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Comments: Dear US Forest Service,

I am writing to you as an avid outdoor enthusiast and a passionate advocate for responsible climbing practices in our nation's wilderness areas. I understand and appreciate the importance of preserving the natural beauty and ecological integrity of these areas, but I believe there is a need for a thoughtful reconsideration against the proposed ban on fixed climbing bolts in wilderness zones.

Jacques Cousteau once wisely stated, "People protect what they love." This sentiment resonates deeply with climbers and, I believe, holds the key to fostering a genuine and lasting commitment to the preservation of our natural wonders. While I wholeheartedly support the Forest Service's dedication to safeguarding the integrity of our wilderness areas, I respectfully disagree with the proposed ban on fixed climbing bolts as a means to enhance both safety and environmental preservation.

Wilderness climbing is not merely a physical pursuit; it is a spiritual connection with nature that instills a profound appreciation for the beauty and fragility of our ecosystems. Climbers, by nature, are stewards of the environment, understanding the delicate balance between adventure and preservation. Fixed climbing bolts, when used responsibly, can serve as crucial safety anchors, allowing climbers to navigate these terrains without causing undue harm.

The use of fixed climbing bolts can significantly reduce the environmental impact associated with alternative protection methods. Removable gear, when placed and removed repeatedly, can cause wear on the rock surface and vegetation. Fixed bolts, when properly installed and maintained, offer a more sustainable option by minimizing the physical impact on the climbing environment.

Moreover, the prohibition of fixed climbing bolts could inadvertently lead to the creation of unsustainable and dangerous alternative routes. Climbers may be forced to seek out less-than-ideal placements for protection or establish new routes, potentially causing irreversible damage to the environment. By allowing the responsible use of fixed bolts, the Forest Service can help guide climbers towards established routes, minimizing the impact on the wilderness and promoting sustainable recreation.

I propose that the Forest Service consider a nuanced approach that allows for the controlled and regulated use of fixed climbing bolts in designated wilderness areas. This approach could involve the establishment of specific guidelines for bolt placement, periodic assessments of climbing routes, and collaboration with the climbing community to ensure that safety and environmental considerations are prioritized.

In conclusion, I urge you to reevaluate the proposed ban on fixed climbing bolts in wilderness areas. By adopting a more flexible and collaborative approach, we can strike a balance between preserving the natural beauty of these areas and promoting safe and responsible climbing practices. I appreciate your consideration of this matter and am hopeful that together we can find a solution that benefits both the climbing community and the cherished wilderness areas under your stewardship.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the preservation of our nation's precious natural resources.

Sincerely,

Karl Menzel