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Comments: I am writing to urge the USFS not to adopt its proposed policy prohibiting fixed anchors in America's wilderness areas. Fixed anchors are a crucial element of safety systems for climbers, not "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Their use, as permitted by relevant federal agencies, has been allowed and even authorized for decades. Without fixed safety anchors, land managers will face barriers to exploration of wilderness areas. Finally, without fixed anchors, America's climbers will find their access curtailed, and some of the most impressive athletic and outdoor accomplishments of the last century will go unrepeated by a new generation. Much of America's most stunning climbing exists within wilderness areas.

I acknowledge that the growing popularity of outdoor recreation, and in this instance, climbing, presents environmental impacts. However, I think these impacts should be managed with more fine-tuned approaches, and not by effectively prohibiting climbing in wilderness areas. By and large, climbers love and respect the lands they climb on, and bringing more people in as environmental stewards benefits our public land. The solution to the impacts of increased traffic and crowds could be a permit system, a daily quota of climbers, or another of many possible solutions. These types of solutions would mitigate environmental damage without broadly prohibiting climbing -- or at least, broadly prohibiting safe climbing that employs best practices.

I sincerely request the revision and reimagining of this policy, if not its total retraction.