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Organization:

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Comments: My name is David Pyle and I am a rock climber living in northern California. I've been rock climbing in our National Forests for 5 years. As I am sure you are aware, rock climbing has been a legitimate and accepted activity in the National Forests for over 100 years. And, for most of that time, fixed anchors have been used by climbers. These anchors are an essential part of the sport. Without fixed anchors a large majority of climbers would not be able to safely enjoy the sport.

I am concerned that the recent proposal to classify fixed anchors as installations in wilderness areas will lead to a de facto ban on new anchors as well as a restriction and prohibition on the replacement of existing anchors. This proposal could also lead to the removal of current fixed anchors. In my opinion, it will be impossible for the Forest Service to design and finance a system to review, evaluate, and approve every fixed anchor in every National Forest. The USFS does not currently have either the funds, staff, or the expertise to safely and in a timely manner evaluate the current stock of existing fixed anchors or proposed fixed anchors that are encompassed in this proposal. In addition, I believe it will be impossible for the USFS to police and enforce these rules if enacted. What I fear will happen is the overburdened Forest Service will adopt a no evaluation or approval stance. This will in turn lead no new rock climbing opportunities and slowly, a reduction in current rock climbing opportunities as current anchors begin to fail. Aging anchors will inevitably result in injuries and deaths when anchors fail as climbers use them.

The fixed anchor proposal is solving a non-existent problem. Climbers have been responsible stewards of existing fixed anchors as well as the lands that we climb on. It is a unique and effective system because climbers know where anchors are needed, take care to place only what is needed, maintain them through their lifespan, and replace them at the end of their lifespan. And, all of this happens without any expenditure of time or labor from the USFS. The current fixed anchor system works, there is no need to completely change it.

I urge you to reject this proposal.

Thank you for your time.