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Comments: Rock climbing has emerged as a legitimate sport in which a great number of people participate. The USFS has accommodated other outdoor activities which have a far greater impact on the environment than climbing, and it is only fair that climbing's impact be measured by the same metric.

Fixed anchors are intrinsic to climbing, and these anchors are essential to the safety of the sport. In comparison to skiing, with its lodges, chairlifts and groomed slopes, the aesthetic impact of fixed climbing anchors is miniscule. Even hiking, with miles of maintained trails, signage, bridges, retaining walls, etc. has a far greater impact on the environment than climbing anchors.

If public safety is a goal of the USFS, fixed anchors must be approved and protected. To remove existing anchors will not stop climbers from attempting a given route, but it will make an ascent of that route more dangerous, incurring more rescues and retrievals at the expense of the USFS.

Removal of anchors on aesthetic grounds cannot be justified given the much greater impact of other activities endorsed by the USFS.

Climbing is a sport that has long been misunderstood, thus has not received the general approval that other sports enjoy. When I began climbing in the 1970s, climbers were considered daredevils with a death wish, who wouldn't be missed if they were to disappear. Climbers at that time were irreverent and full of energy, which did not help their image or their favor with authorities. I fear that some of this stigma may still exist.

Contemporary climbers have evolved from perceived social misfits into legitimate sportspersons who are responsible and environmentally conscious. Any misgivings regarding the character and intent of climbers within agencies such as the USFS should be reevaluated, and not be allowed to color any decisions made by that agency.

As a lifelong climber I applaud the USFS for its fine record of service and support of outdoorsmen and their various pursuits, and I understand their concern over the proliferation of bolts in wilderness areas. Climbers have traditionally done a good job of policing themselves when it comes to placing bolts and appreciate the faith that the USFS has shown in allowing us to do so.

While I think fixed anchors are a valid issue, I do not believe oppressive regulation is necessary, nor will it result in enhanced safety for climbers or for a better wilderness experience for non-climbers. In my opinion it is a step too far, and I respectfully voice my opposition to regulations limiting or prohibiting fixed climbing anchors in areas under USFS jurisdiction.