

Dear USFS,

I am a trail builder in Los Padres and White Mountain National Forests, and I am preparing to be a research assistant in ecological studies undertaken in the USFS' Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest. I am also an avid rock climber, and a disciple of wilderness defenders such as Bob Marshall, Aldo Leopold, and Wallace Stegner. I agree with your Department when it defines wilderness as "an area where Earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain," and I understand that oftentimes this definition can come into conflict with certain recreational uses of designated land. Among these, motorized recreation, and recreation dependent on permanent structures and facilities, are banned.

That said, wilderness as an area devoid of *any* permanent human creations should not be the management practice. And having spent countless hours working in USFS wilderness clearing brush and building retaining walls, I know that it is *not* the practice. If it were, all picnic tables, signs, tent platforms, privies, fire rings, and trails would be removed or abandoned.

What these structures are to the backpacker, bolts and anchors are to the climber. A better management plan would be to manage bolts and anchors like vertical trails. Removing all bolts from wilderness is akin to letting all wilderness trails grow over, but letting every cliff become riddled with thousands of metal clips is akin to building hundreds of trails up a mountain.

The medium your department has currently struck with the density of wilderness trails, which preserves both the wilderness character of the land and people's access to it, must also be struck with wilderness climbing. Specifically, we should selectively allow bolts and anchors on climbs that give visitors higher-quality wilderness experiences, and those that have minimal impact on vertical ecology.

Climbing helps convince Americans to venerate, protect and form their character from our country's wildlands in the way that the Wilderness Act intended. If this use is prohibited outright, then an appreciation and connection our people have built for this country will be lost.

Very Sincerely Yours,

William B. Kellogg