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Comments: I am writing to oppose any measures that would make fixed anchors, an essential piece of climbers' safety system, 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. Rock climbing is a popular, low-impact sport that encourages fitness, environmental stewardship, and economic development. In the New River Gorge area, climbing is estimated to bring around \$12 million annually into the economically depressed region of my state. (See <https://www.climbing.com/news/new-study-finds-rock-climbers-bring-12-1-million-annually-to-new-river-gorge-region/>). Safe and easy to access sport climbing routes in Appalachia help to curb the obesity epidemic in this region of the country and make it possible for those who live in these areas to safely experience a sport that previously required more costly equipment and expensive guiding services.

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. Communities have formed in areas with fixed hardware and anchors, based on access to safe rock climbing.

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 also 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.

When adopting policies that limit established outdoor recreation, agencies should attempt to work with groups and individuals who understand the recreation and the practical impact it will have on communities and safety of outdoor sports. Please consult with the Access Fund and do not take measures that will functionally eliminate access to sport climbing for the majority of the population.