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Organization: Southern Montana Climbers Coalition

Title:

Comments: Dear U.S. Forest Service Representative,

As representatives of the Southern Montana Climbers Coalition and Montana residents, we write to express our profound concern regarding the proposed policies by the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) that could have detrimental effects on some of the most cherished climbing destinations in our state, including the Absaroka and Beartooth Mountains, Beehive Basin, the Humbug Spires, and Hyalite Canyon.

The proposed classification of fixed anchors, such as bolts, pitons, and slings, as "prohibited installations" in Wilderness areas poses a significant threat to our climbing community. These changes not only jeopardize the iconic climbs in our area but also risk erasing nearly 60 years of climbing history and tradition.

Southern Montana boasts a rich climbing heritage, and the proposed policies could have profound and lasting impacts. Beyond hindering opportunities for exploration, threatening established routes, and impeding climbers' ability to replace aging bolts for safety reasons, there is also the potential for this classification to extend to all USFS managed lands, including non-Wilderness areas, exacerbating the challenges faced by our community.

We implore you to reconsider these proposed policies and engage in meaningful dialogue with the Southern Montana Climbers Coalition and other climber-lead organizations around the US. Collaborative efforts are essential to finding solutions that balance conservation objectives with the preservation of our unique landscapes. The climbing community is committed to responsible stewardship and is willing to work together to address concerns without compromising the essence of our climbing experiences.

Montana's climbing routes are an integral part of our cultural and recreational identity. We urge you to consider the collective voice of our community and take decisive action to safeguard our climbing heritage for current and future generations.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your support in preserving the vibrant climbing culture of Montana and beyond.