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Comments: Dear USFS,

As an avid climber for the last 4 years I am very interested and concerned about the new policies you are developing regarding fixed anchors in America's wilderness lands. There are three points I would like to clarify initially that I feel are hard to dispute by anyone knowledgeable about climbing:

1. Climbing is a well-established traditional recreational use of our national parks and wilderness lands.
2. Fixed anchors are well established devices used to protect climbers both during ascent of otherwise unsafe expanses of rock, and as points of protection for safe belays and for safe escapes (rappelling). They have been used for half a century or more. They are not prohibited installations under the Wilderness Act.
3. Prohibiting fixed anchors or removing already existing anchors will create serious safety issues to climbers AND to the rescue squads dispatched in an emergency (at which point the rescue squads will be forced to create fixed anchors for safety reasons).

The recent explosion of climbers and bolt-protected routes does not invalidate the above points, it only forces an increased scrutiny of their impact on the natural resource in which they are occurring. Any ruling that entirely bans climbing and fixed anchors is a blow against traditional established land use.

While I agree that "sport climbs" - a method that requires extensive bolting of steep rock faces and sometimes slings attached to those bolts- should be limited in the wilderness, I disagree that this can be translated into a policy of no fixed anchors whatsoever. I understand that distinguishing what is a sport climb and what is an acceptable use of fixed anchors in the wilderness may be a difficult definition to conquer, but I believe with the input of the Access Fund and climbers we can all come up with a reasonable agreement.