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Comments: I have been a frequent user of federally designated wilderness for climbing, hiking and skiing since 1975. During those nearly 50 years, I have climbed in wilderness from Alaska to California to New Hampshire. Fixed anchors are an integral part of climbing and can be found in many wilderness areas. In many instances, fixed anchors predate wilderness designations.

Wilderness areas like El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, the Wonderland of Rocks in Joshua Tree National Park, the Diamond in Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado and the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire all had fixed anchors before they were designated wilderness. Never in the intervening decades did Congress tell land managers that fixed anchors on El Capitan or the Diamond were installations and thus prohibited by the Wilderness Act.

Never during Congressionally mandated studies to determine if proposed wilderness areas had appropriate characteristics to become designated wilderness has a land manager suggested an area did not meet wilderness criteria because there were fixed anchors. To the contrary, agency policies such as the 2007 Bureau of Land Management memorandum and the National Park Service Director's Order 41 acknowledged that fixed anchors are allowed in wilderness.

Changing the interpretation of "installations" within the Wilderness Act concerning fixed anchors will create a myriad of headaches for federal land managers. All federal land management agencies are currently underfunded and any realistic person knows that is not going to improve. The proposed fixed anchor policies by the NPS and USFS would create incredible amounts of extra work to try and figure out what happens to fixed anchors.

For many decades climbers from around the world have relied on fixed anchors on cliffs like El Capitan and the Diamond. How will these historic climbs remain safe and climbable without fixed anchors?

I urge the NPS and USFS to abandon this ill-conceived attempt to re-interpret the Wilderness Act, especially since clarifying legislation concerning fixed anchors in wilderness is currently working its way through Congress.