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Comments: I would like to provide my comments and share my experience pertaining to the proposed policy on fixed anchors. As an avid climber, I have spent countless days recreating in wilderness areas across the US. From remote towers in the Utah deserts to massive rock faces in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness of Washington, these experiences have been some of the most formative and important ones in my life, largely due to the opportunity that these areas provide for unconfined and primitive recreation. Climbing, as a legitimate form of recreation on these lands, provides me and my closest partners with a lifetime of adventures.

One of the critical pieces of equipment that makes these adventures possible and reasonably safe are the fixed anchors that I have used. These are an irreplaceable part of the safety chain as I go up and down these walls and mountains, and the proposed policy directly puts my safety at risk by creating bureaucratic hurdles for the placement and replacement of these anchors.

As it is written, it will be difficult if not impossible for the volunteers who maintain anchors to replace them in an expedient and efficient manner - the anchor replacement process is already laborious and tedious, and almost always done by volunteers, and the draft policy adds another layer of time and effort to do this work.

In addition, the proposed policy is simply not practical or actionable. Without funding and intimate knowledge of the decision making, it is virtually impossible for the administration to effectively conduct MRAs of existing anchors. This opens the door for the wholesale removal of existing fixed anchors if the administration decides that they do not have the funds or time to carefully review each anchor, a decision that will effectively erase a large quantity of climbing in wilderness and non-wilderness areas.

While I agree that some forms of climbing drive foot traffic to concentrated areas and can cause undue impact, I believe the draft policy is a blunt instrument that will have outsized impact on all forms of climbing, thus limiting my ability to safely enjoy the remote, wild adventures that I love. The policy does not contain or allow for the nuance of differentiating between anchors placed to create convenient, bolt-intensive face climbs that draw crowds and can cause impact, and anchors that are placed sparingly on adventurous, remote rock climbs where nobody but those using them for safety would know they exist. In addition, on such remote and seldom traveled rock routes, fixed anchors are often the only viable option for descent. Without minimalist, high-quality hardware, these descents will see a proliferation of unsightly nests of cord and rope left behind by climbers looking to descend. There is existing precedent of such rappel anchors failing in the Wind River Range, and this policy would only drive more climbers to create and use such unsafe rappel stations.

I am deeply concerned about the wording and consequences of this draft policy, and I encourage you to listen to and work directly with the climbing advocacy groups that understand the nuances of fixed anchors to draft policy that better accomplishes the goals of limiting impact without compromising my safety and enjoyment of wilderness.