

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/27/2023 3:03:38 PM

First name: Eileen

Last name: Beall

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Canyoneering has been a major part of my life for the past 9 years. It keeps me physically fit, provides a healthy and sober way to socialize and build close friendships, and gets me out into an increasingly rare bit of quiet nature. I cannot stress how essential these activities have been to my mental health and that of my friends - if it were ever studied I am certain we would find that canyoneering effectively takes the place of a great deal of therapy, pharmaceuticals, harmful addictions and expensive medical care for the small but slowly growing number of individuals that do it. It is one of the last places to find true wildness, and vital to the wellbeing of those of us who have built a life around being able to access such places.

Canyoneers as a group tend to excel at Leave No Trace practices that preserve the wildness of the remote places we visit - pristine nature is a large part of the reason we choose this activity and we have no desire to disrupt that. Certain types of anchors, including bolts and many natural webbing anchors, are the single exception where they are required to safely descend a canyon. Without such anchors, most canyon routes would be inaccessible or accessible only with unacceptably dangerous risks. The proposed measure to ban these anchors has no significant positive benefits and is likely to create increased issues for those who manage these areas, resulting in both direct and indirect deaths as well as, unfortunately, further damage to the environment as mistaken descenders may find themselves forced to build redundant anchors if existing ones are removed. This is not a practice I nor any responsible canyoneer would endorse, but it is the unfortunate reality that we have seen in areas where bolts are removed, particularly where descent is otherwise impossible and would necessitate a rescue.

When canyoneers are permitted to place necessary anchors, whether temporary or permanent, the vast majority of us do so with an eye toward minimal impact. Unlike most mountaineering routes that can gather piles of webbing, canyoneers will cut old webbing and pack it out. There is great emphasis on using webbing colors that blend with the local rock, and to avoid placing any anchors where casual hikers might spot them. Wherever possible as the environment and safety allows, we favor releasable anchors that leave nothing at all behind. However if a canyon can be "ghosted" in this way on all but one drop, the inability to place one non-releasable anchor there would make the entire canyon inaccessible.

We have limited enough places to experience the beauty and wildness of truly raw nature. Please do not take our canyons away.