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Comments: I am writing as a rock climber of 21 years and a passionate advocate of our wild areas. I spend as much of my life outside as is possible for someone with a desk job, and every vacation I take is for rock climbing, as is almost every weekend. I was inspired to write this because of the Access Fund announcement that you all are considering rules about the permanent gear left to help us enjoy climbing.

First off, I'm a trad climber. I have the skills, the experience, and the drive to build my own anchors and leave no trace. However, that's not a feasible solution for everyone and not even for me. There are places where fixed anchors are an absolute necessity, as it keeps us off the tops of the cliffs (and keeps hikers from seeing us there and traipsing through the foliage to get to where we are.) Fixed anchors also take the load off of trees, which despite best efforts can have damage to bark when too many climbers rely on them to get down safely.

The new way of thinking about climbing safety is that fixed gear is replaceable. People are not. This is why many now lower using a system that never takes them off belay, but does put some wear on the fixed anchor. It is worth it for the fewer accidents due to "user error," but it means we need to have permission to repair those anchors when they finally need it and permission to install the right kind of anchor when needed.

Climbing has risen exponentially in popularity since I started, and I didn't even start "early." Fixed anchors reduce the impact of climbers and let us enjoy the woods and wilderness in a very special way.

Last, look to Europe for examples of how to manage the larger and larger number of climbers accessing resources. Even in these older countries there are new routes to be explored and established - the US has even more than that. Please do not try to restrict new routes.