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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

I have been a climber for more than 50 years and a longtime student of American climbing, both as a writer and as the editor of Climbing (1974-1998) and Alpinist magazines (2009-2012).

I have climbed extensively in national forest wilderness all over the United States. Many historic climbs that I have done, including my own first ascents in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Alaska, would not be possible without the judicious use of fixed anchors such as pitons, bolts, and slings, either for belay anchors, climbing protection, or rappel descents. Fixed anchors are an essential component of the climber's safety system and allow for "primitive and unconfined" recreation in wilderness. In no way are they prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act.

The use of fixed anchors on rock climbs and mountain routes in wilderness has been a well-established practice in the United States for nearly a century. Climbers, besides being among the most outspoken advocates for wilderness values, have a sterling record of stewardship of the public lands we hold dear. Fixed anchors are indispensable, minimal tool for sustainable wilderness climbing. It is essential that the safe and responsible use of fixed anchors in national forest wilderness areas remains available to the climbing community.

In addition, restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-wilderness national forest lands is unenforceable and will create confusion for 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.

Please revise your climbing guidance to reflect the practice and precedent of at least the last 60-plus years: that fixed anchors for climbing can be used, replaced, and maintained in designated wilderness and non-wilderness areas in our national forest areas.

Sincerely,

Michael Kennedy