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Comments:

Fixed anchors are a critical and necessary component of any rock climber's system and in my opinion are not prohibited installations under the Wilderness Act. Fixed anchors encompass a wide variety of equipment that is necessary to engage in climbing safely, and more importantly, to allow safe descent. There is also concern of older fixed anchors that are in constant need of monitoring and replacing, that will become unsafe if organizations like the Access Fund and American Safe Climbing Association are not allowed to maintain them. Climbing is a well-established sport with strong ties to national lands and wilderness areas. In comparison to a trail, a fixed anchor impacts the environment much less. Climbers, climbing organizations, and land management agencies including the BLM, USFS, and state entities have worked together for years to find solutions that make sense for specific places and situations. Making a blanket policy unnecessarily restricts use to the climbing population and is a step backwards in terms of accessibility and equal rights and access for all.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new policies that prohibit Wilderness climbing anchors around the country where they have been allowed, and specifically managed with climbing management plans to ensure the spirit of the Wilderness Act is followed, nature and resources are preserved, while protecting this important, historical activity.

A prohibition of fixed anchors will cause safety issues, including deaths from failed anchors that will be on the hands of the people choosing to make this ill-informed policy. Rescues will be affected as they rely on fixed anchors, whether natural or manmade, to safely reach people in need of rescue and get them back to safety. This includes hikers, not just climbers, as hikers are more frequently rescued with high angle rescue tactics due to the hiking location or if they have gotten off trail.

Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate and historical exploration of our national lands, and is one more step in the direction of removing individual rights and supplementing corporate rights.

America has a rich climbing legacy that literally defines and attracts visitors to many Wilderness areas such as Yosemite.

Restricting establishment of new climbing routes to existing climbs on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and violates the spirit of our national lands that are intended to be used for recreation as well as resources for industry and commerce, as seen in lands that are leased for grazing rights, mineral rights, or forestry. Only when detailed analyses show that a specific location needs restriction to protect cultural or natural resources, should any sort of prohibition of fixed anchors occur, and only for the location that the study has been performed on.