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Comments: I completely disagree with the proposed Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act by the Access Fund. As a passionate climber, I do not think it is wise to open up wilderness to unregulated fixed protection and anchor production.

Climbing in a designated wilderness should feel "wild." The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Climbing routes that fit this ethos tend to wander and follow natural weaknesses, with fixed protection only if no easier path can be found. Developing a climbing route that depends on fixed protection is in direct violation of this definition. That being said, I am not directly opposed to fixed protection on a route. Local agencies or entities need to have the power to review a proposed new route to determine if the nature of the route remains "wild." Sport climbing does not belong in wilderness.

Fixed anchors and protection violate Leave No Trace principles. Measures can be made to lessen the impact of fixed protection installation such as painting the exposed metal or purposely hiding anchors from ground view. However, it cannot be denied that the landscape is being permanently altered when a new hole is drilled in the rock.

Entities like the National Park Service or the US Forest Service need to have a say when potential new climbing routes are proposed in wilderness areas. I agree with the creation of FSM 2355 Climbing Opportunities in that it gives individual National Forests the power to create their own climbing management strategies in their Wilderness Management Plans. Every wilderness is different: A one-size-fits-all plan like the one the Access Fund is proposing does not have the nuance necessary to protect our recreational, wild and scenic natural resources. A newly established climbing route with fixed protection greatly increases the likelihood of traffic to that specific area. If this area happens to have a fragile or sensitive ecosystem, the degradation of the land, flora and fauna could be greater than just the holes drilled in the rock.

Safety also needs to be a concern in proposed climbing route development. Allowing local agencies to monitor and regulate new climbing development would give said agencies the opportunity to limit development in high-use areas where rockfall or other hazards generated by an increase in climbing traffic would pose a risk.

In conclusion, I am in support of the creation of FSM 2355 Climbing Opportunities and completely disagree with the proposed Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act. There are already plenty of developed climbing routes in the United States, and new policies implemented by the National Park Service and US Forest service would not affect already established routes in wilderness areas. One person will never be able to climb everything that has been developed. Granting individuals the right to develop climbing routes with fixed protection in designated wilderness at will is reckless and potentially dangerous to fellow visitors and to the ecosystem in which the climb exists.