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Comments: I moved to the US eleven years ago for graduate school and stayed to work. As my studies concluded ten years ago I took my first backpacking trip in the Sierra Nevada and became, if such events are to be given credence, an outdoorsperson. Since then I have visited the Eastern Sierra to climb peaks throughout Inyo National Forest, some of which have required my rope and trad rack. I have also climbed Mt Baker's North Ridge and Mt Shasta by several routes from different aspects. I live in Northern California and climb at Donner Pass (Tahoe National Forest) and Lover's Leap (Eldorado National Forest) several times each a year.

In in this time I have only used fixed anchors in the wilderness a handful of times. When ascending Mt. Baker and Shasta, as well as in couloirs in the Sierra, I've only relied on removable protection that is dug into snow or ice and can be removed by the last climber past a given point on the route. The terrain on the volcanoes and some peaks in the Sierra is such that I can descend, if at times exposed to the potential for a big fall, by walking. Where more could be required fixed anchors, in the form of a few feet of tubular nylon webbing tied around a big heavy rock, have held a bight in the middle of my rope as I rappelled past a tricky section.

Of course given more skill and enough time most such anchors would be redundant and I would simply apply what I do to ascend a peak in reverse. For my part this seems risky and impractical, since spacial awareness and control of your body's movement is more challenging going down, often backward, than it is going up, conventionally forward. Furthermore, none of these descents from anchors are out of established norms in the sport, nor are they likely to encroach on other land user's wilderness experience, compact and dispersed as they are.

I don't maintain fixed anchors, beyond replacing a piece of tubular webbing that looks faded, or establish new routes that might require a fixed anchor to safely lower off. However, it is clear to me that those committed to explore the wilder parts of the county's forest land in search of new opportunities to climb would be faced with a choice between their personal safety and the law of the land, should the placement and maintenance of fixed anchors be subject to increased regulations and scrutiny. The prior level of scrutiny and regulations have afforded these people the right to preserve both at no demonstrable impact to the wilderness experience of anybody who would chance upon the area at a later time.

At more accessible climbing areas a rappel from a bolted anchor offers the safest way back to the ground. More often than not these are placed because, above them, climbing to a ledge from whence the climber could walk safely back to the route's base is prohibitively difficult. In others, the route is simply too long to be climbed with a single piece of rope and no opportunity exists for solidly anchoring the party to the wall at an intermediate stance using removable gear. In a similar spirit to the last case, bolts are most often placed in rock to prevent a dangerously long fall from immediately above them. This is in line with decades of precedent, as allowed by the forest service and acknowledged as good style in the climbing community.

Where anchors for new routes, or the establishment of a new area is concerned I would ask the Forest Service to continue to empower climbers to explore. In the past decade climbing has become more popular. The rapid sharing of knowledge of varying degrees of validity on the internet has removed long standing barriers and somewhat delegitimized the gatekeepers to climbing. A select few new climbers have earnest aspirations to develop routes but in practice none of them do, eschewing this to seek out classic routes to cut their teeth and experience for themselves what has inspired generations of climbers. It is possible that some popular cliffs will be crowded, which could strain the local environment.

In the unfortunate event that this occurs it will be abundantly clear as a short approach is a major factor

contributing to an area's popularity. And in this event the forest service should intervene and take practical steps to limit climbing traffic and prevent further damage. I would not expect this fate to befall most nonwilderness climbing areas on USFS land, since most of them are not so popular that climbing meaningfully impacts their local environment. I conclude that limiting the development of fixed anchors for the immediate future will prevent climbers from recreating responsibly without meaningfully improving the condition of the environment controlled by the service.

For some, it is enough to stand in and look up at a cliff by a road to appreciate climbing as something done by an adequately skilled other. For the rest of us, seeing and hearing are not enough- a climb will only reveal itself when felt, hung from, and occasionally clung to. I expect minimum requirements analysis for new anchors to impede the establishment of new viable routes. More gravely, I can see how such a requirement for replacement anchors might endanger climbers were it to stand in the way of timely replacement. Such oversight will encumber a community who have been, and continue to be, reliable environmental stewards. As such I would urge the USFS to continue in the spirit of its prior, more permissive policies that have been in place for decades, and allowed responsible individuals to enhance the recreational experience for all while seeking to minimize environmental cost. Thanks for reading.