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Comments: I implore the U.S. Forest Service to reconsider the draft policy that designates fixed anchors, including bolts and pitons, as "prohibited installations" in America's Wilderness areas. These anchors are integral to climbers' safety systems and have been responsibly employed for nearly six decades. Prohibiting their use not only disregards the climbing community's longstanding adherence to safe practices but also jeopardizes the safety of climbers.

The proposed policy poses a significant threat to Wilderness exploration and established routes in iconic climbing destinations such as Yosemite, Rocky Mountain National Park, Joshua Tree, and more. Fixed anchors play a crucial role in ensuring the safety of climbers, providing stability and support in challenging terrains. Hindering the use of these anchors not only disrupts Wilderness exploration but also endangers the very climbers whose safety these anchors aim to protect.

Moreover, the climbing community has demonstrated a commitment to responsible anchor maintenance over the years. Prohibiting fixed anchors would create unnecessary obstacles to routine maintenance, a responsibility shouldered by climbers themselves. Critical safety decisions often require immediate action, and any authorization process should not impede these decisions. We urge the USFS to consider a management approach that incentivizes safe anchor replacement while addressing safety concerns in a pragmatic manner.

In light of bipartisan legislative initiatives like the Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act and America's Outdoor Recreation Act, which have garnered unanimous support, it is crucial for the USFS to align its policies with these efforts. These legislative acts aim to protect the legal and conditional use, placement, and maintenance of bolts and other fixed anchors. Embracing this legislation would not only ensure the safety of climbers but also pave the way for new national climbing management guidance that supports safe, sustainable access to Wilderness climbing.