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Comments: Dear USFS,

It's unreasonable for federal agencies to prohibit fixed anchors in Wilderness climbing areas. An anchor prohibition would be a step in the wrong direction, away from a long history of agencies working successfully with climbers to protect human and environmental health in cliffside zones used for recreation. Prohibiting fixed anchors would not only create safety issues, but would inevitably lead to additional degradation of cliffside natural resources, damaging trees, creating erosion, and leading to more widespread human impacts as climbers search for alternative anchors. Fixed anchors should be viewed as both a strategy for conservation and harm reduction.

It is also worth noting that prohibitions on new route development would not only be difficult to enforce and lead to confusion between climbers and land managers, but creates a significant issue with accessibility. New route establishment is essential to create shared resources that allow climbing areas to accommodate growth in climbing. As well, climbing is expanding from a largely white male dominated sport with a high degree of elitism. There is significant demand for new route development at easier grades to allow for new climbers, many of whom come from disadvantaged groups, to enter the sport.

Best regards,

Bennett LaFond