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Comments: Dear US Forest Service,

I am writing to provide constructive feedback on the proposed guidelines related to climbing protection. As an avid climber, I understand the importance of balancing conservation efforts with responsible climbing practices. Rather than opposing the proposals outright, I believe that suggesting improvements to the guidance is essential for finding a harmonious solution.

Fixed Anchors and Wilderness Character:

Fixed anchors play a crucial role in climbers' safety systems and have been a recognized practice under existing climbing policies for over half a century. It's vital to acknowledge that fixed anchors are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. I recommend continued adherence to established climbing policies, as they have proven effective in preserving Wilderness character while accommodating primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

Reasonable Guidelines for Fixed Anchors:

Creating new guidance policies that outright prohibit Wilderness climbing anchors across the country seems unreasonable, given that federal agencies have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades. Instead, I propose refining and clarifying existing guidelines to ensure their alignment with contemporary climbing practices while maintaining safety standards.

Safety Concerns and Fixed Anchor Maintenance:

Prohibiting fixed anchors could pose safety issues by hindering the regular maintenance undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often require on-the-spot actions, and any authorization process should not impede this. It is crucial to manage fixed anchor maintenance in a way that incentivizes safe replacements and doesn't risk the removal of climbing routes.

Facilitating Exploration in Wilderness Areas:

Wilderness areas should allow climbers to explore responsibly, making in-the-moment decisions when navigating complex vertical terrain. Prohibiting fixed anchors could obstruct appropriate exploration. I suggest working towards guidelines that strike a balance between conservation and the freedom to explore while ensuring responsible climbing practices.

Preserving Climbing Legacy:

Climbing has a rich legacy in America, with some of the world's greatest climbing achievements recorded in our national parks. It is vital that climbing management policies protect existing routes from removal. Let's collaborate to enhance policies that acknowledge and preserve this legacy.

Restrictions on New Routes:

Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands may lead to confusion among land managers and climbers. I propose maintaining opportunities for new anchors unless analyses determine that climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

In conclusion, I appreciate the US Forest Service's commitment to conservation, and I believe that a collaborative effort with the climbing community can lead to improved guidelines that safeguard both our natural resources and the essence of climbing in these magnificent landscapes.