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Comments: As a salmon-conservation professional, I am an avid supporter of federal Wilderness for the immense ecological value it conserves. I am also an avid rock climber in certain Wilderness areas and observe that most climbing is compatible with other wilderness values. Some Wilderness climbing areas are indeed overdeveloped and require restrictions. New federal policy should direct efforts toward these heavily impacted areas but not create unnecessary planning and enforcement burdens at the many benign locations.

I spend 20+ days each year at climbing areas on USFS lands near Darrington, Washington. In addition to climbing, I also clear roads of downfall, unplug culverts, and replace bolts. If it weren't for me and other climbers, these access roads would have washed out and grown over years ago. Despite being two hours from Seattle, the Darrington walls are challenging to access and receive light climbing traffic. Unlike other parts of the western US, vegetation is resilient and the landscape recovers quickly from human disturbance. After 50 years of climbing activity, the impacts of rock climbing on Wilderness integrity continue to be low.

Darrington climbers have worked constructively with USFS staff, who recognize the recreational value and light impact of rock climbing. From the positive history, USFS staff would likely support a process to allow climbing and associated hardware use at levels comparable to the past. However USFS has limited staff resources available to prepare a MRA, even with voluntary assistance from climbers. Staff time is now consumed addressing growing impacts from illegal camping/squatting, off-road motorized vehicles, timber theft, invasive plants and deteriorating roads. New regulations on climbing hardware would add another 'unfunded mandate' to their difficult jobs.

To reiterate, this new climbing policy should target high impact climbing areas, which federal staff are generally aware of. The climbing community has provided an excellent proposal in the Protect Americas Rock Climbing (PARC) Bill and I have written in support to my federal representatives (Murray, Cantwell and Larsen). Thanks for considering my comments.