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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Lucille Williams, and I am an avid rock climber and ecologist in the state of Alaska. I have been following the release of draft policies that would consider both existing and new fixed anchors (bolts, pitons, slings) as "prohibited installations" and therefore make them banned in Wilderness areas. I strongly believe this new classification will hinder Wilderness exploration, threaten the existence of historic established climbing routes, and obstruct climbers' ability to replace old, unsafe bolts. This not only threatens America's climbing legacy but puts the safety of our community at risk.

Additionally, I believe that safe fixed anchors are essential for not only exploration and recreation, but research as well. As an ecologist studying bats, my research aims to gain a better understanding of what bat species hibernate in above ground rock structures and cliff faces. My ultimate goal is to draw on my climbing skills and apply my knowledge of bat ecology to implement effective management practices for bat conservation while also productively regulating climbing areas. Without safe fixed anchors in place, this research would not be possible.

Regardless of my personal endeavors, it is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors for countless reasons-- including safety, maintenance, and funding issues. I believe that different language should be considered for fixed anchors for the purposes of climbing, so that they therefore would not fall under the "prohibited installation". I think this is reasonable because there are expectations made for trails, roads, and natural resource extraction equipment. Thus, I believe different language should be used to classify fixed anchors and they should not be banned in Wilderness areas, especially because fixed anchors have not been considered "installations" for over 60 years.

Thank you for your time and consideration.