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Comments: To Whom It May Concern at the U.S. Forest Service,

I am writing as a passionate climber and a professional guide to express my concerns regarding the proposed regulations that would prohibit the use of fixed anchors in Wilderness areas managed by the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service.

Climbing is not only a sport but also a way of connecting with nature, and it fosters a deep respect for our wilderness areas. The use of fixed anchors like bolts, pitons, and slings has long been an integral part of climbing, particularly in ensuring the safety of climbers and guides alike. The proposed blanket prohibition on these anchors, including the removal of existing ones, poses a significant threat to the safety of our climbing community.

The presence of reliable fixed anchors is crucial, especially in well-traveled routes. These anchors often replace older, less reliable equipment, enhancing safety for climbers. The proposal to remove existing anchors could lead us back to relying on outdated and potentially unsafe equipment.

Moreover, climbing has been a part of America's outdoor legacy for decades. Many of the established routes in our national wilderness areas are not just pathways up a rock face but are steeped in the history and culture of climbing. The proposal to prohibit anchors threatens this legacy and limits the accessibility of these routes to future generations of climbers.

As a guide, I am deeply committed to both the preservation of our wilderness areas and the safety of those who explore them. I understand and support the need to protect our natural environments from unnecessary harm. However, I believe that a blanket prohibition on fixed anchors does not balance environmental protection with safe access to these areas. A more nuanced approach, perhaps allowing for the careful placement and maintenance of anchors in established climbing routes, would better serve both the environment and the climbing community.

I urge the U.S. Forest Service to consider the impact of this proposal on the climbing community's safety and the rich climbing history that is part of our national heritage. Collaboration with climbers, guides, and climbing organizations in developing these regulations could lead to a more balanced and effective management strategy for Wilderness areas.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this critical issue.