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Comments: Banning fixed anchors on climbing routes will effectively prohibit access to a vast natural resource by a select class of outdoor enthusiasts.

There are very few climbing routes that can be protected with 100% natural and/or removable gear. Fixed anchors are often essential for belay stations or to safely protect short sections that will not allow removable gear. Thus, banning fixed anchors equates to banning climbing in most cases.

The idea that fixed anchors degrade the wilderness experience for others is simply untrue. It is often difficult or impossible to see these anchors (from the ground or when climbing) even knowing where to look by having a guidebook, route knowledge and keen eyes.

The proliferation of fixed anchor installations in some areas (such as Yosemite) for heavily bolted "sport" climbs has been effectively managed by requiring only hand drilling. The visual impact of fixed anchors has been eliminated by the use of like colored gear and modern methods that don't require nylon webbing that becomes bleached white with exposure.

Non-fixed alternatives have been proven to be more destructive and harmful to a wilderness experience. These include various types of pitons and malleable swaged "bashies". Pitons are hammered into incipient seams and cracks and when removed must be hammered out. Over time, these become widened, flared scars that can no longer take another piton placement, so another section of rock is used until that one is beyond use, etc. Malleable swages of aluminum or copper can be "pasted" by hammering them into a shallow seam, but although they are not meant to be fixed, the cables will often break when trying to remove. This renders the placement useless as well as ugly.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.