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Comments: Dear National Forest Service,

I am reaching out to express my concerns regarding the proposed restrictions on rock climbing activities, particularly the use of fixed anchors, both in Wilderness and non-Wilderness areas. These restrictions not only impact climbers like myself but also have broader implications for the stewardship and enjoyment of our national forests.

Fixed anchors are essential for climbers' safety and have been used responsibly in Wilderness areas for decades under policies that balance environmental protection with climbing activities. The proposed restrictions on fixed anchors could jeopardize climber safety by impeding the maintenance of these essential safety tools.

Moreover, fixed anchors, particularly bolts, are discreet and minimally invasive. Their small size means they often go unnoticed even for those actively looking for them.

Another crucial point is the impracticality and confusion that would arise from restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" in non-Wilderness areas. This approach is vague and unenforceable, leading to uncertainty among both climbers and land managers. A more effective policy would allow for the establishment of new anchors, with limitations imposed only after thorough analyses demonstrate the need to protect cultural or natural resources.

Prohibiting fixed anchors in Wilderness areas not only limits climbers' ability to safely navigate these terrains but also restricts our ability to explore and appreciate the full scope of these natural landscapes.

These restrictions threaten the rich climbing legacy of America. It is vital that climbing management policies protect existing routes to preserve this part of our cultural heritage.

I urge the National Forest Service to reconsider these proposed restrictions. A balanced approach that respects both the environment and the climbing community's safety and traditions is crucial. Let's work together to ensure that our national forests continue to be places of adventure, exploration and conservation.

Sincerely,

Damon van Vessem