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Comments: To Whom It May Concern at the National Park Service,

Fixed anchors have long been an integral component of climbers' safety systems and should not be categorized as prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Their role is crucial in ensuring the safety of climbers, which aligns with the Act's goal of preserving wilderness character. For more than fifty years, the existing climbing policies have successfully balanced the use of fixed anchors with the preservation of wilderness. These policies have demonstrated that the judicious use of fixed anchors can protect the wilderness character while simultaneously allowing for primitive and unconfined wilderness climbing experiences. It is important to recognize that fixed anchors do not detract from the wilderness experience; rather, they are a necessary tool that enables climbers to safely navigate these natural landscapes.

Moreover, the proposition of new federal guidelines that blanketly prohibit wilderness climbing anchors across the country is unreasonable and disregards the historical context. For decades, fixed anchors have been allowed, managed, and authorized by various agencies, demonstrating a long-standing acceptance of their importance. Prohibiting these anchors not only creates significant safety issues due to the hindrance of regular maintenance—a responsibility that the climbing community has admirably shouldered—but also impedes the ability to make critical safety decisions in real-time. Such decisions are often crucial in climbing and cannot be delayed by bureaucratic processes. Furthermore, the prohibition of fixed anchors is a direct obstacle to the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Climbers need the freedom to make in-the-moment decisions, which are essential in navigating complex vertical terrains. Lastly, it is vital to consider the impact on America's rich climbing legacy. Prohibiting fixed anchors risks erasing some of the world's most significant climbing achievements. Therefore, it is imperative that climbing management policies not only allow but actively protect existing routes from removal, thus preserving this integral part of our national heritage.

Finally, restricting new route development to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable. Management plans should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless other factors determine that climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

Thank you.