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Comments: Climbing is an essential and vital way of relating with nature via our natural parks and public lands. For me it fosters a deeply spiritual connection to nature and a profound sense of purpose and wellbeing. Part of climbing is the freedom to explore new spaces and the ability to challenge oneself in ways one did not know he/she/they were capable of. Another part of climbing is the ability to safely come home from the experience. This safety comes from skill, proper training and equipment, but also from fixed anchors and the people in the climbing community who take care of these anchors.

Your new draft policies that would prohibit fixed anchors will devastate my and other climbers' ability to access and participate in the activity of climbing by making some of our most important routes unsafe to climb. They will also, thus, inadvertently be dooming many people to their deaths--those who will inevitably try and climb these routes without bolts and fail. These proposed rules would also set a negative precedent for other climbing areas not on NPS or Forest Service lands that may impact climbers nationally on locally managed lands. They may also have a strong negative impact on the climbing economy and industry.

Some things you should know:

Fixed anchors are not visible from the ground and create no detriment to the view of non-climbers. Indeed, it is often hard to see a fixed anchor even when you are 5 feet from it.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions.

Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

Sincerely,

Alan Fortescue