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Comments: I have been a climber for over a decade, and I know first hand how incredible it is to be enmeshed with the wilderness as we embark on climbs in the outdoors. I have also been a Wilderness First Responder for ten years, and I know the dangers and risks of outdoor recreation. The proposed rule prohibiting fixed anchors and equipment serves to diminish the accessibility and appreciation of the wilderness and increase the danger and risk of recreating outside.

Climbing is an incredibly welcoming and supportive community. I have felt empowered as I've learned to climb outside. Friends and strangers have showed me the ropes and encouraged me to try a bit harder and reach a bit farther to get that next hold. Also, there is nothing quite the same as being so connected to the earth as you cling to rock edges or swing your ice ax. Relying on the rock and ice to keep you safe instills an appreciation and awe for the wilderness in a way that other activities do not. I hope everyone can experience this feeling.

However, climbing is a difficult sport to enter. It requires specialized knowledge and expensive equipment. The presence of fixed anchors reduces some of these barriers to entry by providing safe routes for people to test their skills and practice their knowledge. Without fixed anchors, many incredible routes will only be accessible to those who know how to trad climb and build their own anchors. This type of climbing is inherently more dangerous, expensive, and exclusive. I have a significant foundation of climbing knowledge, yet I have neither the skills to place my own protection nor the funds to purchase the necessary equipment. I would be blocked from many areas that I would love to explore-as would many others. Relying on fixed anchors provides a stepping stone and a necessary protection as we gain the skills for trad climbing. I fear that without the benefit of fixed anchors, people will rush into trad climbing too soon. So strong is the pull to explore the wilderness through climbing that people may risk embarking on climbs and placing their own gear before they are ready. In this way, this rule actually undermines safety and may have catastrophic consequences. This rule may also undermine sustainability. If climbers do not have the requisite knowledge or end up in emergency situations, they may make less-than-ideal choices about where to place equipment or may have to leave equipment behind. This not only creates riskier climbs but may harm sensitive wilderness areas and increase the amount of debris left behind. Therefore, allowing for fixed anchors facilitates safety and sustainability.

If this rule is adopted, many climbs will become less accessible and riskier. Maybe it's a good thing that few people have this type of access. The concerns underlying this rule are real. The permanence of these anchors and the process to install have negative impacts. However, the benefits far outweigh the negatives. Climbing allows a unique opportunity to explore the wilderness-large and small, horizontal and vertical. In no other community have I seen the same level of appreciation and stewardship for the wilderness as I do with climbers. Sure, there are outliers and those who disrespect the wilderness, but the climbing community has instituted significant measures to ensure climbers are safe, respectful stewards of the land and work cooperatively with NFS and the tribes where they climb. As a climber, I know respect for the land and others' use of it is at the forefront of my mind.

Allowing us to explore the wilderness through climbing, and climbing safely, facilitates a deep appreciation for every aspect of wilderness-from the expansive views from the top of a climb to the minute details observable only when gripping a rock edge. For all these reasons, I ask that you do not adopt a rule banning permanent anchors.