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Comments: As an avid member of the climbing community deeply connected to the preservation of our nation's natural wonders, I write to share my concerns surrounding the proposed prohibition of fixed anchors in Wilderness areas.

In the rugged tapestry of our Wilderness, where vertical landscapes challenge and inspire climbers, fixed anchors stand as silent sentinels, integral to our safety systems. These unassuming fixtures, have played a vital role in climbers' pursuits for over half a century. Adhering to established climbing policies has been the cornerstone of our ability to protect the pristine character of these sacred spaces while fostering a legacy of primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

Yet, a shadow looms over the climbing community as federal agencies contemplate new guidance policies that would forbid fixed anchors nationwide. This contemplation strikes an unharmonious chord, echoing an era where agencies have historically allowed, managed, and authorized these anchors. To alter this long-standing practice appears unreasonable and threatens the safety and ethos of Wilderness climbing.

Safety, a paramount concern for climbers, is intricately tied to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors. The climbing community has embraced the responsibility of this upkeep, ensuring the reliability of these anchors for all who follow. However, any potential authorization process should not hinder crucial decisions made in the heat of the moment, ensuring the swift and safe replacement of anchors to protect climbing routes.

The proposal to prohibit fixed anchors reveals a paradox - a constraint on the very exploration that Wilderness areas beckon. Navigating complex vertical terrain demands in-the-moment decisions, a necessity stifled by restrictions on fixed anchors. Land managers should be allies in fostering a delicate balance between exploration and preservation, allowing climbers to navigate these landscapes responsibly.

Beyond safety concerns, the legacy of American climbing hangs in the balance. Prohibiting fixed anchors could erase the footprints of climbers who etched their stories into the stone. It poses a threat to the rich tapestry of our climbing heritage, endangering some of the world's greatest achievements. Climbing management policies must evolve to safeguard existing routes, honoring the legacy of those who dared to dream vertically.

The notion of restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands introduces a quagmire of enforceability challenges. Such a provision, though well-intentioned, risks confusion among land managers and climbers alike.

I implore you to consider my concerns. The climbing community stands ready to collaborate, to work hand-in-hand with the custodians of our public lands. Let us preserve the essence of Wilderness climbing, ensuring safety, nurturing our climbing legacy, and embracing responsible exploration.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to a continued dialogue that fosters the stewardship of our precious Wilderness areas.

Best Regards,

Scott Krankkala