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Comments: Hello, I'm Ethan Steinmetz, and I've been an active rock climber in Ohio for the past 9 years. I frequently get out to various outdoor climbing crags on weekends trips. I always love these escapes because they allow me to truly connect to the nature of the places that I'm climbing, and become more at peace. For instance, I love climbing at the state park the New River Gorge. I spent the summer of 2017 working at a summer camp in that area. Having the ability to explore the different geography of the land there by going to so many of the different walls really helped me appreciate the rolling hills, winding rivers, and expansive lakes that make up the natural beauty of this park. I've especially enjoyed exploring the vertical terrain, as this has allowed me to see the most scenic and awe inspiring views of the area. Every time I'm visiting the park, I do my best to leave no trace, cleaning up where I can to improve the environment, and act as a good example for others to do the same. Although I have not made it out for a trail day at the New River Gorge yet because of the distance, I have been involved in frequent trail days in more local crags like the Red River Gorge and the Mad River Gorge. In this way, having the access to recreate in my climbing has encouraged me to help take care of the land.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of the climbers safety system. As a predominantly sport climber, the prohibition of fixed anchors would entirely limit my ability to go climbing with any confidence of personal safety, and would therefore shut me out of doing this outdoor sport that I love.

I understand the need to ensure the popularization of climbing and the influx of climbers does not degrade the parks. Therefore, I understand the need to have some limitations on anchors. However, that can be done in a much safer way by having restrictions in certain specified areas that are at risk. By starting out with a blanket prohibition that needs individual allowances, you will be cutting off the vast majority of climbing access, and create a ton of confusion for what regions are allowed. Climbing has been a recognized and approved outdoor recreation activity for the past decades. This prohibition policy will be a complete rejection of that climbing legacy. It is unreasonable for federal agencies to make such a change.

I think this policy will also be very dangerous. It will limit the ability to maintain and replace old bolts and anchors. Not all climbers will be in the know on what the current policies are, and what climbs have been maintained. Even if there is a ton of focus on spreading that news over social media and news, there will be plenty of climbers who operate on old print books and will not be given the message. This is surely going to result in people climbing on bolts and anchors that are old and will not protect them. People will fall and get seriously injured and/or die. The best way to keep those kinds of accidents is to encourage safe anchor maintenance and removing the obstacles that may restrict this maintenance.

I sincerely hope that we can come up with a policy that can offer restrictions at key areas that need intervention, but don't result in the broad sweeping restrictions that will prevent the ability to safely rock climb at most areas.