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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Forest Service National Recreation and Wilderness Programs

USDA Forest Service

RE: Forest Service Manual 2300 - Chapter 2355 - Climbing Opportunities

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed climbing management directive.

My name is Rebecca Mongeau, and I am a recreational climber who regularly climbs on National Forest lands throughout Wyoming. Some of my favorite outdoor experiences have been on these public lands, and I appreciate the Forest Service's efforts to develop national guidance that both protects natural resources and ensures continued opportunities for climbing.

As a climber, I depend on fixed anchors for safe climbing and safe descents on many established routes. Properly maintained anchors are an important part of the climbing experience and help prevent accidents while allowing climbers to descend without causing unnecessary impacts to surrounding vegetation or other natural features. In many cases, a well-placed fixed anchor is the safest and least impactful option available.

I encourage the Forest Service to ensure that the final directive supports the responsible stewardship of existing climbing routes by allowing aging fixed anchors to be replaced before they become dangerous. Preventive replacement is far safer than waiting until hardware has deteriorated to the point of failure.

I am also concerned that requiring Climbing Management Plans before fixed anchors can be routinely placed or replaced could unintentionally delay important stewardship work. Very few National Forests currently have Climbing Management Plans, and developing them can take many years. Until those plans are in place, the Forest Service should provide general authorization for the responsible placement and replacement of fixed anchors, while still allowing individual forests to address site-specific resource concerns where needed. This approach will allow volunteers to continue maintaining existing climbing routes and addressing safety concerns without unnecessary delays.

Outside designated wilderness, I believe power drills should be an accepted tool for placing and replacing fixed anchors because they allow this work to be completed safely and efficiently with less overall disturbance. Within wilderness, I support continuing the long-standing practice of thoughtfully and sparingly placing or replacing fixed anchors by hand where they are necessary to provide reasonable protection or facilitate safe descents while preserving wilderness character.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your work developing this guidance. I hope the final directive recognizes the important role that responsible fixed anchor stewardship plays in supporting safe recreation while protecting the public lands that so many of us value.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Mongeau

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