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Organization:

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Comments: As a climber, I support the intent of this stewardship effort to ensure that "Wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use. - 4.3(b) of the Wilderness Act, 1964". But I do not believe the current proposal on the evaluation and authorization procedures for fixed anchors and equipment is the right way to achieve this goal. I request that the USFS develop an alternate proposal with input from climbers.

As a climber who has spent over two decades exploring and climbing in wilderness areas from my home in Montana to my current residence in Washington State, legal fixed anchors and equipment are a critical element in ensuring safety, access to recreation, and conservation of the landscape. Fixed anchors are akin to hiking trails: people will hike in NPS and wilderness area land; do we not want hiking trails to help to manage the safety and flow of hikers and keep people to designated areas that leave as minimal trace as possible? It is the same with fixed anchors, which direct people to the safest and least environmentally impactful option.

The MRA approach is not a reasonable or sustainable solution to manage this situation. I request the USFS partner with stakeholders - including climbers and climbing organizations such as the American Alpine Club, the Access Fund, and Local Climbing Organizations - to develop an improved solution for establishing climbing stewardship plans that address the issue of fixed anchors and equipment.

Thank you,
Katie Stahley