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Comments: Sir,

I have spent 26 years as an active-duty member in the United States Army. I started climbing in 1999 and have been active in this sport to this date. Climbing groups like the "Carolina Climbers Coalition" (CCC) protect our Natural resources and parks. The Carolina Climbers Coalition organizes trail maintenance days and many park in North Carolina. The CCC has area managers responsible for bolt placement and bolt replacement for older bolts. North Carolina has such a rich history in climbing and very strong ethic when it comes to bolt placement. Not just anyone can bolt a route. The CCC works with federal and state park officials to discuss new route development.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

Please consider working with these climbing organizations.

Kind Regards.

Scott Rhodes