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First name: Kyle
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: To whom it may concern,

I am writing in regard to the proposed Evaluation and Authorization Procedures for Fixed Anchors and Fixed Equipment in National Park Service Wilderness Areas.

As an outdoor enthusiast, avid climber, and a person who has grown to love and value access to wilderness areas to say I have some concerns over the proposal would be an understatement.
Fixed anchors allow for safety of those exploring any vertical aspect of our wild spaces. The approach of attacking fixed anchors does not protect sacred spaces, it makes these spaces less safe to visit. Climbing policies that have allowed for the use of fixed gear have allowed for the exploration of vertical terrain in a way that would not be possible otherwise. It also allows for a certain amount of safety while experiencing nature. I can imagine ways to protect wild spaces and protect primitive and wild spaces without increasing the risk of those who choose to enter these spaces.
I also fear that these new policies will create increased risk in the face of assumed safety. Under new policies I can see the loss of anchors in two ways. The systematic removal of fixed anchors will leave a history of climbs that were once safe and approachable. However, with the removal of these anchors future climbers could encounter increased risk when following in the footsteps of climbers past. Misunderstanding of fixed anchor status between historic ascents and new standards could lead to climbers encountering unforeseen risk. Second, if we just let these anchors age out, we will again see a situation where the status of fixed anchors of the past could lead to climbers encountering unseen risk due to the loss or degradation. For this reason, it again seems that there is a space for fixed anchors, especially when considering the maintenance of climbs that have already been established.
Further, restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands has proven unenforceable. 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.

Climbing in America is rich in history as well as cultural importance. The proposed changes risk a massive loss of exploration of wild spaces. These changes also risk removing a key way in which many people are introduced into the beauty that America's outdoors can offer. This introduction teaches us so much but also makes us understand the balance of conservation and exploration. Over my last 22 years spent outdoors as a climber, hiker, backcountry camper, etc. I have seen a change in the amount of people seeking out wild spaces. I can understand that the way we interact with our wild spaces needs to be analyzed. I expect that changes need to be made in how we allow for exploration and experiencing of nature. I however, do not anticipate that reducing the ability to be in the wilderness safely is the expected or desired outcome so consider this proposed approach as missing the mark.
Sincerely,
Kyle Fisher