in terms of funding and people power. This is not the most efficient use of money and people when it comes to protecting and stewarding the wild places affected by this new plan. Working with climbers, people already passionate about the outdoors, to protect these spaces is essential to the future of stewardship in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness area. Please do not go forwards with the Climbing Management Plan as written.

Sincerely,

Jakelynn Wert