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Comments: Fixed anchors have long been a critical component of climbers' safety systems, and their use does not contradict the principles of the Wilderness Act. These anchors, far from being intrusive "installations," play a crucial role in preserving both the safety of climbers and the character of wilderness climbing experiences. For more than half a century, climbing policies have permitted the judicious use of fixed anchors, striking a balance between protecting the Wilderness character and enabling climbers to engage in primitive and unconfined exploration. It is therefore impractical and counterproductive for federal agencies to contemplate new policies that would prohibit the use of Wilderness climbing anchors, especially considering their long-standing acceptance, management, and authorization of these essential safety tools. Such a shift in policy would not only undermine decades of established practices but also disregard the significant role these anchors play in the safe exploration of Wilderness areas.

Moreover, the proposal to restrict the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is problematic. This approach is not only unenforceable, but it also seeds confusion among land managers and climbers alike. A more practical and clear-cut policy would be to maintain opportunities for new anchors on non-Wilderness lands, deferring any restrictions until thorough analyses indicate a need to protect cultural and natural resources. Non-Wilderness climbing management should foster an environment where new opportunities for climbing can evolve naturally, respecting both the climbers' aspirations and the preservation of the land. Prohibiting fixed anchors poses not only a threat to climbers' safety but also to the very essence of Wilderness exploration and America's rich climbing heritage. Protecting America's climbing legacy necessitates a climbing management policy that not only safeguards existing routes but also respects the historical achievements of climbers worldwide.