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Comments: As a climber and environmentalist, the proposed change to the rules surrounding fixed anchors shock and disturb me. It feels like those proposing the changes do not understand climbing safety systems. The proposed policy change would make it so that climbers would need to trust their safety to gear that is decades old, without a simple, legal way to replace the gear in kind with newer, safer gear. I work in the railroad, and we regularly replace our fixed assets in kind when it reaches the end of life in its state of good repair. Failing to do this in the railroad would result in deaths. It is the same case with anchors in climbing: if they are not easily replaced by the end of their life, people will die unnecessarily.

Anchors are relatively low-impact but provide a significant safety benefit to climbers. The cost is greatly outweighed by the benefit. While encouraging more sustainable climbing that impacts the environment less is, obviously, a good thing, it should not come at the cost of safety.

Furthermore, the Wilderness Act was passed with the intent of creating a system "for the permanent good of the whole people, and for other purposes" in areas that "have outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation." I ask, what is a more primitive type of recreation than climbing up a cliff? While the proposed changes make it seem as if fixed anchors are an unjust intrusion of man upon wilderness areas, I believe it is fair to say that two small, two inch diameter metal rings roughly every 190 feet up a wall should not be considered a major intrusion of mankind's influence. Prohibiting anchors will prevent people from exploring wilderness areas that have been preserved with recreation and exploration in mind.

The United States of America has a rich history of wilderness climbing. Prohibiting or otherwise preventing the installation of fixed anchors is a dangerous idea that will inevitably lead to unnecessary deaths due to gear failure and erode America's unique position as a world-class wilderness climbing destination. I urge all involved in approving of this rule change to reconsider it, for the safety of climbers across the country.