

Please consider my input regarding any new policy changes regarding the use of fixed anchors in wilderness areas. As a long-time climber, I have always held a view towards minimal impact in my enjoyment of wild mountain places. However, the use of permanent fixed anchors are synonymous with a safe and rewarding experience of wilderness mountains and rocky terrain, whether it be in a national park or state lands.

The concept of fixed anchors is about as old as the idea of wilderness itself. John Muir, the reputed "Father of the National Parks" would have undoubtedly used some form of anchorage to descend or secure oneself in his explorations of America's wilderness mountain lands... to ensure his safety and others that followed him. Were he alive today, I believe he would support policies which permit the installation and use of such devices, if it meant preserving the peaceful experience of America's treasured wilderness areas.

I believe there is no argument that safety is paramount for today's individuals looking to visit high mountain perches and descend from them in a safe manner. Regarding specifics on the installation of fixed anchors, I would refer the reader to advocacy groups such as The Access Fund. They have developed proper guidelines and best practices to ensure the most structurally sound installation specific to a geological area. The installation of fixed-anchors should ensure minimal impact to the surrounding environment and be done so in accordance with local ethics and established practices. The use of power drills should be considered, if needed to provide the best possible anchor. From a wilderness impact standpoint, the noise from a battery-operated drill is nothing compared to the deafening noise associated with a helicopter rescue, if one were to sustain a fall due to an unsound anchor.

It is my contention then that the installation and use of fixed anchors are compatible with the enjoyment of mountain wilderness areas by climbers and non-climbers alike. Please consider the above comments in the development of policies associated with this topic.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker

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