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Organization:

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Comments: To whom it may concern,

I object to the recent policy proposal for fixed objects in wilderness areas. As an active backcountry recreationalist (climber/hiker/skier) I relish the physical and mental challenges the wilderness provides. As an instructor/guide, I have put my time in teaching others how to minimize impact. With that said, I understand the place and time for fixed anchors.

Currently, it's prohibited to use mechanical drills in wilderness areas. Drilling bolts by hand is time and labor intensive and as such, a thoughtful approach to creating fixed anchors is needed and not taken lightly. There is not an epidemic of bolt drilling in wilderness areas solely due to the fact that it takes time and effort to place one bolt. Anchors typically consist of two bolts or pins driven into the rock. These anchors are small and hard to see with the naked eye at a distance. This is not an eyesore and does not damage the aesthetics of the environment.

Fixed anchors provide safe passage for climbers. Like managed trails and signage, bolted anchors allow climbers to safely navigate their way through sections of rock with no protection. This could be while climbing as well as rappelling. These anchors degrade and need to be replaced at times. Many times, this is a detail that needs immediate attention and replacement.

Climbing is and has been a beloved endeavor for many Americans through the ages. The climber standing atop an isolated peak is akin to the rugged individualist riding their horse through the plain. Indeed, climbing has predated the wilderness act by decades and fixed anchors have never posed a problem in the past. Climbers and federal land agencies have a great history of working together in land conservation and cleanup efforts. I'm a little puzzled about the sudden need to restrict our public land usage with the minimal impact we have made in our fixed anchors.

I believe it is unrealistic for the already budget strapped federal agencies to enforce this new policy. Is it really realistic to review all existing routes and their anchor placements. Is it realistic to devote personnel to a climbing anchor committee for fixed anchor approval? No, federal land agencies have neither the employees, budget or time to devote to adequately enforce these measures.

Due to these reasons, and many more which I am certain you will be reading about, I believe the policy proposal is inappropriate and unrealistic. It is my hope that this policy will be withdrawn and land use agencies can work closer with user groups (not just climbers as this applies to many other groups) to come to a consensus which works to benefit everyone.

Sincerely,

Christopher Berdoulay