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Comments: Dear USFS managers,

I am a professor of Geosciences at the University of Arizona. I routinely spend 2-4 months of my time doing fieldwork in remote, often wilderness, locations, here and around the world (Himalaya, Andes, Alps etc.). I understand, admire, and cherish the goals and accomplishments of the creation of Wilderness areas in the United States, and I understand how unique 'our' treatment of these special places has been in the global context of continuing overdevelopment, over-tourism, and land speculation. I recently spent a month in the field in the Khumbu Himalaya, near Mt. Everest, mapping and collecting rock samples for geochemical analyses. In order to gain access and the ability to collect these samples, we had to go through a cumbersome and slow process of vetting by Nepalese authorities associated with the Sagarmatha National Park. This is all good and right, and I have no issues with this sort of oversight. What is ironic is the ongoing over-use of the region by tens of thousands of trekkers, who are literally destroying the landscape directly and indirectly. It was 'amusing' to ponder the asymmetries between our extremely low-impact scientific work and the off-scale damage being done by the 'customers'.

I am also a climber. I have been climbing since 1979, and I practice all of the major disciplines of climbing, often in the context of my scientific work. I used to climb a little in Yosemite Valley, and I was always amazed at the asymmetry between the impact of climbing and the impact of off-scale over-tourism in the Valley. I know many climbers, and I understand the ethics of many climbers. Climbers are not all saints, and ethics are quite different from one group to the next, often delineated along national cultures. For example, European climbers are used to treating the Alps as an outdoor gymnasium, with well developed climbing areas and bolted and fixed-anchored routes seemingly everywhere. Personally, I don't like this approach, especially in wild 'undeveloped' areas. I am not a big fan of over-development and transforming natural environments into something that looks more like a climbing gym. However, I am also grateful to the many climbers who have worked hard and spent lots of their own money to 'develop' outdoor climbing areas, and especially to those who have placed safe fixed anchors in places where those anchors have undoubtedly saved lives.

Proper regulation of fixed protection/anchors is a tricky business, and I urge the NPS to go slowly and in careful consultation with leaders in the climbing community. Let's not end up with another Khumbu Himalaya or Yosemite, where the trivial impact of one group is singled out while much greater impacts of other groups are ignored or even embraced.