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Comments: It is hard to put into words how important having legal, properly maintained bolts and fixed anchors are for ensuring an inclusive and safe climbing experience for residents of southern Arizona. In our part of the United States, climbing routes are maintained by the Climbing Association of Southern Arizona (CASA). Members of this 501(c) non-profit are experienced climbers who have the expertise to ensure the long-term safety of bolts and fixed anchors on the many, many climbs that have been established in the area. The region is home to world-class climbing, which when properly maintained as done currently by CASA ensure an important economic boost to our local economy.

Setting aside the considerable economic impact of having safe climbing routes for visitors to the region, providing sport climbing opportunities promotes diversity and inclusion of opportunities for those who would otherwise not be able to engage in this incredible sport. There are many who cannot, for myriad reasons, engage in traditional climbing and depend on sport routes set with fixed bolts and secure anchors. This includes people who want to and deserve the opportunity to climb, such as those new to the sport for whom traditional climbing is too dangerous. The sport of climbing is experiences a such in popularity in recent years, and sport climbing, climbing with fixed bolts and anchors, provides the opportunity to introduce outdoor climbing to a diverse range of Americans.

Given the popularity of climbing in recent years, I am not sure what the impetus is for the USFS and NPS to implement sweeping national changes that threaten the safety of climbers. But, I am completely confident that outlawing fixed bolts and anchors and failing to allow volunteer, expert stewards to maintain the equipment such as fixed anchors and bolts will endanger the health and safety of many Americans who engage in climbing as a recreation activity on our own publicly own lands. Such a failure on the part of the USFS and the NPS will lead to people dying from climbing on gear that would have otherwise been replaced by CASA and similar non-profit organizations.

I implore the NPS and USFS to avoid sweeping policies that will endanger lives, particular in areas like southern Arizona where there are active stakeholders and stewards who use private money to maintain safe and secure protection features for all interested climbers. Instead, work with and empower CASA to continue their important work of ensuring safe and secure year-round climbing routes in one of the best places on earth to climb.