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Comments: I am a long-time climber and am opposed to prohibiting fixed anchors in Wilderness and non-Wilderness areas in National Forests. I think the intent of the proposal is excellent. I do not think the Minimum Requirements Analysis (MRA) is the right process for determining whether a fixed anchor is appropriate. I think a much better solution would be to improve the culture and legacy of stewardship by the millions of visitors. Helping facilitate a culture of environmental stewardship is the most important opportunity to preserving Wilderness and non-Wilderness areas. Our Wilderness areas need visitors to be partners in preserving these critical and outstanding places. The Forest Service needs to focus on improving the on-going education about best practices in low impact and sustainable Wilderness travel and exploration. I believe prohibiting fixed anchors would undermine this effort. The vast majority of people want to be part of the solution.

For example, I walked the entire Colorado Trail over several years and met and talked to many fellow backpackers. Hiking this trail, with excellently constructed trail work and signs, is an incredible experience, much like climbing. Like climbers, hikers and backpackers have a long history of working with the Forest Service to protect these fragile resources. There are reasonable rules and guidelines, and the main reason that the resource is protected is that the vast majority of people, in partnership with the Forest Service and other entities, make a real effort, most successfully, to be good stewards. I believe that prohibiting fixed anchors in Wilderness will bring to an end the long standing formal and informal local partnerships with the climbing community across the country. Instead of reducing impact, this will increase resource damage and end constructive dialogue about best practices with the very groups that access public lands managed by the U.S, Forest Service.

Prohibiting fixed anchors would unnecessarily destroy the partnership with climbers developed over many years and would degrade resource protection.

Please continue to make improving partnerships with visitors and the local climbing communities a central focus of the Forest Service efforts to protect Wilderness areas and give the Forests the local autonomy to protect and manage the unique requirements that they manage while working in partnership with their local climbing communities. Prohibiting fixed anchors is not the answer. It would be a big step backward.