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Comments: Dear Forest Service, I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposed directives related to climbing management on National Forest System lands (FSM 2355 Climbing Opportunities #ORMS-3524). While I understand the need for consistent rules and regulations to avoid conflicts between the climbing community and land managers, the proposed directives could have disastrous consequences for American climbing. Climbing is a legitimate recreational activity that has been around for decades, and in fact, predates existing legislation that regulates land use. Climbing routes are like trails that extend into the vertical plane, creating durable surfaces that cause less harm to the environment than traditional hiking trails. For example, the "cables route" in Yosemite National Park on Half Dome is an iconic trail that exemplifies one of the most accessible climbing routes in the country.

Access to such incredible resources encourages public engagement with our shared land resources, and Americans who have had the opportunity to experience this climbing trail are far more likely to defend these wild places. Existing climbing policies that allow for judicious use of fixed anchors have been in place for over half a century and are the best way to protect the wilderness character while still allowing primitive and unconfined climbing. It is unreasonable for federal agencies to create new policies that prohibit the use of fixed anchors for wilderness climbing when they have been managed and authorized for decades.

Prohibiting fixed anchors would also hinder appropriate exploration of wilderness areas. Land managers need to allow climbers to explore the wilderness in a way that permits in-the-moment decisions necessary when navigating complex vertical terrain. Prohibiting fixed anchors would threaten America's rich climbing history and could erase some of the greatest climbing achievements in the world. Climbing is an important part of American history that we should take pride in. It also helps to bring together people from all over the world, meaning more climbers, more investment, and more engagement from the American public. Ultimately, this leads to more advocates for our wilderness resources.

Fixed anchors, which are small and visually unobtrusive, are an essential part of climbers' safety systems. They are not prohibited under the Wilderness Act and prohibiting them would create safety issues by making it difficult to maintain them properly. The climbing community is responsible for this maintenance, and critical safety decisions often need to be made in the moment. Any authorization process should not impede these decisions, and fixed anchor maintenance needs to be managed in a way that incentivizes safe replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes. Therefore, I respectfully request that climbing management policies protect existing routes from removal and that the proposed management plan for climbing activities be reconsidered.

The current iteration of the plan would require significant investment from taxpayers and increased oversight from land managers, making it infeasible. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,
Noah