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Comments: I began rock climbing in 1977 as a NOLS student, and in the 47 years since then I have climbed extensively in wilderness areas from Yosemite to Canada to Patagonia. Spending days on El Capitan and climbing alpine peaks like the Grand Teton have given me the opportunity to experience not just adventure, but the profound beauty and grandeur of the earth, inspiring me to take care of the wild places I have been blessed to visit and to be a voice for the preservation of wilderness. My safety on those climbs and the ones I will do in the future depended on fixed anchors, from bolts to pitons to a sling around a tree. Prohibiting fixed anchors will not only make those climbs unsafe, but impossible, erasing the rich history of climbing exploration, the quest to explore the unknown.

Climbing in wilderness areas in the United States has a rich history stretching back more than a hundred years, and names like David Brower and Yvon Chouinard were inspirations to me not only for the climbs they did, but for their visionary efforts to preserve wild places. Allowing the continued and judicious use of fixed anchors in the wilderness helps protect the wilderness by celebrating the legacy of environmental icons like David Brower and Yvon Chouinard and encouraging generations to come to emulate their vision for preserving wild places for all. Prohibiting fixed anchors in wilderness would erase their legacy and would deprive future climbers of the opportunity I had to be inspired by the stunning beauty of wild places and understand that they need to be protected for all beings, not just human beings.

I have also been a river guide and river runner for almost 50 years and have run rivers around the world. Just like being on a big wall, a wild river is an intimidating, powerful, and beautiful thing to experience, to feel awe in the presence of something larger and more powerful than yourself. Back when the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was being negotiated, one sticking point was whether or not to allow motor rigs to continue to operate in the Grand Canyon. Eventually, a compromise was reached, and motor rigs were allowed to continue to operate on the Colorado through the Grand Canyon. There were forward thinking people like Senator Frank Church at the table back then, and I have to believe there are individuals involved in the current discussion about fixed anchors in the wilderness who understand the long history of fixed anchors in wilderness areas and the importance of those anchors to the safety of climbers, anchors that in many cases have been used by generations of climbers since the 1950's and before.

I agree that some form of fixed anchor management is needed to preserve the integrity of the wilderness, the feeling that we all go there to experience in our own way. But a flat-out prohibition on fixed anchors is not the way to accomplish that goal. In the recent past, climbers have stepped up to take responsibility for the impacts of climbing. For example, every September the National Park Service and the Yosemite Climbing Association partner to host the annual "Yosemite Facelift." In 2019, over 2,000 volunteers cleaned up 16,429 pounds of debris from the park, including debris on trails and on popular climbing routes like the Nose of El Capitan. The Yosemite Facelift, and other similar efforts at wilderness climbing areas across the country, are shining examples of how regulatory agencies and land managers like the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service can work in partnership to preserve and protect the wilderness values we all cherish while continuing to provide safe access to historic wilderness climbing resources. I strongly urge you to find a compromise solution that allows the continued use of fixed anchors in the wilderness and leverage the voice of the climbing community in the effort to preserve wild places for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Dan Bolster