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Comments: Dear U.S. Forest Service,

As a passionate climber and an active participant in the Forest Service's climber impact study at the Red River Gorge in Daniel Boone National Forest, I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed policies regarding fixed anchors in Wilderness areas. The climber impact study demonstrated that climbers have minimal environmental impact, highlighting our role as responsible stewards of these natural areas.

The proposal to classify fixed anchors as "prohibited installations" in Wilderness areas is in direct conflict with this evidence and decades of sustainable climbing practices. Fixed anchors are crucial for the safety and exploration of Wilderness climbing routes. Their prohibition not only threatens climber safety but also impedes the ability to replace old, unsafe equipment. This policy change would significantly impact the climbing community and undermine our ability to safely enjoy these public lands.

Climbing has become an essential recreational activity on public lands, gaining recognition as an Olympic sport and attracting a diverse and growing community. The proposed policies risk alienating this community and eroding America's rich climbing legacy.

I urge the U.S. Forest Service to consider the following recommendations:

Maintain existing policies that allow for the judicious use of fixed anchors, as they have effectively balanced Wilderness preservation with safe climbing practices.

Recognize the importance of fixed anchors for climber safety and avoid classifying them as prohibited installations under the Wilderness Act.

Implement policies that facilitate the maintenance and safe replacement of fixed anchors, ensuring the longevity and safety of established climbing routes.

Avoid restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands, as this approach is unenforceable and creates confusion among land managers and climbers. Instead, maintain opportunities for new anchors, applying restrictions only when necessary to protect cultural and natural resources.

Climbing is a low-impact, high-value activity that encourages appreciation and stewardship of our natural