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Comments: I request any personal identifying information be withheld from the public.

I am writing to share feedback and concerns about the proposed changes to fixed anchors and equipment used by climbers in national parks. Climbing in its many forms allows for exploring Wilderness areas in a fun and challenging way. The proposed anchor restrictions needlessly obstruct this exploration and go against the spirit of the existing Wilderness Act.

Without the use of anchors - often placed in the middle of climbing to accommodate conditions unique to that moment in time - the safety of climbers is jeopardized. To climb with reasonable safety, climbers must be able to utilize anchors and protections of all varieties during their activities. A bolted sport clip is very different than a temporary sling. These proposed changes do not differentiate between different types of anchors and safety systems. It would be the same as treating an airplane, car, and bicycle as the same vehicle merely because they all use tires. I cannot stress enough how these proposed changes are either not well-informed of the different types of anchors or are willfully ignorant in an attempt to severely restrict the sport. I would also point out that it is an unreasonable departure from existing practice across the country to prohibit climbing anchors when, for decades, the established practice allowed for the placement of fixed anchors.

I do agree there are valid concerns surrounding the preservation of wilderness areas and the perception non-climbers might have regarding the placement of anchors. Yet, under the existing Wilderness Act, fixed anchors are not prohibited "installations" and already leave minimal impact on wilderness character. To address concerns of leaving a less visible trace, rules could be implemented where the color of bolts and climbing chalk must reasonably match the surrounding climbing route. This both preserves climber safety and the character of the surrounding wilderness. Regarding non-wilderness climbing, unless the placement of new anchors can demonstrably impact cultural and natural resources, non-wilderness climbing should still allow for new routes to be developed. Otherwise, this unenforceable policy will only create confusion between land managers and climbers.

Finally, climbing is an essential part of American history, and these proposed changes unequivocally oppose the mission of the USFS by depriving present and future generations of their wilderness needs. From the dirtbags of Yosemite, to the formation of the 10th Mountain Division, to more recent efforts of outreach to BIPOC climbers, climbing has left a profound impact on those who love the outdoors and continues to build a rich history unique to America. Instead of moving forward with these proposed changes, the NPS and USFS should instead work with climbing groups, like the American Alpine Club and Access Fund, to better understand the impact of policy changes. It happened during World War II when the US Army and American Alpine Club worked together to both educate and develop safer climbing techniques for the 10th Mountain Division. I strongly suggest these proposed changes be tabled until the USFS can demonstrate it understands what a climbing anchor is and works with established climbing groups to develop an informed policy that works with, not against, climbers.