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First name: Rowan

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear [Recipient's Title and Name],

I am Rowan Steel Hall, an active participant in both sport and traditional climbing. I am writing to express my concern regarding the current discourse on fixed anchors in Wilderness areas. As a climber who deeply appreciates the natural beauty and challenge of these environments, I urge the National Park Service (NPS) to consider the following points in its policy-making:

1. **Essential Safety: Fixed Anchors in Wilderness Climbing**

Fixed anchors are not merely convenient; they are a crucial component of climbers' safety systems. Their use aligns with the Wilderness Act, as they do not constitute prohibited "installations." Adhering to established policies that have allowed the judicious use of these anchors for over fifty years will protect Wilderness character while ensuring safe, primitive, and unconfined climbing experiences.

2. **Unreasonableness of Prohibiting Established Practices**

It seems unreasonable for federal agencies to issue blanket prohibitions on Wilderness climbing anchors, especially considering their longstanding allowance, management, and authorization of these anchors. Such a sudden shift in policy contradicts decades of established practice.

3. **Safety and Maintenance of Fixed Anchors**

Prohibiting fixed anchors will inevitably lead to safety hazards by hindering the regular maintenance of these crucial safety features, a task historically undertaken by the climbing community. In critical situations, climbers often need to make immediate safety decisions. Any authorization process should facilitate, not impede, these essential actions. Therefore, fixed anchor maintenance should be managed in a way that promotes safe anchor replacement and ensures the preservation of climbing routes.

4. **Impact on Exploration and Climbing Legacy**

Barring the use of fixed anchors would significantly restrict the exploration of Wilderness areas. Climbers often need to make split-second decisions in complex vertical terrains, and fixed anchors are integral to this process. Furthermore, such prohibitions could threaten America's rich climbing heritage and potentially erase significant achievements in the world of climbing.

I would like to specifically emphasize the importance of rappel anchors. These safety devices offer climbers a significantly safer means to engage with Wilderness terrains. While their presence is minimal, their impact on accessibility and safety is substantial.

Climbing is not just a sport to me; it is a passion deeply intertwined with my life in Colorado. The growth of this sport promotes healthy lifestyles and fosters a unique connection with nature. As such, I strongly advocate for policies that support sustainable and safe climbing practices, which I believe are in line with the ethos of the NPS.

I trust that the NPS will consider these points with the gravity they deserve. It is imperative to strike a balance that respects both the integrity of Wilderness areas and the safety and traditions of the climbing community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rowan Steel Hall