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First name: Thomas

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Organization:

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Comments: Dear Forest Service,

As a long-time climber of wilderness and backcountry rock and alpine climbs, I have relied on fixed anchors in many instances, including during retreats and self-rescues as well as "regular" ascents and descents. In all cases, fixed hardware, including bolts, pitons, slings, and removable protection that becomes stuck in place, have never been in places that would detract from the natural beauty of the surrounding area from a nature lover's perspective, i.e. from the ground. Such hardware does wear out just from time in the elements, and occasionally from extended use (talking about rappel rings and chains here). Fixed anchors must be replaced before end of life by those who know how to place such hardware in a safe way. Fixed hardware replacement bans make no sense from a safety perspective as well as in light of the self-sufficiency climbers require to move safely in the vertical wilderness. Both climbers and the Forest Service should agree that climber self-rescue or retreat in the face of climbing obstacles or weather is preferable to (and much cheaper than) a rescue by emergency response teams. Most if not all retreats will require leaving behind some type of hardware or using existing fixed hardware. Climbing routes that do not follow natural crack systems many times also require fixed hardware such as bolts and pitons for safety. Climbers have for the most part been respectful of the wilderness lands they traverse and will continue to do so without a ban on fixed anchor replacement.

Thank you for taking my inputs and the inputs of other experienced climbers.