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Comments: I am writing to express extreme disappointment and opposition to the draft policies that would prohibit rock climbing protection (anchor bolts, pitons, etc.) in wilderness areas. It is currently already the case that such protection in wilderness areas must be placed by hand--a restriction which I fully support, as it keeps the number of placements negligible, the climbs are more adventurous, and the impact is minimized. Recreating in America's great public lands is part of what makes life fulfilling and provides the deep connection to nature that so many people lack. I fully support the importance of multiple layers of protection for different types of public land, which is why I support that Wilderness-designated land already has its existing fixed anchor policy to limit rampant development.

I have had many experiences rock climbing in Wilderness that I would not trade for anything: my husband proposing on top of Pingora in the Popo Agie Wilderness of the Wind River Range, 15 years ago; five days and four nights on El Capitan in Yosemite National Park and Wilderness; sunrise beneath Mount Whitney before climbing the classic East Face. The current proposal is alarming because its focus on anchors as "installations" would have made all of these experiences impossible had the occasional fixed pin or anchor not been allowed for climbers' safety through otherwise unprotectable sections of sheer rock. The impacts of these anchors is far less than hiking trail systems on these same mountains or formations.

Climbing is a beautiful, exhilarating way to enjoy nature, with a long history and a growing interest among many groups of people (including those not historically well-represented in the rock climbing community) as a healthy, non-motorized, adventurous sport and way to connect with the land through movement and beauty of place. There are certain characteristics of rock and mountain and landscape that combine to make something climbable, and many of those things converge on public lands, and taking away that ability in (and out) of wilderness areas is devastating to myself and the climbing community. Each removal of a treasured rock formation or area from climbable lands is a deep blow to us, a shrinking of the available pool of classic or very special routes and climbs.

Federal agencies, as stewards of our public lands, have managed recreation as appropriate in concert with preservation objectives, and climbing has benefited from that management since its early history on the nation's most special rock formations and mountains. I urge you to reject these proposed changes that will devastate this community by removing a key safety feature and thus the climbability of some of the world's best rock climbing. Thank you for considering leaving the Wilderness anchors policy as it is: hand-placed anchors only; no motors; and a strong ethic of minimal impact on the land.