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Comments: Opposition to the Prohibition of Fixed Anchors in Wilderness Areas

To whom it may concern, I am writing to express my concern regarding the recent draft policies from the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) that propose to prohibit fixed anchors in America's Wilderness areas. As a member of the climbing community, I believe this decision will have far-reaching negative impacts, not only on the climbing legacy of our nation but also on the safety and freedom of climbers to responsibly enjoy Wilderness areas. Fixed anchors have been a longstanding and sustainable element of Wilderness climbing, allowing for safe passage through complex terrain. The climbing community has a proven track record of maintaining these anchors responsibly, ensuring both safety and minimal environmental impact. The proposed policies overlook nearly 60 years of precedent and threaten to erase iconic routes in areas like Yosemite, Rocky Mountain National Park, and others. This action disregards the climbing achievements that form part of our cultural heritage. Moreover, at a time when bipartisan legislation is moving forward to provide clear guidance on the use and maintenance of fixed anchors, it seems counterintuitive for the NPS and USFS to establish blanket prohibitions. Climbers need to be able to make real-time decisions for safety, and such a prohibition would only hinder these critical judgment calls. I strongly suggest that the policies be revised to allow for the continued use of fixed anchors. The focus should be on creating management plans that support safe and sustainable climbing practices, recognizing the value and history of climbing in America's Wilderness areas, rather than imposing outright bans that disregard decades of tradition and community-led stewardship. Thank you for considering my comments on this matter.

Sincerely,

Zachary Banks