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Comments: I am reaching out to share my concerns about the proposed restrictions on the use of bolts for climbing in national wilderness areas. This proposal raises several issues regarding climbing safety, historical practices, exploration freedom, and the practicality of enforcement.

1. The Necessity of Fixed Anchors for Climber Safety:

Fixed anchors are crucial for climber safety and should not be classified as prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. The existing climbing policies allowing the use of fixed anchors have proven effective in balancing safety needs with wilderness preservation for over half a century.

2. Inconsistency with Historical Practices:

It is contradictory for federal agencies to propose a nationwide prohibition on Wilderness climbing anchors, given their historical authorization and management of these fixtures. Such a change disregards the established understanding and practices that have been part of climbing culture for decades.

3. Safety Concerns and Maintenance of Anchors:

A ban on fixed anchors compromises safety. Climbers often have to make instant critical safety decisions, and a process requiring authorization for anchor maintenance is impractical and dangerous. Policies should promote the safe upkeep of anchors, ensuring the continued viability of climbing routes.

4. Impediments to Wilderness Exploration:

Climbing is a unique form of wilderness exploration requiring the ability to make real-time decisions in challenging terrain. Restricting fixed anchors hinders this exploratory aspect and goes against the spirit of wilderness engagement.

5. Preservation of Climbing Legacy:

The proposed restriction threatens the rich climbing heritage in America and could lead to the erasure of significant climbing achievements. It is imperative to protect existing routes from removal to maintain this legacy.

6. The Practicality and Clarity of Enforcement:

Restricting the establishment of new routes to only "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is impractical and likely to cause confusion among both land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management should continue to allow for new anchors, with restrictions implemented only after thorough analyses demonstrate a need to protect cultural and natural resources. This approach would ensure clarity and enforceability while preserving the dynamic nature of climbing.

In light of these points, I urge the NPS to reconsider the proposed restrictions. It is crucial to strike a balance that respects both the integrity of wilderness areas and the legitimate safety and exploratory needs of the climbing community.