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Comments: Hello,

I am writing today in relation to the draft policies recently released by the NPS and USFS which would make fixed anchors (bolts, pitons, slings) prohibited in America's Wilderness areas. I am a climber and I feel morally obligated to speak out against these proposals.

Fixed anchors are a crucial component of climbers' safety systems and should not be considered prohibited "installations" according to the Wilderness Act. Upholding the longstanding climbing policies that have permitted the judicious use of fixed anchors for over fifty years is essential for preserving the Wilderness character while accommodating primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to introduce new guidance policies that ban Wilderness climbing anchors nationwide, especially when they have historically allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

The prohibition of fixed anchors could lead to safety concerns as it would introduce unnecessary hurdles in maintaining these anchors. The climbing community takes responsibility for the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, and critical safety decisions often need to be made on the spot. Any authorization process should not hinder these crucial decisions, and fixed anchor maintenance should be managed in a manner that encourages safe anchor replacements while avoiding the risk of removing climbing routes.

Banning fixed anchors would also hinder the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers should permit climbers to explore these areas in a way that allows for in-the-moment decisions, especially when navigating complex vertical terrain.

Ultimately, prohibiting fixed anchors could jeopardize America's rich climbing legacy and potentially erase some of the world's most remarkable climbing achievements. Climbing management policies should prioritize the protection of existing routes from removal.

It is imperative that we advocate for the passage of the bipartisan Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act and America's Outdoor Recreation Act. With unanimous support in their respective committees in 2023, these acts offer a promising opportunity to safeguard the legal and conditional use, placement, and maintenance of bolts and fixed anchors. If successfully enacted, they would compel NPS, Bureau of Land Management, and USFS to craft new national climbing management guidelines that prioritize safe and sustainable access to Wilderness climbing. Your continued support and engagement in advocating for these critical pieces of legislation will be instrumental in preserving the future of climbing in our cherished Wilderness areas. Together, we can ensure that the legacy of climbing remains vibrant and enduring for generations to come.

Kind regards,
Michael Olson