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Comments: As a dedicated rock climber, I'm really worried about the proposed rule changes regarding climbing in Wilderness areas and their broader implications. These changes could significantly affect our climbing community, our approach to safety, and the legacy of climbing in America.

First off, the debate over the use of fixed anchors in Wilderness climbing is a major concern for me. Fixed anchors aren't just gear; they're a vital part of our safety system, in use for over fifty years and not prohibited by the Wilderness Act. Maintaining the existing policies that permit the sensible use of these anchors is crucial for balancing the preservation of Wilderness character with our climbing experiences.

I'm also troubled by the federal agencies' inclination to ban Wilderness climbing anchors nationwide. This seems like an unreasonable change, given their long history of managing and authorizing the use of fixed anchors. Why disrupt a system that's been working effectively for so long?

Safety is always a paramount concern. Prohibiting fixed anchors raises serious safety issues. As climbers, we've traditionally managed the maintenance of these anchors, a critical responsibility for our safety. Any new regulation should not hinder the quick safety decisions we often need to make. The approach to fixed anchor maintenance should focus on promoting safe replacements rather than risking the removal of climbing routes.

Moreover, the proposal to restrict the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is problematic. This is practically unenforceable and will likely lead to confusion among both land managers and climbers. The non-Wilderness climbing management policy should continue to allow opportunities for new anchors, unless specific analyses suggest that climbing needs to be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

Exploration is another key aspect of climbing. Climbing involves navigating Wilderness areas, often requiring spontaneous decisions in complex vertical terrains. Restricting our use of fixed anchors limits our ability to safely explore these areas.

Finally, I'm concerned about the impact on America's climbing heritage. Banning fixed anchors could erase some of the world's most significant climbing achievements. Our climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes and preserve the rich history and achievements of the climbing community.

Let's try to work together to find a balanced approach that will benefit everyone.

Thank you for your time.

Nate