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Comments: I have been climbing in US Wilderness areas for 17 years and I oppose the draft policy to prohibit fixed anchors. The climbers I know are the most environmentally conscious people you'll ever meet -- obsessed about leaving as little trace as possible, in love with open wild country, longing to get out there and honor the beautiful natural resources of our country. We follow a strong culture of minimal impact, only placing anchors or slings as needed to be safe. In 17 years of climbing, these practices have stayed the same, while so much else has changed in the world and in our climbing community. It is wrong to reject these safe, minimally invasive practices.

The wildest place I've ever been was on a 3-week climbing trip to the Gates Of The Arctic National Park. This place has a very extreme ethic of wilderness preservation. There are not even hiking trails... you have to bushwhack everywhere! The float plane drops you off at a lakeshore, and comes back 21 days later. Most of the granite walls in the area have barely been climbed. We spent 17 days waiting in our tents in the rain, and four days climbing. On those climbs, we went up walls that no human has ever climbed before. Once, 500 feet up, on a run-out stretch of degraded rock, the lead climber hammered in a 4-inch piton. We brought just a few, and painted them mute gray before our trip so they'd blend in with the thousands of square feet of cliff. That piton allowed us to reach a summit no one had visited before. To get down, we looped some tan webbing slings around rock features for our rappels. Anyone who gets up there, via our first ascent route or another way, can now safely rappel via our slings (for the next 20 years or so until they need to be replaced).