

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/21/2026 2:54:47 AM

First name: Katherine

Last name: Bender

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a Colorado climber who spends dozens of days each year climbing on National Forest lands both in Colorado and in other states throughout the country. I routinely practice Leave No Trace principles and deeply value our public lands. In my experience, the visual and physical footprint of a climbing bolt is tiny compared to other recreational infrastructure, while its contribution to safe and sustainable climbing is significant.

I strongly encourage the agency to ensure that the final directive recognizes that fixed anchors (bolts) are a minimal, carefully used tool that enables safe climbing while having very little impact on the surrounding environment.

A properly installed climbing bolt occupies only a very small area of rock, does not require vegetation removal or ongoing ground disturbance, and often allows climbers to avoid creating larger environmental impacts that could result from repeated use of removable protection or unsafe route finding. In many cases, a single well-placed bolt reduces erosion, minimizes damage to vegetation around belay areas, and concentrates use on durable rock surfaces. It also preserves ecological resources (by avoiding tree anchors) and preserves resources (by avoiding costly search and rescue efforts).

The climbing community has a long history of self-managing fixed anchors through replacement of aging hardware and adherence to local ethics. Allowing the installation, replacement, and maintenance of bolts under clear, practical guidance helps preserve both visitor safety and the long-term sustainability of climbing resources. Burdensome approval processes for routine bolt replacement could discourage maintenance of aging hardware without providing meaningful environmental benefits.

I encourage the Forest Service to acknowledge in the final directive that fixed anchors are a minimally intrusive management tool when used responsibly, and to adopt policies that:

- * Recognize that properly placed bolts have negligible long-term environmental impacts compared to many other recreational infrastructure improvements.
- * Allow efficient replacement of existing unsafe or deteriorated bolts without unnecessary administrative hurdles.
- * Permit carefully considered new bolts where appropriate to facilitate sustainable climbing opportunities and reduce resource damage.
- * Continue to work collaboratively with local climbing organizations, route developers, and stewardship groups that have decades of experience balancing access with resource protection.

Climbing is a low-impact form of recreation that connects people with our public lands and fosters a strong ethic of stewardship. The final guidance should support sustainable climbing access while protecting natural and cultural resources, recognizing that responsibly managed fixed anchors are an essential and minimally intrusive component of that recreation.