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Comments: To whom it concerns,

I am writing with a deep concern about the proposal to prohibit fixed anchors in Wilderness Areas of the United States backcountry.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not actually 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 critical that safe, protected climbing be allowed to continue through reasonable, limited, and measured use of fixed anchors (including movable anchors). Nobody wants to see wilderness areas marred by excessive overuse of bolts and anchors-and this is NOT what climbers are advocating. What the community wants to see is improvements to the overall proposal, not a blanket prohibition on fixed anchors.

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. This is an issue of precedence where active and overall safe climbing has occurred as an American legacy for most of a century.

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.

Finally, 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. Thank you for your consideration,

Gary O'Brien