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Comments: The recent policy shift by the U.S. Forest Service to prohibit the use of fixed anchors in Wilderness climbing areas is not only deeply concerning but also presents a direct threat to the lives of climbers. Fixed anchors, contrary to the misconceptions of the policy, are not installations banned under the Wilderness Act. Rather, they are a critical component of climbers' safety systems. The longstanding practice of judiciously using fixed anchors has been instrumental in safeguarding Wilderness character while ensuring safe and primitive climbing experiences. The sudden reversal of this policy, after decades of sanctioned and managed use, is not just unreasonable, but also dangerously undermines established safety protocols.

By impeding the regular maintenance of these fixed anchors, traditionally undertaken by the climbing community, the U.S. Forest Service is creating substantial safety hazards. The nature of climbing necessitates quick, critical decision-making for safety, and any delay or impediment caused by cumbersome authorization processes can be fatal. The inability to perform essential maintenance on these anchors could lead to catastrophic accidents, for which the policy and its proponents must be held liable.

Furthermore, this policy severely restricts the appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Climbers must have the flexibility to make in-the-moment decisions while navigating complex vertical terrains, a freedom that fixed anchors facilitate. The prohibition of these anchors not only limits this essential flexibility but also threatens America's rich climbing legacy. Some of the world's most significant climbing achievements could be erased if existing routes are not protected.

In light of these severe implications - the increased risk of fatal accidents, the hindrance to safe exploration, and the potential erasure of climbing achievements - it is unconscionable to support or enforce this policy. We strongly urge the U.S. Forest Service to immediately reconsider and reverse this policy. The risks it poses to human life and the heritage of Wilderness climbing are intolerable and run counter to the principles of responsible Wilderness management. It is the duty of the U.S. Forest Service to protect not only our natural landscapes but also the lives and legacy of those who explore them.