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Comments: I am writing to voice my interest and concern regarding the new policies you are developing that impact the use, installation and/or replacement of, and maintenance of fixed climbing anchors in America's wilderness lands.

I have been rock climbing since childhood and began taking it seriously after college. I have learned from mentors and fellow climbers the importance of moving safely on the rock, how to preserve the rock and the landscape, how to follow land-use policies, and how to move in and out of these areas following Leave No Trace principles. Climbers put an incredible amount of energy and intention into each bolt they add to the rock: they are an imperative component of safety in the mountains and are therefore taken very seriously and are maintained well.

A ban on fixed anchors would be a severe blow to the climbing community in America as well as an unwarranted shift in policy. I have outlined some key reasoning to consider regarding the proposed ban on fixed anchors:

1. Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. They have been allowed and appropriately managed for over half a century. A ban on fixed anchors in portions of America's public lands will create serious safety issues that could result in severe consequences. People will continue to climb, however, a ban on fixed anchors will result in unsafe conditions on the walls and most likely lead to preventable deaths and injuries.
2. Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.
3. Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors in all cases EXCEPT where proper and ethical analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.
4. Finally, prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. It is YOUR duty as a government agency to protect what the public (the people you serve) value. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment. I ask that you reconsider the current policy change being evaluated. Climbers are dedicated and passionate stewards of our public lands, but we MUST work together.