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Comments: I am writing to express my concern over the use of fixed anchors in our nation's Wilderness areas. I am a passionate amateur alpinist and climber and have used existing fixed anchors countless times to protect dangerous runouts and to facilitate safe descents.

Fixed anchors are an integral component of climbers' safety systems, and their use has been an accepted practice for over half a century. It is essential to recognize that these anchors are not prohibited under the Wilderness Act, and adhering to established climbing policies is crucial for protecting Wilderness character while facilitating primitive and unconfined climbing experiences.

Implementing new guidance policies that broadly prohibit Wilderness climbing anchors is not only unreasonable but also overlooks the decades of responsible management and authorization of fixed anchors by federal agencies. This sudden shift in approach poses significant challenges to the climbing community, particularly in terms of safety, regular maintenance, and the preservation of climbing routes.

Prohibiting fixed anchors introduces unnecessary obstacles to routine maintenance efforts undertaken by climbers themselves. Quick, critical safety decisions often must be made in the field, and any authorization process should not hinder the timely replacement of anchors, which is vital for maintaining safety standards and preventing the removal of established climbing routes. I don't believe climbers should have to consider whether they are breaking the law if they need to make a quick descent down a route due to unforeseen circumstances such as injury or poor weather. The use of fixed bolt anchors on established descent routes can prevent build up of unsightly and possibly unsafe cordelette anchors, or the use of natural features such as trees or blocks.

Beyond safety concerns, the prohibition of fixed anchors jeopardizes America's storied climbing history and world class achievements that were made possible through sensible use of fixed anchors. Climbing management policies should prioritize protecting existing routes from removal, safeguarding not only our natural landscapes but also the cultural and historical significance embedded in these climbing achievements.

I urge you to consider the implications of such prohibitions on the safety of climbers. I have personally lost a close friend who slipped and fell while lost on the descent of a popular and established route in a wilderness area, and I have other friends that share similar stories. While in this specific case fixed anchors would be unlikely to help as it was a walk off descent, the prohibition of fixed anchors to allow safe and obvious descent seems likely to lead to more climbers getting off route on descent while descending off steeper terrain, which can lead to extremely unsafe situations.

Thank you for your consideration.