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First name: Steve

Last name: Muller

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Sir,

I have been an avid climber for over 30 years and have the amazing fortune to be able to explore and rock climb in some incredible parts of our National Parks and National Forest Wilderness Areas, some of which I would not have been able to safely do without fixed anchors and bolts.

So, I am writing to express that I am opposed to the proposed new policies which would classify fixed anchors as "prohibited installations" in Wilderness areas. I am a wilderness lover and conservation supporter, including via philanthropic donations to non-climbing conservation organizations, and I can safely say that I probably wouldn't be nearly such a staunch conservation advocate if I had not had the experiences I had climbing and exploring the vertical spaces in these areas. I also would like to suggest the following thoughts about why it is important that fixed anchors continue to be allowed in Wilderness areas as they have in the past.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbers' safety system and are not prohibited "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Following existing climbing policies that allow judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century will do more to protect Wilderness character while providing for primitive and unconfined Wilderness climbing.

It is 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 incentivizes safe anchor replacement and does not risk the removal of climbing routes.

Prohibiting fixed anchors will threaten America's rich climbing legacy and could erase some of the world's greatest climbing achievements. Climbing management policy needs to protect existing routes from removal.

I do appreciate that it is a challenge to manage and balance preservation and conservation with appropriate and varied use by the public. However, I do not believe a blanket ban on fixed anchors is a fair or appropriate means to do so and unfairly and unsafely singles out climbing and climbers. I hope you will take my comments into serious consideration when making a final determination.