

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/20/2023 1:29:32 AM

First name: Michael

Last name: Plapp

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello,

I have followed the recent discussions of reinterpreting the Wilderness Act with regards to fixed anchors and I am writing to express my concerns.

I first went scrambling in Joshua Tree National Monument in 1975 and have been a serious climber since 1981. Clean climbing ethics and leave no (or minimal) trace practices have been the mantra of the climbing community since its earliest days. I have witnessed many changes in the sport from types and styles of climbing and equipment to the background and training of participants. Especially significant is the advent of climbing gyms with the resulting growth in the number of outdoor climbers. As a crusty old timer, I readily admit that this has had an impact on access and use of outdoor recreation areas. While the majority of this new generation has focused on newly developed sport crags and bouldering, many are drawn to backcountry areas to experience traditional climbing. I believe that this should be applauded and encouraged since wilderness climbing is such a rewarding experience. This style of climbing goes back to the roots of the sport and many of these historic routes predate the existence of the Wilderness Act. In order to ensure the safety of climbers on these routes, I fully support the responsible use of fixed anchors in Wilderness/national forests. I believe that fixed anchors are a necessary component of climbing and are compatible with a sustainable Wilderness experience. Please revise your climbing guidance to reflect the practice and precedent of the last 60+ years-that fixed anchors for climbing can be used, replaced, and maintained in designated [Wilderness/national forest] areas. Thank you for your time.