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First name: William

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS Representatives,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the recent proposal to implement a bolt prohibition, which, if enacted, would, among other things, prevent the replacement of old climbing bolts in wilderness areas - an activity that has historically been allowed. My name is William (Bill) Landefeld and I bring a unique perspective to this matter as a former NPS summer consultant at Mesa Verde, former outdoor guide and outdoor educator with over 5 years of experience in the outdoor industry, and 10+ years climbing around the USA and the world.

Throughout my career and personal climbing endeavors, I have been dedicated to promoting responsible outdoor practices. I hold certifications such as Leave No Trace Instructor, Single Pitch Instructor (AMGA), and Wilderness First Responder. As a current member of the American Alpine Club, Southeastern Climbers Coalition, and contributor to various organizations, I am deeply committed to preserving our natural resources and ensuring safe access to the wonders of our land.

Growing up in Washington State, I developed my love for the wilderness through frequent visits to the National Forests and National Parks. This passion led me to work in the outdoor industry, where I educated both youth and adults across the Pacific Northwest about the importance of respecting and enjoying our natural treasures safely.

Having utilized the very anchors targeted for replacement restrictions, I understand the delicate balance the USFS seeks between preserving the land and enabling public access. I believe that modifying the proposed ban would strike a more appropriate balance, allowing for low-impact and safe climbing activities.

It is my sincere hope that the current proposal undergoes reconsideration to honor the legacy of safe, low-impact wilderness travel that has defined our nation's climbing heritage for decades. I align myself with the Access Fund and other reputable organizations, including AAC and Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, whose well-considered perspectives echo my sentiments.

Thank you for listening to the public's concerns. I trust that the USFS will carefully weigh the implications of the proposed bolt ban and consider an amendment that upholds the principles of responsible outdoor recreation.

Below are the highlights of the Access Fund's well-thought-out concerns that I also share:

- Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half-century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

- It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new guidance policies prohibiting Wilderness climbing anchors across the country when they have allowed, managed, and authorized fixed anchors for decades.

- Prohibiting fixed anchors will create safety issues by imposing unnecessary obstacles to the regular maintenance of fixed anchors, a responsibility undertaken by the climbing community. Critical safety decisions often must be made in the moment and any authorization process should not impede those decisions. Fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

- Prohibiting fixed anchors obstructs appropriate exploration of Wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore Wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions that are necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain.

- Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

- Restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,
Bill Landefeld