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First name: John
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Comments: . I write this in support of our wider wilderness recreational use community, to stop the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service from implementing a new policy that could erase America's most iconic climbing routes and put our safety at risk.
. I am enjoying my 8th decade, and have been a technical rock climber for almost 6 of them, as well as having been a mountain & wilderness rescue instructor, a member of the National Cave Rescue Conference, NPS Ski Patrol, amateur radio operator (ARES), Red Cross National Disaster Team, Fairfax Medical Reserve Corps, … all of that, by way of my support and enthusiasm for our nation's wilderness resources.
. These new policies would classify fixed anchors as "prohibited installations" in Wilderness areas. This new classification would apply to both new and existing anchors-hindering Wilderness exploration, threatening the existence of longstanding established routes, and obstructing climbers' ability to replace old, unsafe bolts. This is a huge blow to climbers that not only threatens America's climbing legacy but puts the safety of our community at risk.
. These NPS and USFS proposals come at the same time that legislation to protect the legal and conditional use, placement, and maintenance of bolts and other fixed anchors is making its way through Congress.
. It seems 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 enables 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 timely, 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 and opportunities. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.
. Asking the USFS to restrict the establishment of new routes on "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and the climbing public. 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 attention to this matter of importance to us and our progeny.