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Comments: Dear National Forest Service,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my concerns and suggestions regarding the proposed guidance policies related to fixed anchors in Wilderness areas. I understand the need for thoughtful management of climbing activities, but I believe that the proposed restrictions on fixed anchors may have unintended consequences and negatively impact both safety and the rich climbing legacy in our country.

The proposed bolt ban is a bad idea that is going to harm beloved recreation access and more importantly get people hurt or even killed. Appropriate land management as it pertains to fixed anchors should work in tandem with climber coalition groups such as the Access Fund, American Alpine club, and the general public, so to enrich a deep American tradition of exploring and enjoying our outdoors with an utmost focus on the protection of our natural resources. A blanket ban will inevitably lead to climbers encountering bad hardware, and force them to decide between risking their lives or breaking the law in order to complete their recreation safely.

There is a deep and powerful tradition in American rock climbing to coexist with our natural resources. Permanent installations are a touchy subject even among the most fervent of the sport. The community strives to leave as minimal a trace as possible, but some compromise must be made to ensure safe and equitable access to the outdoors. This is the same reason the national park service has installed roads, trails and paths within their parks. Because enjoyment of our natural resources should be accessible not only to the highly adventurous and risk tolerant. I hope you can come to see fixed gear in a similar light as other man made development in our treasured outdoor spaces, as something imperative to the appreciation of the resource itself, and something to be mindfully managed, not blanket banned.

The focus should be on reducing the volume and impact of fixed gear by promoting a culture of responsible development and stewardship. Such examples are fixed gear painted to visually blend in with the rock. Reducing development of low quality lines and "squeeze-jobs". Perhaps limiting development on features that are particularly visually apparent to the general public. Regardless, the approach should be measured and taken with great consideration.

I myself have been in situations where my life was at risk due to depreciated hardware while climbing. It is not an experience I wish on anybody. The thought of such an event occurring on a regular basis is greatly concerning to me. If this passes I loathe to see a time where it becomes common-place to read accident reports that are a direct result of this legislation.

Fixed anchors are an integral component of climbers' safety systems, playing a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of individuals navigating challenging terrains. I would like to emphasize that fixed anchors are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act, and it is important to recognize their importance in preserving Wilderness character while facilitating primitive and unconfined climbing experiences.

Existing climbing policies have allowed for the judicious use of fixed anchors for over half a century. I urge the National Forest Service to continue following these established guidelines, as they have proven effective in balancing safety considerations with the preservation of Wilderness character.

I find it unreasonable to create new guidance policies that prohibit fixed anchors nationwide, especially when federal agencies have historically allowed, managed, and authorized their use for decades. Prohibiting fixed anchors could lead to safety issues by hindering the regular maintenance of these crucial safety elements. The

responsibility of maintaining fixed anchors often falls on the climbing community, and any authorization process should not impede critical safety decisions made in the moment.

Furthermore, prohibiting fixed anchors could obstruct the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Climbers need the flexibility to make in-the-moment decisions when navigating complex vertical terrains. Land managers should allow climbers the freedom to explore Wilderness areas while ensuring responsible decision-making and route exploration.

I am concerned that prohibiting fixed anchors may threaten America's rich climbing legacy and potentially erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policies should aim to protect existing routes from removal and support the continued enjoyment of these natural wonders by climbers.

I encourage the National Forest Service to reconsider the proposed guidance policies and instead focus on improvements to existing climbing policies that have successfully balanced safety and environmental considerations for decades. Collaborative efforts between federal agencies and the climbing community can lead to effective solutions that preserve our climbing heritage while ensuring responsible and safe climbing practices in Wilderness areas.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I appreciate your commitment to the preservation of our natural spaces.

Sincerely,  
Brayden Levy