



CLIMBING MANAGEMENT PLAN

Bitterroot National Forest

February 28, 2020

This is a revision to and supersedes the letter issued on February 14, 2020 titled “Climbing Regulation”. It is being issued to provide more clarity around the intent, expected process, and to address safety concerns regarding development of a climbing management plan for the Bitterroot National Forest.

The Bitterroot National Forest is undertaking the development of a comprehensive climbing management plan, with the purpose of promoting sustainable climbing activities into the future. This plan will help reduce user conflicts, address impacts to resource values, and protect the unique climbing attributes found here on the Forest. There will be ample opportunity for all interested parties to participate and comment on this plan during its development as there will be a series of public meetings over the course of the next 12-18 months to allow for the community to come together and cooperatively define how climbing will be managed on the Bitterroot National Forest.

The Forest is also seeking to reduce the potential for conflict between user groups while the management plan is being developed. During this period there will be a suspension of any further unauthorized fixed anchor route development as well as any activities that impede the use of trails to popular climbing areas. These actions are only serving to increase the conflict between groups and do not serve the interest of furthering the cooperation and collaboration that will be needed to move forward successfully with a comprehensive climbing plan.

The climbing management plan, once finalized, will prescribe the further use of fixed anchors across the Bitterroot National Forest. To be clear, this suspension of unauthorized fixed anchor route development is a step in the process to developing a climbing management plan not the solution to climbing management.

If an individual or group is developing *new* fixed anchor climbing routes with any type of permanent hardware they will be subject to criminal prosecution, to include restitution for the impacted areas.* Emergency use during rescue situations, replacement of existing bolts on established routes and cleaning of loose rock, where needed *on existing routes*, will be allowed to facilitate continued safe use of these routes while the climbing management plan is being developed.

Similarly, if an individual or group is seeking to impede the travel along and/or use of an existing trail by other Forest users, or they are vandalizing existing climbing apparatus (i.e., destroying bolts) and thereby creating a potentially unsafe condition they will be subject to criminal prosecution, to include restitution for the impacted areas.*

It is recognized that there has been a long history of cooperation between the Bitterroot National Forest and the local climbing community around climbing restrictions for resource benefit and





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your continued help and cooperation is appreciated. Not only will it serve to enhance and protect the resources that are currently enjoyed, but it will also help to promote the sustainable and responsible management of climbing into the future.

For questions, information, or input regarding the climbing management plan please contact Steve Brown, Stevensville District Ranger, (406) 777-5461.

Sincerely,

MATTHEW D. ANDERSON
Forest Supervisor

(*) The following is referenced from Subpart A of 261 in the Code of Federal Regulations, pursuant to 16 USC 551;

36 CFR§261.9(a) Damaging any natural feature or other property of the United States.

36 CFR§261.9(b) Removing any natural feature or other property of the United States.

36 CFR§261.10(a) Constructing, placing, or maintaining any kind of road, trail, structure, fence, enclosure, communication equipment, or other improvement on National Forest System land or facilities with a special-use authorization, contract, or approved operating plan.

36 CFR§261.12(c) Damaging and leaving in a damaged condition any such road, trail, or segment thereof.

36 CFR§261.12(d) Blocking, restricting, or otherwise interfering with the use of a road, trail, or gate.



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