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Organization:

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Comments: I am a climber and I love climbing. Simple. There is nothing else that compares to being on a climb. It brings me to a focus point where nothing else matters at the moment except my partner(s) and the next move. Yes, living IN the moment, few things can create that mental presence, especially in our complex world.

Sometimes the approaches are long, a ways far back and might be considered arduous by some. For me, the entire process is compelling, whether it be a roadside routes, hiking through Federal Lands, National Parks, or some form of public land to reach the route. I could continue but that is not my purpose at the moment. My purpose is to voice my opinion on the draft proposals/policies of the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) that would make fixed anchors (bolts, pitons, slings) prohibited in America's Wilderness areas. I strongly believe that these policies would overturn nearly 60 years of sustainable Wilderness climbing precedent and impact some of America's most iconic climbs in Yosemite, Rocky Mountain National Park, Joshua Tree, Linville Gorge, the Wind Rivers, Sierra Nevada, and many others that have routes or do not yet have any routes. Not to mention the ability for climbers to bolt and establish new routes for an ever growing community of climbing enthusiasts. This new classification would apply to both new and existing anchors-hindering Wilderness exploration, threatening the existence of longstanding established routes, and obstructing climbers' ability to replace old, unsafe bolts. This is a huge blow to climbers that not only threatens America's climbing legacy but puts the safety of our climbing community at risk. Here are some of my concerns:

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes

Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal. Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

In addition the following concerns are notable characteristics of the climbing community that I have found to hold true:

Because safety is paramount I have found that the climbing community as a whole does an exceptional job in regulating route setting and maintenance. Posts are made on popular climbing beta sites describing necessary updates to routes where holds may be unsafe and need to be replaced and then new posts once they have been replaced as well as newly placed routes.

To this day, I have never had a visitor in a well visited location see climbers on a wall and been disturbed or upset. There has never been any mention of defacing the rock. In contrast, what I have experienced from non-climber visitors passing by is an awe of the climbers on the wall and the signs of their minds wondering, wow,

that looks so cool, I think that I want to try that. What a great legacy to pass on. Do we want to put a halt to that in our National Parks and Federal lands?

Finally, I ask anyone involved in the making of the policies to ask themselves, how many times they have waked by or driven by bolted routes and never noticed. I expect the answer to be often because they are not noticeable.

Sincerely Yours,

MaryEllenDietz- Holmes