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Comments: Good morning,

I am an avid lover of our nation's National Forests, and me and my wife both love visiting forests around the nation (I have a personal goal to backpack in every single one!). I am a supporter of the Forest Service, and think that the job this agency does is critical and essential to protecting our wilderness areas, ensuring the survival of key species, and keeping America beautiful. Keep doing what you are doing, we love the passion!

That said, I am a strong believer in the universal ownership of these natural assets by all Americans, and as long as responsible and respectful use of these assets is maintained and impacts to ecology are kept to a minimum, I want everyone to enjoy these national treasures their own way. I am worried about this proposed prohibition, as removing/banning fixed anchors in our parks will put climbers in more danger while enjoying their sport unnecessarily. Well-maintained fixed anchors along routes save lives, and prohibiting maintenance or placement of bolts (or requiring lengthy review processes) will absolutely lead to an increase in accidents and fatalities among those who practice the sport.

In addition, budgets across all agencies are stretched thin already. I fear that requiring Minimum Requirements Analysis (MRA) to be conducted for new or replacement anchors will be cumbersome and often unable to be completed in a timely and cost-effective manner.

I do absolutely support what I believe to be the spirit of this proposal - a desire to ensure parks and forests stay beautiful long after any one of us has departed the earth, and to leave a sustainable, protected space for generations of Americans and foreign tourists to enjoy forever. One suggestion I would have to achieve this would be a partnership or collaboration with respected and responsible non-profit bodies like the American Mountain Guides Association and American Alpine Club to develop a certification course for those with the skills and desire to blaze new rock routes or maintain existing routes. If a certification like described above was a requirement for bolt/anchor maintenance to ensure the practitioner was using best practices & being responsible and respectful of the natural features, I think that would be a good plan that would shift the ownership and responsibility from the Forest Service to the individual (or organization) and still achieve the same goal.

Thank you again for soliciting comments and for your attention to this matter. What the Forest Service does is often taken for granted, but you have a special place in the hearts of all outdoor enthusiasts like me, who appreciate each of you and what you do for us day in and day out.

Respectfully,  
Charles Ross