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Comments: This potential policy seems both unnecessary and problematic. There are, in instances, thousands of climbing routes in a wilderness area. Most of these have some sort of fixed anchor(s), many that predate the wilderness act. This policy suggests area supervisors, who may have no experience with climbing, be asked to evaluate and permit all anchors that keep people safe, thus putting a burden on the USFS to maintain infrastructure that is currently maintained by the community as needed. What you are describing would require massive amounts of time and funding, and if the USFS cannot complete these tasks adequately, people will die. The current situation allows climbers to use their judgement to install and replace anchors as they climb, to protect themselves; if an anchor looks bad or cannot be found then climbers make their own so that they can safely descend. You are suggesting a system where public individuals utilizing public land are not allowed to perform basic and established actions to allow themselves safe passage.

I would suggest that you work with the Access Fund and climbers to see what works and what is needed, something you clearly didn't do before writing this. Study what impacts are being made by current practices. A small piece of metal camouflaged on a cliff makes minimal aesthetic and ecological impacts, temporary anchors made of cord or webbing have a greater impact but still not much. Climbing anchors are minimally impactful compared to most other human impacts from climbing and other activities; walking through vegetation, clearing camp-sites, and disposing of bodily waste are all things that should be receiving more attention. The USFS cannot even properly police these things despite having rules around it and yet, you appear to be trying to make more work for yourselves on something that will have little return on investment and simultaneously put people at risk. It seems strange to regulate anchors but not regulate people swimming in wilderness areas with sunscreen, washing dishes in water, what camping stove people are using, etc. etc. etc.

I know that as a young climber I was often tempted to try down-climb or scramble off of mountains or rocks because I was too cheap to leave gear. If you get rid of in-situ anchors AND make it illegal for people to make an anchor to rappel then you are pushing climbers to make more dangerous decisions. This makes USFS responsible for resulting accidents and will put a greater stress on search-and-rescue teams. Please, if you insist on making changes around climbing anchor policy after decades of precedent, at least talk to the Access Fund and other climbers to make sure your new policy isn't so draconian and dangerous.