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Comments: Dear Sirs,

I am alarmed and disturbed that fixed anchors may be banned in wilderness areas. Fixed anchors are a necessary part of safe rock and ice climbing. If you are establishing a new route, the best option is to place passive protection in cracks. This gear is then removed and reused. However, after getting to the summit, it is necessary to get down safely. We used to simply double the rope around a (live) tree trunk and rappel. However, sufficiently large trees are not always present at the needed sites. Also, we discovered that over time, pulling the rope will rub away the bark, and can eventually kill the tree. Fixed slings were used for a while, but these turned out to be quite dangerous.....u.v. radiation can weaken the slings, and turn the rappel stations into death traps. On the same note, pitons and stoppers can be left as a rappel station. However, it turns out that cracks in rock are quite dynamic over time. Temperature and water fluctuations cause the cracks to expand and contract. This can (and does) lead to rappel/ descent stations turning into death traps. The modern solution is to install mussey hooks at descent stations. Stainless steel bolts are an integral part of the installation. The size of the bolts are dependent on the rock type (desert sandstone requires deeper bolts than fresh granite, basalt, or quartzite). Safe rappel anchors are needed in wilderness areas, just as they are needed on all public lands and private lands where rock and ice climbing occurs. The USA is supposed to be a free country. Please allow the freedom to climb up rock faces in the wilderness continue. This means let climbers place permanent anchors to get down safely.

Sincerely, Eric Anderson, Ph.D.