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Comments: To Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and USFS Chief Randy Moore:

I am very disappointed that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has proposed a policy on fixed climbing anchors that elevates recreation above wilderness protection and which will result in the permanent scarring and degradation of Wilderness through the installation of fixed climbing anchors.

"It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment." -- Ansel Adams

The Wilderness Act prohibits installations and structures like permanent fixed climbing anchors in order to protect the areas' wild character. Fixed climbing anchors must not be allowed in Wilderness.

The Wilderness Act's strict prohibitions, including its prohibition on installations, cannot be overcome by a desire to facilitate or enhance a particular form of recreation, and the narrow administrative exception for installations does not extend to the general public seeking to create developed recreational activities in Wilderness.

The USFS's primary duty is to protect Wilderness in its natural, untrammeled state, and the Wilderness Act's ban on installations can only be overcome in rare administrative circumstances where the installation is necessary to protect Wilderness in its natural, untrammeled state.

The USFS has no duty to develop Wilderness to provide "opportunities for primitive recreation." Wilderness, by its very existence, provides these opportunities[mdash]the agencies need only to protect the Wilderness according to the provisions of the Wilderness Act to safeguard the opportunity.

"It is imperative to maintain portions of the wilderness untouched so that a tree will rot where it falls, a waterfall will pour its curve without generating electricity, a trumpeter swan may float on uncontaminated water[mdash]and moderns may at least see what their ancestors knew in their nerves and blood." -- Bernard De Voto

Climbing without permanent fixed anchors is generally compatible with wilderness preservation. While it may be true that fewer people will climb certain routes in Wilderness if they don't have fixed bolts or other permanently-installed protection, natural limits on use is not a bad thing when it comes to wilderness protection, particularly with the recent explosion of outdoor recreation uses in Wilderness.

For those climbers seeking developed climbing opportunities, there are ample permanently bolted climbs outside of Wilderness.

Wilderness is an endangered landscape. Less than three percent of land in the Lower 48 is protected as Wilderness, and it is under threat, including from rapidly escalating recreation pressures.

"Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed. Without any remaining wilderness, we are committed wholly, without chance of even momentary reflection and rest, to a headlong drive into our technological termite-life, the Brave New World of a completely man-controlled environment." -- Wallace Stegner

Any specific proposals for permanent fixed anchor installations in Wilderness must be subjected to public notice and an opportunity for public comment pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please do NOT add my name to your mailing list. I will learn about future developments on this issue from other sources.