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Comments: Two years ago, I was introduced to canyoning by a friend. She took me to Hall Creek, WA, where I rappelled waterfalls for the first time. I immediately loved the beauty and serenity of the canyon. The cold water, the lush greenery, the serenity, nothing but the sound of the water, and us being submerged in this magical experience.

That summer, I experienced three canyons with the same friend. She invited me on trips and ensured my safety at all times. At the time, I was not educated in the techniques and procedures necessary to safely navigate a canyon, but I felt safe, because the anchors in the rock looked solid, and the rope was secured to them.

The next summer, I signed up for a beginner canyoning course, so I could figuratively and literally learn the ropes of this new activity I had fallen in love with.

What I found most in canyoning, is a unique community. The canyoning community is one of great diversity. It is a community where women and men are welcomed equally and receive equal respect and opportunity. It is a community where folks of all skin colors and ethnicities are represented and welcomed. It is a community where all ages and body types are welcomed and celebrated. It is a community of diverse gender expression and sexual orientations. Never in my life before have I experienced a community that is so welcoming to anyone who wants to join, with open arms. If you feel drawn to canyoning, the canyoning community will embrace you, welcome you, educate you, support you and make you part of the family.

Further, canyoning is an activity where great life skills are built. In the canyon, you rely on each other. There is tremendous teamwork and generosity. In the canyon, we are a team, tight knit and trusting of each other. Canyoning builds resilience, strength, and endurance. Canyoning engages critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills and decision-making skills. Canyoning can make one face fears and learn how to overcome them. Canyoning builds confidence. All of these skills make us better humans for society. It makes us mentally strong. On top of that, most of us have advanced first responder certifications!

What does all this have to do with anchors in the wilderness?

Without those anchors, our community will lose safe access to most of the canyons we love so much. It will mean that only advanced canyoneers can access the canyons and that new community members will have no opportunity to learn.

Losing the anchors in the canyons will result in countless people missing out on the opportunity to be part of our heart-warming and welcoming community. They would be missing out on building life skills that will make them grow as individuals and become a stronger part of our society.

The anchors are in a way the anchors to our community. They give us security, and the safety to learn and grow.

However, the anchors not only protect us; they also protect the environment. Because of the thoughtful placement of the anchors, vegetation and wildlife is protected. The anchors create a defined path through the canyon, much like a trail up a mountain. When people stay on the designated trail, we can enjoy the magic the wilderness has to offer, while at the same time protecting the eco-system from damage.

Nature has a way of changing us. Nature grounds us, connects us to our core, to our soul. Nature helps us disconnect from our daily lives, from the fast pace, from technology. Nature helps us to be present with

ourselves and the people around us.

And the canyons do that for me like no other place before. Canyoning has been a great support for my mental health. Canyoning makes me feel like I belong in a way that I haven't experienced....maybe ever in my life before.

So, to be quite frank, your proposal frightens me. It makes me scared that you will take all of this away from me and my community. I feel like a kid who just discovered Disney Land and then hears that the government might want to close all locations forever. Going through with this proposal would take so much joy away from so many people.

The anchors protect the canyoneer, and the wilderness, and all its beings. The anchors give us community. The anchors offer us a way to connect with nature and get to our roots.

The canyoning community cares a lot about the wilderness and the canyons we recreate in. We take great precautions not to contaminate or damage our sacred lands in any form. We educate new community members on how to care for our canyons. Preserving our canyons for future generations of canyoneers is paramount to us.

I beg of you to not take our anchors away. Those anchors are so much more than pieces of metal in rock. They are the glue of our community. They are the safeguards of the environment. They are the training wheels for new community members. They are the key in keeping the activity accessible to people from all backgrounds, of all body types, of all ages....the diversity of America is represented in those canyons, and we couldn't do it without our anchors.

It is my sincere hope that you can embrace canyoning like we do. It is my sincere hope that you can experience it for yourself one day and see it through our eyes. Because you would find that it is those anchors that keep you safe and give you the opportunity to experience the wilderness in a way that you could not have envisioned in your wildest dreams!