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Comments: Hello

I have been a climber for 30 years and a canyoneer for 20 years, but more importantly, I have been a lover of and a strong advocate for wilderness my entire life. I took courses in wilderness management and have argued and fought for wilderness protections, even as an avid mountain biker, knowing full well that Wilderness designation would prohibit mountain bikes in terrain/on trails that I could ride. I have traveled in Wilderness on both FS and NPS land by foot and by boat for literally thousands of days, and have done the same in many countries that don't have wilderness as a concept nor Wilderness as a fundamental tenet of land management. I have been a big believer in Leave No Trace since I was a kid. I truly embrace the concept of a place where we are only very temporary visitors, and have kicked over innumerable cairns and dismantled hundreds of fire rings in wilderness areas.

However, I am very much against this proposed ban/severe limitation on fixed anchors for both rock climbs and canyons. Fixed anchors for both canyoneering and climbing are generally placed only when natural anchors don't exist, and I feel comfortable saying that generally both canyoneers and climbers have learned to be very judicious in their placement of fixed anchors, particularly in Wilderness areas, and in fact are often proud of their resourcefulness and skill in utilizing natural anchors and/or retrievable anchors. In canyoneering, many of the modern fixed anchors are put in places specifically to protect the rock from rope burns caused by old - or even natural - anchors, and over time these rope scars are healed by running water, with just simple, well-placed bolts and hangers put in discreetly. And I can guarantee you after many years of searching for both rock face and canyon anchors, they are very difficult to see and -again, as a lover of and advocate for Wilderness values - fixed anchors are many times so discrete I can barely even see/find them, so they are not a visual blight (particularly in canyons, where the nature of the activity - to descend the canyon - means that it's virtually impossible for anyone besides canyoneers to see the anchors). To be sure, there are abuses, and I've seen anchors with way too much old, sunbaked, tattered webbing, but there is an increasingly popular ethos of cleaning up these anchors, and I and most climbers and canyoneers I know take a dim view of over-anchored anchors and endeavor to take the excess out of Wilderness.

I have worked extensively with USFS officials in their land management efforts and I understand the challenges and difficulties of managing overwhelming numbers of recreators on public lands and the implications on the agencies that other public recreators may not be able to appreciate. In this case, I strongly believe that not only are fixed anchors not a visual blight nor contradictory to wilderness values, but trying to manage this new policy would be difficult at best. Establishing what anchors are appropriate where - given the myriad of anchor options - would be difficult to implement, and likely confusing/frustrating for recreators. Such a policy would undoubtedly infuriate recreators - many of those who, like me, have been supporters of Wilderness as long as they can remember - and not only create animosity but also would lead to them feeling compelled to place "bandit" anchors and/or replace anchors that the agencies take out. Don't alienate so many of your strongest advocates and initiate a new era of animosity.

Additionally, safety is a huge consideration. I understand that the agencies are not responsible for the safety of the public, but rescues put a huge impact on the resources, and at a human level I would like to think that District Rangers, Park Supervisors, and their respective employees would be loathe to know that they are taking very distinct actions that could endanger the recreating public. Particularly in canyons, fixed anchors - most often placed out of the way of high water/debris flows - are a huge safety factor in an environment that sees annual/seasonal changes. I understand that a possible reaction of managers would be "we are not responsible for the safety of people, they know what they are getting into, and it's part of the risk" but the community relies on

these fixed anchors and ironically if fixed anchors were not there, the resources could actually sustain more damage from people being compelled to alter the natural environment to create more natural anchors seasonally.

This is a terrible, misguided idea. Please let it go. Don't implement an impossible-to-manage, unnecessary, and dangerous plan that would create a new era of animosity between your agency and the historically-supportive constituents who recreate on your resources.