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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Members of the U.S. Forest Service:

I am writing in regards to FSM 2355 Climbing Opportunities, which would limit the use of fixed anchors for wilderness climbing. I have been enjoying wilderness climbing for the last 5 years and am highly concerned about the potential consequences of these proposals.

Prohibiting or limiting fixed anchors will make the sport of outdoor climbing significantly more dangerous. Climbers rely on fixed bolts and anchors to ensure a safe ascent and descent. These proposed regulations will ultimately not deter climbers from climbing - climbers will simply be forced to use other means, which create additional problems. Climbers will have to rely on natural features (e.g., trees, vegetation) to create anchors, which are not only more unsightly (compared to a camouflaged bolt or anchor), but also significantly more dangerous. This method may also compromise those natural features, which contradicts the USFS goal of preserving wilderness character.

The climbing community has a fundamental awe and respect for nature. It is why many of us climb: to experience the beauty of natural rock formations and wilderness. We have been responsibly fixing equipment for decades prior to the aforementioned proposal. We are mindful of the trace we leave behind, and we pass this etiquette along to other climbers. If the USFS is concerned about the impact of climbers on wilderness character, I urge you to consider the far greater impact of hikers, horse riders, and mountain bikers - none of whom have had similar bans on their sports.

We are open to working with the USFS on what types of gear may or may not be fixed on certain locations. For example, camouflaged bolts may be an ideal compromise: they allow climbers to climb safely, and are extremely unobtrusive.

If there are concerns about fixed equipment, I urge the USFS to consider the long history of climbing in Europe. No such bans on fixed anchors exist, and those areas have been able to preserve their character, while simultaneously cultivating a rich climbing culture.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to partnering with the USFS to identify solutions so that climbers and non-climbers alike can enjoy the beauty of the wilderness.