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Comments: I am writing to express my opposition to the USDA Forest Service's proposed policy that would prohibit fixed anchors in Wilderness areas. As a climber and backpacker for four decades, I feel I have some understanding of the need to keep Wilderness areas wild and the policies that will help achieve that goal, this is not one of them.

Fixed anchors are essential for climber safety and should not be classified as prohibited "installations." Banning them would make climbing in Wilderness areas unnecessarily dangerous and likely increase the burden on Forest Service employees who handle rescues. Similarly, creating burdensome obstacles to the replacement of existing fixed anchors in Wilderness areas, many of which are old and use inferior materials and technology compared to modern equipment, would do more to endanger climbers than preserve wilderness.

I think it's also important to point out that fixed anchors often protect natural features, such as trees, from damage.

It is entirely appropriate to restrict climbing in areas where it is necessary to protect cultural resources, such as Native American petroglyphs, or natural resources, such as the delicate rock features in a place like Arches National Park. However, in the absence of such concerns, non-Wilderness climbing management policy should leave open opportunities for new anchors.

I believe climber impacts can be managed in a way that protects Wilderness areas, keep climbers safe and preserves the long legacy of climbing on our public lands. Banning fixed anchors in Wilderness areas is not the way to achieve these goals.