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Comments: I have been climbing throughout the western United States for more than a decade. Many of my happiest days and my most treasured memories took place climbing in national parks or on national forest land. And part of the reason I love climbing on these lands so much is because they feel so incredibly wild still. Many of the routes I have climbed have been "classics", routes that have a story behind them, a famous name attached to them, something that makes me feel like I am a part of America's climbing legacy by climbing that route. I treasure wilderness, and I also treasure a long history of American exploration in wild lands.

For these reasons, I believe there are vital changes that need to be made to the draft policy on wilderness anchors. Fixed anchors keep climbers safe! Prohibiting fixed anchors and making maintenance of anchors difficult or impossible is first and foremost a safety issue. Fixed anchors have been allowed in wilderness areas for decades -- and I feel no diminishment of "wilderness" when I encounter them on a climb. Considering them "installations" is a new interpretation of the Wilderness Act that is at odds with how wilderness climbing has been managed for decades.

Further, this draft policy threatens the proud legacy of climbing and exploration in America's wild lands. I feel a thrill when I climb a historic route and see a small piton left behind by the first ascensionists. This policy would mean historic routes would be fundamentally changed or at risk of disappearing altogether. Even worse, the policy would make new exploration of vertical terrain more difficult and more dangerous.

I care deeply about keeping our wilderness areas wild! I also care deeply about the safety of climbers and the proud legacy of climbing in this country. These are not at odds with one another. Please consider making improvements to the current draft policies that allow for climber safety and also honor the connection climbers feel with the lands they climb on.