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Organization:

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Comments: Dear National Park Service,

I am writing as an avid climber and passionate outdoors enthusiast to express my concerns regarding the proposed ban on bolts and fixed anchors in wilderness areas. This policy, I believe, significantly undermines both the safety of climbers and the spirit of outdoor exploration that national parks are meant to foster. I would like to highlight several key points for your consideration:

1. ***Essential Safety Equipment***: Fixed anchors are a vital component of a climber's safety system. They are not prohibited installations under the Wilderness Act. For over half a century, existing climbing policies have allowed the judicious use of fixed anchors. This approach has successfully balanced the protection of Wilderness character with the provision for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing experiences.
2. ***Historical Precedent and Reasonableness***: It is unreasonable and inconsistent for federal agencies to suddenly prohibit Wilderness climbing anchors. This stance contradicts decades of management practices where fixed anchors were not only allowed but also managed and authorized. A sudden shift in policy disregards this longstanding precedent.
3. ***Safety and Maintenance Concerns***: Prohibiting fixed anchors will severely impact the safety of climbers. Regular maintenance of fixed anchors is crucial, and this responsibility is often undertaken by the climbing community. The ability to make critical safety decisions quickly is paramount in climbing, and any authorization process should not impede these decisions. Safe anchor replacement and maintenance need to be managed in a way that ensures the safety of climbing routes rather than risking their removal.
4. ***Exploration and Access***: The prohibition of fixed anchors would significantly restrict the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Climbers need the flexibility to make in-the-moment decisions when navigating complex vertical terrain. Land managers should facilitate this need, ensuring that Wilderness exploration remains true to its core values of adventure and discovery.
5. ***Preserving Climbing Legacy***: The rich legacy of American climbing is at stake. Prohibiting fixed anchors could lead to the erasure of some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. It is imperative that climbing management policies protect existing routes from removal, thereby preserving this important cultural and sporting heritage.

In conclusion, I urge the National Park Service to reconsider the proposed ban on bolts and fixed anchors. A policy that supports safe, responsible climbing aligns with both the spirit of the Wilderness Act and the rightful use of public lands for recreation. Let us work together to find a solution that safeguards our cherished wilderness areas while respecting the rights and safety of the climbing community.

Sincerely,
Gretchen