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Comments: To whom it may concern:

I am writing regarding the proposed legislation to prohibit fixed anchors in wilderness areas.

The current language in these proposals will result in a blanket ban on anchor placement and maintenance, but what does this mean? What even is a fixed anchor?

These are defined by the proposed document as any man-made installation, whether a bolt in the rock or a sling around a tree. However, these anchors are critical pieces of safety equipment and work to preserve natural features and vegetation by directing climbers to recreate in specific areas. When climbers rappel, for example, they are completely dependent on fixed anchors to descend safely, whether they've successfully ascended a route or forced to bail due to perilous conditions. The primary cause of death of climbers is frequently rappelling, and prohibiting the maintenance or placement of bolted anchors will greatly increase the frequency of fatal accidents in the community. Fixed anchors and protection have been used by climbers for decades, and this legitimate use of public lands has predated even the Wilderness Protection Act.

The climbing community carefully self-regulates the placement of anchors and other protection, and there has been a growing movement to collaborate with park rangers and land managers to develop management solutions as a community. For example, Yosemite National Park recently introduced a Big Wall Permit system for climbers planning to spend the night on El Capitan and other large formations, and national parks and public lands across the country have introduced Climbing Ranger and Climber Steward programs to introduce a liaison between the climbing and land management agencies to promote the best interests of both groups.

With the rise of collaborative, community-oriented programs, a blanket ban on fixed anchors in wilderness areas is a step backwards as well as unreasonable, unenforceable, and a drain on public resources better directed towards education and conservation programs.

This is a critically important issue for the outdoor community, and I've attached links to additional resources from the climbing organizations who directly work in these spaces.

Thank you for your time.

<https://safeclimbing.org/fixed-anchor-directives>

<https://www.accessfund.org/latest-news/wilderness-climbing-faq>

<https://alpinist.com/newswire/two-proposals-threaten-americas-rock-climbing/>