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Comments: Hello,

I would like to suggest some improvements to the new NPS guidance.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing. Most if not all climbing areas need to rely on various types of "anchors" in order to ensure safety.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades. Climbing routes are already established and climbers will keep climbing them. If the bolts are removed, they will be re-installed by the climbing population.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

I work as an anchor maintenance technician in and around Salt Lake City. I work for the Salt Lake Climber's Alliance and one of our role is to inspect and replace climbing hardware. There are already so many anchors that need to be replaced for safety, and not being allowed to perform this work in Wilderness areas is making climbing very dangerous. Please allow for trained and competent anchor technicians to replace existing anchors in Wilderness areas. It can be done with minimal tools and in a low-impact way.

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.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

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 unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

Sincerely,

Alex Lemieux