Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/27/2023 3:24:39 PM

First name: John Last name: Nelson Organization:

Title:

Comments: While climbing is (or may be) an appropriate use of back country and Wilderness, the acitivity should be subject to the same rules and regulations that affect other users, including no permanent structures or evidence of mankind in Wilderness and limited in back country. Climbers have been looking for new routes and areas for many years and are constantly expanding their presence in back country and Wilderness, and the questions about bolting, human user densities, and impacts to natural resources and other users have been asked for decades- with few answers but more and more expansion of climbing routes and areas. We are continually coming across new climbing routes and areas where we live in SW Colorado, and the impacts from obvious un-authorized routes marked, loud voices, numbers of people, trampled vegetation, creation of unsustainable trails, and publication of new books and online sources for people to access these areas has been disheartening -the scale of increases is scary, similar to illegal mountain biking routes on the increase. Some FS units have developed climbing plans, but with minimal resources to manage the use, such plans are often immaterial or of little consequence. We need a national policy for climbing, especially for the bolting and the marking of permanent routes, and the climbing industry needs to help fund management of this use. In order to protect Wilderness values and resources, in Wilderness there should be few if any permanent routes or designated climbing areas, and similar constraints in non-Wilderness primitive back country areas. And all of this should be taken into consideration in a similar way as it is looked at when any other recreation or other user group uses back country and Wilderness - the question is which user group, including campers, hikers, equestrians, outfitters, etc. are allowed to create permanent sites and facilities on more than a very limited basis if at all? Climbers should be subject to the same standards. And if the issue is one of climbers continually creating illegal routes and areas, similar to how some mountain bikers create new biking trails and areas without FS approval, then the FS stance should be to ask the organized climbing (and biking) communities to step up and proactively help manage this situation better - in other words, they shouldn't tacitly approve of illegal, resource-impacting activities by their compatriots, or worse yet, they shouldn't fund such illegal activity. The new FS management policy on this needs to be clear that resource values trump human use.