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Comments: I'm writing because I understand that the NPS and USFS have released draft policies that would prohibit fixed anchors (including bolts, pitons, and slings) in wilderness areas. These policies threaten America's rich history of sustainable rock climbing while posing a serious safety hazard to climbers who depend on these anchors to safely enjoy the outdoors.

Fixed anchors are an essential part of any climbing safety system, and prohibiting their use makes it effectively impossible to climb in wilderness areas at all. It is impossible to rappel without a fixed anchor of some type, and without the ability to rappel many routes are impossible to climb safely. Prohibition of fixed anchors would also create unnecessary obstacles to normal periodic maintenance of existing anchors, which creates obvious safety issues as well - what happens to a climbing party that expects a solid anchor at the top of their route, only to find that the anchor has been removed or hasn't been maintained correctly?

Safely navigating complex vertical terrain is only possible if climbers are enabled to make decisions in the moment that allow them to prioritize their own safety while respecting the environment. Instead, these proposed policies impose unnecessary red tape before necessary and responsible maintenance can take place. Fixed anchor maintenance should be managed so that safe anchor installation and replacement is the priority.

Furthermore, the proposed restriction of establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-wilderness lands seems poised to create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Climbing policy for non-wilderness areas should permit opportunities for new anchors in the absence of analysis that explicitly supports restriction of climbing to protect cultural or natural resources.

Rock climbing is a legitimate use of our outdoor spaces. It is entirely possible to preserve wilderness character AND protect access to climbing by allowing judicious use of fixed anchors according to existing climbing policies that have been in place for decades. The climbing community at large values this wilderness character and has shown itself to be a responsible steward for outdoor spaces, as well as one of the strongest advocates for the protection of our outdoor spaces. While I know that bolting sport climbs is contentious, it is unreasonable to prohibit safe permanent anchors at the top of traditional ("trad") pitches/routes that require clean climbing techniques/ethics to climb.

America has some of the richest climbing history in the world, and these new policies threaten that legacy and could erase some of history's greatest climbing achievements while also obstructing continued safe exploration of these wilderness areas. It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new policies prohibiting fixed climbing anchors in wilderness areas after allowing fixed anchors for decades. Climbing management policy must protect existing climbing routes while enabling safe, judicious, unobtrusive, sustainable, and respectful exploration of new routes by empowering the climbing community to install and maintain fixed anchors as it has done effectively for decades.