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Comments: I am writing to express my deep concerns and objections to the proposed policy that would prohibit fixed climbing anchors in America's wilderness areas. While we understand the importance of preserving the pristine beauty and character of these wilderness areas, it is crucial to consider the vital role that fixed anchors play in ensuring climbers' safety and maintaining the integrity of climbing routes.

Fixed anchors are an essential component of climbers' safety systems, providing them with the necessary support and protection during their ascent and descent. It is essential to note that fixed anchors do not fall under the category of prohibited "installations" as defined by the Wilderness Act. For over half a century, existing climbing policies have allowed for the judicious use of fixed anchors, striking a balance between safeguarding wilderness character and facilitating primitive and unconfined wilderness climbing.

It is unreasonable to create new guidance policies that would blanket-prohibit wilderness climbing anchors across the country, especially when federal agencies have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades. Climbers have responsibly undertaken the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a crucial aspect of safety in climbing. Imposing restrictions on fixed anchor maintenance would hinder critical safety decisions that often need to be made in the heat of the moment. We believe that any authorization process should be designed to support safe anchor replacement and not risk the removal of climbing routes.

Moreover, prohibiting fixed anchors would obstruct climbers' ability to explore wilderness areas appropriately. The complexity of vertical terrain often requires climbers to make in-the-moment decisions, which are necessary for their safety. Land managers should allow climbers the flexibility to navigate and explore these areas while ensuring responsible climbing practices.

Additionally, restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

I urge you to reconsider the proposed policy and to engage in a dialogue with the climbing community to find a balanced solution that ensures safety, protects the environment, and upholds the rich climbing heritage of our nation. I believe that by following existing climbing policies that have proven successful for decades, we can strike the right balance between preserving the character of the wilderness and supporting responsible climbing practices.

Sincerely,

Brad Greenlee