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Comments: Hello USFS,

Existing climbing policies for the last half century have allowed judicious use of fixed anchors. These anchors, each usually no more than four square inches, are used sparingly on a cliff. This is not a "sport climbing" scenario where a line of bolts and hangers leads up the cliff, drilled with a power drill. This is "traditional climbing" in the wilderness, where just a few bolts are used on climbing routes at either a stopping point, a retreat point or to bypass a particularly difficult section, the crux of the route, all drilled by hand.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act, unlike roads and mechanical transport. Continuing to allow the judicious use of hand drilled anchors will provide for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

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.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility already 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.

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.

Furthermore, 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.

Benjamin Bruestle

30 years of climbing

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