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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a U.S. citizen and a tax payer. Thanks to rock climbing, I am also an advocate for responsible public access to public lands. It is as a direct result of rock climbing that I understand why Wilderness sometimes starts with a capital W, and it is thanks to rock climbing that I make an effort to be a better steward of the public lands that I enjoy. Rock climbing is both a portal to an outdoor world, and a pathway to being a good citizen in that world.

Among the National Forests that I've visited specifically for their world-class rock climbing opportunities are Pisgah National Forest (Linville Gorge), Shoshone (Wild Iris & Wind River Range), Bighorn (Tensleep), Coronado (Cochise Stronghold), Roosevelt (Boulder Canyon), and Uinta-Wasatch-Cache. It was through rock climbing that I learned the phrase "Leave No Trace," and how to practice its principles. I have developed a better appreciation for the "wilderness character" ideals of humility and restraint through rock climbing opportunities in congressionally designated Wilderness Areas within National Forest System public lands, like Mt. Charleston Wilderness in Nevada, Popo Agie in Wyoming, High Uintas in Utah, and Linville Gorge in North Carolina.

Rock climbing community has encouraged me to volunteer for trail conservation efforts, and to participate in climbing route maintenance stewardship. I have joined events with local climbing organizations in North Carolina, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and Wyoming, and I support national nonprofit efforts which further safe climbing practices and climber education.

I am learning how the policies produced by our federal government have the power to both protect and provide access to our public lands, and I support an approach to climbing management policy that balances recreation and conservation.

I support the proposed directive with revisions to better reflect the congressional intent of EXPLORE/PARC: to protect access to rock climbing, and to bridge the gap between policy and practical application.

(1) Please do not make fixed anchor maintenance contingent upon a Climbing Management Plan, without a timely process to achieve it. Instead, provide a practical alternative for National Forests which lack a dedicated Climbing Management Plan, or presume maintenance for existing fixed anchors to be allowed unless explicitly stated otherwise. I have participated in a years-long planning process for a CMP which still shows no promise for publication in the immediate future.

(2) Please provide national templates and implementation guidance for local Climbing Management Plans, and simplify and streamline the authorization processes. Policy discussion is fixated on fixed anchors, but there are many other advantages for CMPs. National guidance should establish consistent expectations for sustainable approach trails, management of legacy routes, establishment of new routes, fixed-anchor maintenance, protections for wildlife and cultural resources, and consultation with Local Climbing Organizations, while preserving flexibility to address local resource conditions. Implementation should minimize unnecessary administrative burdens for both land managers and the climbing community.

(3) Please continue to work with climbers to clarify terminology, provide better examples of wilderness character in the context of climbing, and allow for modern materials and industry standards in fixed anchor maintenance.

I appreciate the opportunity to enjoy the National Forest public lands, and to share my comments on the policies that manage them.