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Comments: I am writing to state my opposition to some aspects of the new draft policies released by the NPS and the USFS. I think it is not reasonable to reclassify fixed climbing anchors (bolts, pitons, and slings) as "prohibited installations" when climbing was specifically listed as a protected activity in the original Wilderness Act. Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system. Of their own accord, climbers have been improving the quality and sustainability of fixed anchors during the decades since the Wilderness Act was enacted. Thus climbers have shown that they are concerned for the preservation of the rock and the surrounding environment. 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.

I also feel that 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. It does not seem realistic that a system that requires permitting in advance by agencies that already have many things to manage and limited budget will happen in a timely fashion. Thus, I feel that these proposed policies to consider fixed anchors as installations will have serious impacts on the safety of climbing, as well as the ability to explore Wilderness areas for potential climbing. 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 as well as continue to allow the current and future generations of climbers to continue to enjoy climbing in wilderness areas.